



John M Upton

The Episodes of the Security Novels Series:

Episode I - Hainault	Episode XII – Marylebone
Episode II - Holborn	Episode XIII – Haychester
Episode III – Waterloo	Episode XIV – Bank
Episode IV - Moor Park	Episode XV – Leytonstone
Episode V – Westminster	Episode XVI – London Bridge
Episode VI – Victoria	Episode XVII – Cannon Street
Episode VII – Embankment	Episode XVIII – Bethnal Green
Episode VIII – Earl’s Court	Episode XIX – Turnpike Lane
Episode IX – Lewisham	Episode XX – Star Lane
Episode X – Epping	Episode XXI – St. James’s Park
Episode XI – Liverpool Street	Episode XXII - Aldwych

Coming Soon:

Episode XXIII – Nine Elms
Episode XXIII – Priory Park
Episode XXIV – Tottenham Court Road

Official Website:

<http://www.securitynovels.co.uk>



***Search ‘Security Novels Series’
on Facebook***

Alternatively, you can contact the author at:

jmupton2000@yahoo.co.uk

This novel is supplied free of charge to anyone who wishes to read it, however if you would like to make a donation to production and website costs, then please send them via PayPal to the email address shown above.

Thank you.

**© 2022 – John M Upton
All Rights Reserved.**

Star Lane

Six Months Later

"Ladies and gentlemen, fellow officers of the National Police & Security Service, honoured guests" Divisional Commander James Appleby of the Transport Division of the Service formally called from the rostrum at the front of the room "It is with great pleasure that I present these twelve new officer recruits, the graduates of Academy Class 442a and confirm that they have each successfully completed their training and passed their final assessments and are now ready to serve and protect the community."

Watching among the friends and relatives of the officer graduates were three most distinguished guests in the form of Divisional Commander Tracy Caverner, her husband The Commander and Sir Richard Crowthorne who were there to witness the graduation of Jack, Tracy and The Commander's adopted son.

"In addition to their graduation medals" Appleby then continued "I am also delighted to be presenting a further award to one exceptional graduate who in his short time with us has already gone above and beyond the call of duty on three occasions."

"Is it me or has Jack started to look slightly embarrassed?" Tracy quietly asked aside to The Commander.

"I don't think he likes the spotlight too much" The Commander agreed, "Believe me, I sympathise!"

"Lieutenant Jack Regent" Appleby then called whereupon Jack took a deep breath and then stepped forward from the line of graduate officers, remaining standing to attention in his full dress uniform which included a ceremonial sword.

"In recognition of your outstanding achievements" Appleby then continued as he approached Jack "you are being awarded the Robert Peel award for Bravery" he announced as he produced a medal which he then proceeded to pin to Jack's chest "Congratulations" he then declared and shook his hand.

"Thank you Sir" Jack responded, still a bit stunned.

"How many medals is that now?" Sir Richard asked The Commander.

"Three" The Commander confirmed after a brief pause for thought "That one, the Queen's Police Medal and the George Cross."

"At the rate he is going, he'll have more than you before too long" Tracy remarked with a wry smile.

"Ladies and gentlemen" Appleby then announced having returned to the podium "a big round of applause please for the graduate officers of Class 442a."

At that point the audience rose to their feet and began to applaud and cheer loudly as the graduate officers looked on and smiled in delight now that their six months of training was officially over and their journey as fully qualified and passed out officers of the Service was about to begin.

A few minutes later with the formalities over, Jack joined Sir Richard, Tracy and The Commander as the post-graduation celebrations began.

"Congratulations" Sir Richard called "Welcome to the family firm."

"Thanks" Jack responded, still not entirely believing that he was now a fully passed out officer in the service.

"Now the fun really begins" The Commander jokingly remarked.

"Lesson number one" Tracy then added with a wry smile "Learning when to duck" she remarked which brought a smile to everyone there except Jack who momentarily looked on with concern.

"Don't worry" The Commander then reassured him "You have an excellent Guvnor who will make sure you are all right."

"Nice sword" Tracy then remarked "I don't suppose that is mine by any chance as I seem to have mislaid my one?"

"Err no, sorry" Jack confirmed as he momentarily looked down at the sword mounted in its holster attached to his uniform belt.

"What's happened to yours then?" The Commander then asked.

"Search me" Tracy responded "The last time I can remember seeing it was when I put it on for Dave Collins' funeral six months ago, since when it seems to have completely vanished."

"I am sure it will turn up" The Commander reassured his wife.

"I hope so" Tracy remarked "It was the one you presented me with not long after we first met."

"I tend to find in my vast experience that, as with most things, missing objects turn up sooner or later, whether you want them to or not" Sir Richard remarked "I shouldn't worry" he reassured her.

"You can always borrow this one" Jack willingly volunteered "It's only going to gather dust in my wardrobe most of the time anyway" he commented.

"Thanks" Tracy responded.

"So, what next for the Service's newest recruit?" Sir Richard then inquired.

"Straight to work I am afraid" Jack confirmed with a wry smile "The Chief and I are driving straight back to the office as soon as we can get away."

"Try not to get into too much bother on your first day" The Commander suggested.

"Oh yes, because your first day on the job was all very quiet wasn't it?" Tracy recalled what her husband had told her about his first day after graduation many years earlier.

"Well it was comparatively quiet" The Commander sheepishly admitted "I think I only got into the one major scrape in the first twenty four hours if I recall correctly."

"My first day as a fully-fledged officer in MI5 involved the standard operating procedure of the consumption of a rather large amount of fine quality liquor if I recall, although strangely I don't seem to be able to remember much of it past lunchtime" Sir Richard fondly recalled.

"Nothing much changed there then" Tracy cheekily remarked.

"Err... quite" Sir Richard responded in agreement just as they were joined by the Divisional Commander of the Transport Division of the Security Service, James Appleby.

"Afternoon Jim" The Commander called.

"Commander, Maam, Sir Richard" Appleby responded "I am sorry to interrupt" he then apologised.

"Going to take the star of the show away?" Tracy asked, sensing that the end was near.

"I am afraid so" Appleby confirmed "We are somewhat overstretched at the moment."

"Yes, sorry about that" The Commander responded apologetically "I've been trying for some time now to try and increase your Division's resources and personnel but the powers that be in Whitehall keep looking in their proverbial governmental wallets and pleading poverty."

"Ah, the old Whitehall Two Step" Sir Richard commented "An ancient and merry dance that I have performed on way more occasions, often against my will than I care to recall."

"Quite" The Commander agreed "We may have a friendly Prime Minister and an understanding Home Secretary now but that cuts no mustard with the Civil Service's crack team of accountants."

"We'll muggle through" Tracy reassured everyone "We always do."

"It's difficult with so much attention and resources both legal and financial being devoted to the Pyramid Inquiry and the resulting fall out at the moment" Sir Richard confirmed "That is something that is likely to rumble on for months if not years unfortunately."

"And there was me thinking the only fall out from that was the guy who fell out of the window of the twenty fifth floor of The Shard" Jack remarked.

"Ah, if only it were that simple" The Commander confirmed "If only...."

"Regrettably we have to go" Appleby then confirmed "You ready to get to work Lieutenant?" he then asked Jack.

"Yes Sir" Jack confirmed as Sir Richard took care of his glass for him.

"Good luck" The Commander called.

"Thank you" Jack responded with a slight hesitance as it became clear he realised that this was it, a journey for which he had prepared for quite some time was finally about to begin.

"See you back at home" Tracy added.

With that, Jack merely nodded in slightly apprehensive response before turning away and heading off.

"A tenner says he will wind up in some sort of situation inside of twenty four hours" Sir Richard called.

"Oh, I reckon more likely twelve hours" The Commander responded.

"Honestly, you two" Tracy remarked "Such cynicism" she mockingly chastised them before pausing for thought momentarily "Forty-eight hours tops" she then added with a wry smile.

Tracy had indeed lost her ceremonial sword but it was not through misplacement or carelessness on her part, in actual fact it had been stolen some months earlier and was now to be found in a darkened room located in a secret location underground some miles south of London.

It was now in the possession of an individual called Michael Orbison, a tall slender and greying man whom had obtained the sword by sinister means through a contact in his secret organisation which went by the name of the 'Ixion Brotherhood', he being its spiritual leader and referred to as 'Lord Chaos' by his dedicated and rapidly growing band of followers who listened to and read his thoughts he presented both in person in secret meetings as well as online worldwide through web based communications.

It was one o'clock precisely when Orbison proceeded into the dark room, the only illumination being from a pair of candles in a holder that he carried almost ceremonially like before him as he entered, the flickering flame reflecting off the polished metal blade of Tracy's sword where it was mounted on a wall above a sinister looking black altar.

Orbison used the flame of the candles he was carrying to light two more candles located at either side of the altar that then provided further illumination to the room revealing in the dark some more items on the surrounding walls which he had collected through various means over the years of his devotion to building up his Ixion cult, but it was the sword that formed the centre piece of the display.

"By the sword I call to my one and only High Lord in his dark celestial temple" Orbison called in a low voice with his head bowed "Show me what I must do to please you, great master. I commit my life and that of my flock to you and await my instructions that will lead us to victory over the army of light."

He paused as if in deep reverential thought for a moment longer before continuing.

"Give me the strength to lead my followers near and far in your name by the grace of your teachings, master of Ixion and ruler of all" Orbison then called before looking up and crossing his arms across his chest by way of some final closing salute and then standing up.

"To life immortal" he then declared before relaxing and looking around.

"Really must get on and complete the collection" he then remarked to himself as he looked at the sword on the wall, alongside which were a further set of hooks identical to the ones holding Tracy's sword there which seemed to be waiting for their intended contents which had yet to be obtained.

Orbison then blew out the candles on the altar, took the other candles that he had arrived with and left the room.

Outside in the darkened subterranean corridor he proceeded a short distance to a door which when opened revealed a large office like facility dominated by a big desk on the front of which were mounted an array of six large widescreen monitors all linked into a single computer.

In front of the monitors was a trio of small high definition web cams and microphones which pointed to the tall church like carved wooden chair set behind the desk and it was in this chair that Orbison duly sat before checking his watch and then turning on the equipment before him.

"Good afternoon my brothers and sisters across the world" Orbison then called "Lord Chaos calling out to my fellow Ixion Brotherhood brethren, to life immortal."

Running almost directly from north to south for a distance of some fifty six miles, the Brighton Main Line is one of the busiest and densely operated passenger and freight railway lines in the country.

With Brighton on the Sussex Coast at the south end and the bustling termini stations of London Victoria and London Bridge at the north end, the line and its interconnecting branches and feeder lines serve many communities large and small along the way with the international hub of Gatwick Airport situated approximately half way along its length.

At the core of the various local and fast trains serving the length of the line is the flagship service of the Gatwick Express, its long sleek bright red eight and twelve coach trains of recently built Class 387 electric multiple unit stock shuttle non-stop between Gatwick Airport and Victoria every fifteen minutes day and night.

It was one of these trains, the northbound 12:00 departure from Gatwick Airport to London Victoria that was to encounter a problem that would set in motion a chain of events that no one could foresee what it would ultimately lead to.

About halfway between the busy stations at Gatwick Airport and East Croydon, situated in the south of Greater London lies an isolated section of the county of North Surrey where, having run as two separate but parallel lines for a few miles, the fast express lines veer to the left and cross over the slow stopping service lines that run via the town of Redhill over a skewed bridge at a location called Star Lane.

Emerging from the long Quarry Tunnel on the fast lines into the daylight, Carl, the driver of the northbound 12:00 Gatwick Express service to London Victoria, noticed nothing out of the ordinary other than having to slow down from the trains' maximum permitted speed on that section of ninety miles per hour when a yellow signal ahead meant that there was another train further up the line and that he was starting to catch up with it.

"Drat" Carl called as he acknowledged the audible claxon that sounded in the cab; an additional warning system to the visual aspect displayed by the signal in the distance and shut off the power to the motors before carefully applying the brake, bringing the train's speed smoothly down to around sixty miles per hour.

Up ahead Carl could just see he was rapidly approaching the over bridge that took the fast lines he was driving on over the slow lines in the cutting beneath at Star Lane. It was as the train continued to slow down and he got closer, approaching an old concrete line side workman's hut and the adjacent electrical substation that were situated to the right hand side of the line just before the bridge that he noticed something wrong immediately adjacent to the running lines.

"Bugger me!" Carl suddenly exclaimed as he pushed the combined power and brake controller handle situated to his left fully forward into the emergency brake position and quickly brought the train to a stop.

Despite the emergency stop and the power of modern disc braking systems, it still took a fair distance for the train to come to a complete halt, passing the location where Carl had seen the unusual object by the line side and eventually stopping with the front of the twelve coach train past the Star Lane bridge whilst the back was just about level with the electrical substation.

As per the standard railway safety of line emergency procedure, Carl reached across to the radio controls in his cab and pushed the big red button to alert the Signaller and stop all other trains in the area.

He knew right away that his emergency call had worked as immediately the two signals he could see ahead of him turned to red and in the far distance an oncoming train, a gleaming white Class 700 of Thameslink, probably bound for Brighton could be seen coming to an abrupt halt as well.

"Signaller, Panel Three at Three Bridges" came a voice over the radio via the speaker in the cab whereupon Carl picked up his handset "Pass your message, over."

"Driver of One Uniform Three Five stationary on the up fast at Star Lane ahead of signal Tango One Nine Zero" Carl then responded "Emergency brake applied upon seeing what looks like an unconscious person immediately adjacent to the down fast running line at Star Lane Electrical Substation, over."

"Understood driver" the Signaller quickly responded from her control desk in the new state of the art Regional Operations Centre at Three Bridges a few miles south of Gatwick Airport where the whole area's railway operations were controlled and coordinated from.

"I need both lines blocked, an emergency power switch off and the emergency services called please, over" Carl went on to request.

"Driver, I can confirm all signals on the up and down fast now at danger and the electrical power will be isolated in a few moments" the Signaller confirmed as she nodded towards her colleague at the Electrical Control Desk a short distance away across the vast control room who quickly responded with a thumbs up "All traffic has been stopped and emergency services will be despatched, over."

In the Three Bridges Rail Operations Control Room, the Duty Supervisor came up to the Panel Three Signaller's desk as soon as he had heard the emergency call come in and looked on.

"Barry!" the Supervisor called across to one of his people nearby "Who have we got in the area from the Transport Division Plod?" he asked.

"According to the screen in front of me" Barry, sat at the Emergency Services Co-ordination Desk responded "there is a Transport Division car heading up the A23 just north of Redhill now."

"Who's that?" the Supervisor asked as he left the Signaller to continue her radio conversation with the driver and came over to Barry's desk.

"Err, Lima Tango Zero One and Lima Tango Nine Nine Three" Barry confirmed as he checked the computer and then called up the profiles of the two officers identified as travelling in that Security Service vehicle.

"Well that will be their boss Appleby" the Supervisor confirmed, I don't recognise the other lapel number though."

"Lima Tango Nine Nine Three is a Lieutenant Jack Regent, a newbie who passed out today apparently, according to his jacket" Barry responded as he brought his details up on the screen in front of him.

"Jack Regent as in The Commander and Tracy Caverner's son?" the Supervisor cautiously asked.

"Well, err I suppose so" Barry agreed.

"Oh dear God...." the Supervisor face palmed himself at that point for a moment "Ah well, they are all we have in the area, better get hold of them and give them the good news" he requested.

Jack and Appleby were about halfway back to London, travelling north up the main A23 Brighton road when the call came through.

"Lima Tango Zero One from Control" came the call over the radio "Urgent message, over". As Appleby was driving, he nodded to Jack to take it.

"Lima Tango Nine, Nine, Three Responding" Jack formally responded "Pass your message, over."

"We've got a report of a unconscious or deceased person line side just north of your current location" the Control Room Supervisor called to which Jack rolled his eyes upwards in response.

"You couldn't make it up" he remarked to himself which made Appleby smirk in agreement.

"Adjacent to the down fast main line near the Skew Bridge at Star Lane, over" the Control Room Supervisor then confirmed.

"It's about a mile or so ahead" Appleby confirmed "Tell them five minutes" he suggested.

"Control from Lima Tango Nine Nine Three" Jack then returned to the radio "All received, estimated time of arrival about five minutes, over."

"All received" came the business like response "We'll show you dealing, Control out."

"Stuff it" Appleby then declared as Jack hung up the radio handset "Light up the roof lad."

"You got it Sir" Jack agreed and proceeded to hit the buttons on the control panel between the seats whereupon the patrol car's lights and sirens were activated and Appleby accelerated quickly ahead as in response the traffic moved aside to let them through.

A few minutes later Appleby turned off the main road onto a small lane that continued over a tall brick built bridge that crossed the main railway lines situated far below in a cutting.

"We have arrived" he then announced, turning off the car which in turn silenced the sirens as well.

"Charming little back water" Jack remarked as he and Appleby got out of the car and looked around the narrow lane, littered with abandoned rubbish that ranged from drinks cans through to an old brass bedstead which was leaning at an acute angle against the bridge parapet where someone had dumped it some considerable time ago judging by the growth of vegetation that was poking up through and around it.

"Track side access point is over there I think" Appleby indicated a small gate in the wire mesh fencing nearby, barely visible thanks to more extensive untamed vegetation, only a small blue and white sign giving any indication that this was an access point on to railway property.

Jack went around and opened the boot of the patrol car before extracting two orange high visibility vests, one of which he put on and the other he handed to his superior officer.

"Thanks Jack" Appleby responded as he took the vest and put it on "I'll let you go first" he then motioned ahead "Time to get your hands dirty."

"Right..." Jack remarked to himself before turning towards the gate and after releasing the padlock that was securing it, opening it and proceeding inside.

It took a bit of work to find their way through the vegetation that was encroaching onto the path way to the top of the railway embankment but after a bit of effort the two officers were looking down on the railway lines below them at the exact point where they crossed over on the bridge, the red Gatwick Express train still standing where it had come to its abrupt halt almost half an hour earlier.

"Over there" Jack then pointed a little way down the embankment in the southbound direction to a set of winding wooden steps that led down to the track level "I hope you don't have a problem with heights Sir" he remarked as they headed over to the steps and began to make their way down."

"Ooohhh" Appleby remarked as they headed down the steps, the soles of their steel toe capped safety boots making a deep clomping sound on the wooden stair treads as they went.

"Oh dear..." Jack remarked to himself as he carried on whilst Appleby fell behind a bit as he was indeed uncomfortable with the height he was seeing before him and was indeed much relieved when they finally reached the bottom and they were firmly standing on the ballast alongside the running lines.

"That looks like the local Network Rail guy" Jack remarked as a man in a white bump cab and orange high visibility coat and trousers approached them.

"It's all yours Lieutenant" Appleby called "Call it your first case as a fully qualified officer" he suggested.

"Dave Groundman, Mobile Operations Manager" the Network Rail man called as they met.

"Lieutenant Jack Regent" he introduced himself and showed his warrant card identification and badge "This is my Guvnor, Divisional Commander Jim Appleby."

"Thanks for coming, this is a bit of an icky one I am afraid" Groundman confirmed as he led the way up the side of the line, walking on the concrete cable troughing towards the site of the body which was now covered by a sheet of plastic to shield it from the prying eyes of the passengers who were still aboard the train stopped alongside.

"Are all the trains stopped in the area?" Jack asked.

"Yes Lieutenant" Groundman confirmed "and the third rail is shut off both in directions as well."

"Definitely deceased then?" Jack asked as they reached the scene.

"Officially we have to wait for the divisional surgeon to confirm but this guy is definitely gone" Groundman responded.

"Oh, hang about, something down here" Jack then noticed something wedged just under the electric third rail.

"Here, try this" Groundman passed Jack a pair of thick rubber gloves "the power is off but even I always have those moments of doubt so, just in case..."

"Thanks" Jack responded as he took the gloves and put them on before reaching down and grabbing an object that, once extracted and he had stood back up revealed itself to be a leather wallet.

"Anything useful?" Appleby asked as he watched Jack carefully open the wallet.

"Driver's licence here" Jack confirmed "Probably belonged to our dead guy over there I would have thought" he concluded "a Leonard Raffety of Pimlico, central London" he read the details from the licence "born on seventh of March 1969 according to this."

"At least we know who he is" Appleby remarked "That's always a good start."

"Then again...." Jack responded as he looked deeper into the wallet "there's another driving licence in here as well, same guy in the photo but a different name, a Paul Michael Gardner of Ealing Broadway."

"What?!?" Appleby responded.

"Oh it gets better Sir" Jack continued as he slipped the contents selectively out of the various parts of the wallet to look at them "there are at least three other names here."

"Congratulations Lieutenant" Appleby declared "fresh out of the Academy less than an hour and already you have a dead body and a mystery to solve, nice work, truly nice work."

"Thanks a lot Sir" Jack responded with a certain hint of sarcasm.

"So, it's your case" Appleby asked "What's your next move Lieutenant?"

"Get the boys and girls in white overalls down here to photograph every inch of the scene" Jack confirmed "after which we get our deceased friend here into a freezer and get the best Forensic Pathologist the Home Office have got down here tomorrow morning to do a full autopsy."

"You suspect foul play?" Appleby asked.

"I'm the son of Tracy and The Commander" Jack explained "I have a former Operations Chief from MI5 as a Godfather and in the last five years I have found myself in the midst of more trouble and strife than I care to list" he remarked "with that background I always suspect foul play Sir."

"Okay..." Appleby responded "In which case, let me do the honours" he declared as he reached for his radio.

"Lima Tango Zero One to Control" Appleby then called "Are you receiving? Over."

"Control receiving Sir, over" came the swift response.

"I am on site at the Star Lane body" Appleby called "Show Lieutenant Jack Regent as case officer on this one and scramble the Scenes of Crime guys down here ASAP please."

"Will do Sir, Control out."

"Can I get this train shifted now by any chance?" Groundman asked, nodding towards the Gatwick Express train still stationary alongside.

"Yes, sure" Jack quickly agreed "Get the power back on and get him out of here" he confirmed "but slowly away please just in case there is anything underneath it that we may have overlooked."

"You got it" Groundman responded before turning away "All right, let's get that train out of here shall we?" he then called to a group of similarly high visibility orange attired men gathered nearby who duly set off to begin their task.

"In the meantime" Jack remarked as he looked down at the wallet and then across at the body "let's see if we can find out who you really are and what really happened to you."

"Where the hell is he?" Frederick Oldman asked as he looked nervously at his watch as he and another man, Trevor Granger were sat in a booth in the bar of the Black Horse public house in Hounslow, south east London.

Oldman was quite senior compared with his associate Granger, short in stature, it was clear the years had been unkind to him, his face of sixty years of age was scarred, his eyesight failing and what little hair remained on his head was wispy and grey.

His associate Granger was a much younger man, in his mid thirties he presented a formidable figure at over six and a half feet tall and had the appearance of a man who could easily defend himself if challenged.

On the table in front of them they both had two empty pint glasses and a third each of London Pride Ale that was about half consumed.

"Patience my old friend" Granger reassured his more senior colleague "He will be here I am sure."

"I don't like it" Oldman responded, almost in a panic "You know him, he's never been late once in thirty years."

"There is a first time for everything" Granger tried to provide some sort of reassurance but Oldman was having none of it.

"Nope" Oldman suddenly declared as he got up, grabbed his drink and finished the remaining contents in one gulp "I don't like it, I am getting out of here."

"Wait!" Granger quickly got up to go after him but by the time he had managed to extricate himself from behind the table, quickly finish his own drink and grab his coat, Oldman was already out of the door and in the street.

"Fred, come back!" Granger called after the elderly figure who was heading across the road, pausing only to allow a bus to pass.

"I'm out of here!" Oldman was heard to call back but then turned around suddenly when he heard a car screech suddenly to a halt alongside him.

"What the hell...?" Granger remarked to himself but could then only look on as the passenger in the car which had just stopped calmly got out of the vehicle holding a gun which in an instant he aimed at Oldman and opened fire.

Oldman dropped down dead in the street with the first shot which all happened so fast that he never knew what hit him. As passers-by reacted to the sound of the gunshot by screaming and running away, the assassin fired two more times before once more calmly getting back in the car whereupon it sped away.

Granger ran across the road to where Oldman's lifeless and bleeding body lay in the street whilst all around people were screaming and panicking as the sound of sirens approaching began to fill the area.

Realising time was short and having no intention whatsoever of still being around when the authorities arrived, Granger quickly checked Oldman's pockets and found a bunch of keys and his wallet which were blood stained, stuffed them in his pockets and then ran off just as the first Security Service patrol car arrived, turning into the far end of the street with its lights and sirens in full cry.

As the Security Services quickly closed in on the scene and began to seal off and evacuate the immediate area, Granger watched from the shadow of a narrow alleyway between buildings before discreetly scuttling away.

Jack was looking down the line towards the crime scene where the Forensic Investigation Division were now on site, a large white portable tent in position over the location where the body had been found and their experts busily examining and photographing the scene, dressed in their distinctive white overalls and hair caps.

As the rain began to fall, Jack was forced to tighten his uniform overcoat over himself as in addition to getting wet, he was starting to feel the cold biting wind as well.

It was then that one of the white suited Forensic Officers emerged from the tent and proceeded towards him, a plastic evidence bag in his hand.

"Lieutenant Jack Regent?" the Forensic Officer called as he approached.

"That's me" Jack confirmed, keeping up a smile despite the insipid weather.

"Doctor Gareth Yardell, Forensics Service" he introduced himself "I gather this is your first case?"

"Oh yes" Jack confirmed "Well, first since graduating from the Academy. I have err assisted the Service with other matters in the past" he admitted.

"I've got your dead guy's effects here" Doctor Yardell confirmed as he passed across the evidence bag "Not a lot to go on outside of the wallet you found and a gold cygnet ring with some sort of insignia on it I can't make out."

"Quite distinctive" Jack agreed as he looked at the ring through the clear side of the bag.

"The rest is the usual pocket litter, loose change, that sort of thing" Doctor Yardell confirmed.

"I don't suppose there were any train tickets on the body were there?" Jack asked more out of hope than expectation.

"None that we could find, sorry" Doctor Yardell confirmed apologetically,

"What about the body?" Jack then asked.

"Definitely murdered" Doctor Yardell confirmed "Subject to the full autopsy tomorrow morning, I reckon someone hit him hard over the back of the head where he lost a lot of blood but there is none on site which means he was killed elsewhere and then dumped here by someone making a pretty amateurish attempt at trying to make it look like he was killed jumping from a train."

"Well that gives me something to work on" Jack confirmed "Thanks Doctor."

"No problem Lieutenant" Doctor Yardell confirmed "I'll get the autopsy report to you as soon as we are done tomorrow."

Jack watched as Yardell walked away, heading back to the white tent before taking another look around whereupon his eyes alighted on some sort of abandoned structure, primarily constructed of wood that was only just visible in among the encroaching line side foliage some distance away.

"Dave!" Jack called over to Groundman "What's that old building over there" he asked nodding off into the distance at the structure he had just noticed.

"That?" Groundman called as he came over "It's the old Star Lane Signal Box, been out of use for thirty or more years now."

"Derelict then?" Jack asked.

"And then some" Groundman confirmed "lots of old abandoned sheds, huts, etc down here" he explained "This part of the line is so far removed from any civilisation down here, the bosses have never bothered clearing any of the old junk away."

"Well, thanks for your help Dave" Jack then called, shaking Groundman's hand "Hopefully the guys in white will be finished soon and you can have your railway line back."

"Not much point now" Groundman remarked "the evening peak is pretty much wrecked now I reckon."

"Normal service then" Jack responded to which Groundman smirked in response "I just hope there is a train I can catch back to London as my Guvnor has driven off in my car."

"I think I can help with that" Groundman confirmed with a knowledgeable wink.

"Well this is a circus" Tracy remarked as she got off her motorbike and removed her helmet, surveying the scene before her where the shooting had taken place approximately twenty minutes earlier.

Amid sirens, the sound of a Security Service helicopter hovering overhead and lots of onlookers who were being held back by a cordon of tape and uniformed officers, Tracy managed to squeeze through to where the body was still lying in the street, a blanket now draped over it through which blood was seeping and two uniformed patrol officers guarding it, one either side.

"All right, what have we got?" Tracy asked as she reached the centre of the scene

"Some sort of hit and run shooting by the looks of it" one of the officers confirmed as Tracy knelt down and discreetly lifted the blanket a little, winced at the sight of the body lying beneath and then replaced it again.

"What happened to the shooter?" Tracy asked as she stood back up again.

"Sped off in a car almost as quickly as he had arrived" the other officer confirmed "Bob and his Armed Response Unit guys are doing a walk around the area just in case though."

"So who is this poor sod?" Tracy nodded down towards the body.

"The Landlord of the Black Horse over there said he was a regular" the first officer responded as he checked his notebook "name of Frederick Oldman, late sixties."

"Why do I know that name?" Tracy asked generally "Nope, no idea" she then concluded as she failed to recall any further details from her memory.

"He was drinking in the pub with a younger guy called Trevor Granger" the first officer continued, referring to his notebook "Seemed rather nervous apparently before swiftly finishing his drink and walking out which as soon as he crossed the road was when the gunman pulled up in a car and calmly shot him."

"What about the other guy, Granger?" Tracy asked.

"He legged it pretty dam quick as soon as the shooting started" the second officer confirmed.

"Can't say I blame him" Tracy admitted.

"Afternoon Ma'am" came a familiar voice whereupon Tracy turned to see Divisional Commander Bob Thompson, the head of the Specialist Armed Response Division approaching "What brings you to this charming part of town?" he asked.

"New Home Office guidelines dictate that all instances of firearms crime now require the attendance of a senior officer on scene within one hour" Tracy explained "and as I happened to be available, here I am."

"Nasty way to go" Bob remarked, looking down at the body.

"Any sign of the shooter?" Tracy asked.

"Nah..." Bob confirmed "In, bang, out. He's was gone before the echo of the first shot had faded away."

"Passing amateur taking a pot shot or professional hit?" Tracy then asked, hoping that Bob's expertise would lead him to the same conclusion she had already reached.

"One to the head and two to the chest has professional job written all over it" Bob responded "Probably some kind of freelance hit man who I suspect is already on his way out of the country by now. You won't be seeing him again anytime soon."

"Frederick Oldman" Tracy then remarked "Why does that name ring a bell somewhere?"

"Tried asking The Commander?" Bob suggested "He's is practically a walking encyclopaedia on the subject of old school London villains, and I am willing to bet this chap here is connected in some way."

"Good idea" Tracy responded as she picked up her radio "Angel One to Eagle One, are you receiving, over?" she then called.

"Eagle One receiving" The Commander responded a few moments later "Are you all right love?"

"Yes love" Tracy confirmed "I wanted to run a name past you and see if anything went ping in that lovely brain of yours."

"Flattery will get you everywhere" The Commander responded as he sat back in his office chair "What have you got?" he then asked.

"I've got a mid-sixties IC1 male here with three bullet holes in him, quietly seeping blood all over the road outside the Black Horse pub in Hounslow" Tracy explained "The name we have for him is Frederick Oldman."

The Commander paused in thought for a moment before answering. "About five foot five, grey hair, gold tooth and a distinctive mole on the left-hand side of his nose?" he then asked.

"Pretty much spot on" Tracy confirmed as she double checked by lifting up the sheet for a moment before replacing it again.

"Freddy 'Fast Fingers' Oldman" The Commander confirmed "old school crook from South London, specialised in safe breaking and lock picking until arthritis kicked in about ten years ago when as far as I was aware, he retired from a lifetime career of petty larceny."

"Well he's definitely retired now" Tracy remarked "Someone made sure of that, permanently."

"Who the hell would want to kill Freddy the Fingers?" The Commander asked.

"Search me love" Tracy responded "Admittedly I have never heard of the poor fellow though."

"I would like to be kept informed of any developments on this case if possible" The Commander then requested "Have the Scenes of Crime lads got there yet?" he then asked.

"Not that I can see, no" Tracy confirmed as she looked around only to then notice Bob trying to attract her attention "Hang on a second love" she then called.

"Doctor Yardell and his team are already out attending a body adjacent to a railway line, somewhere in Surrey I think they said" Bob confirmed.

"Did you get that?" Tracy then asked.

"Yes thanks" The Commander responded "I'll see if I can find out who the officer dealing with that one is and see if we can get the late Mr Oldman prioritised" he confirmed.

"I'll leave it with you then dear" Tracy responded "Love you, I'll see you back at the office."

Once Tracy had gone, The Commander thought to himself for a moment before getting up and proceeding to leave his office whereupon he turned left and headed down the corridor to the main Control Room which as per usual was busy.

"Simon!" The Commander called across the room to Simon Fuller who was sat at one of the computer consoles.

"Afternoon Sir" Fuller responded, rotating on the swivel chair to face his commanding officer as he approached "What can I do for you?"

"Apparently there is a body line side somewhere in Surrey that is utilising the talents of our team of forensic experts" The Commander explained "I need to find out who the officer dealing with the case is as I may need to gazump them over the forensic guys but I don't want to ruffle any feathers."

"Okay then, let's see now" Fuller turned back to his computer console and got to work "The only death on the books in Surrey seems to be a body by the side of the line at Star Lane near Coulsdon" he quickly confirmed "Transport Division are on it who have declared it as suspicious. Officer dealing with it is Lima Tango Nine Nine Three."

"Lima Tango Nine Nine Three" The Commander repeated before something suddenly occurred to him "Hang on a minute, that isn't who I think it is, is it?"

"Officer dealing is no less a mortal than one Lieutenant Jack Regent" Fuller confirmed "Not bad for his first day in the job."

"Where is he now?" The Commander then asked "I think I had better do this face to face."

"According to his last report filed with the Transport Division Control Room, he has just been picked up from Star Lane by a London Victoria bound train that has stopped specially to collect him and is on his way back to Holborn" Fuller replied.

"Right then" The Commander called "Have my car meet me downstairs in ten minutes" he requested "Looks like I am going back to Holborn."

Automatic ticket barrier number fifty-five beeped and opened as Jack passed his Security Service warrant card over the reader having ascended the escalator from the Piccadilly Line platforms at Holborn Underground Station in central London before stepping out into the busy street outside.

It was a short walk across High Holborn by way of the pedestrian crossing to the headquarters building of the Transport Division of the National Security & Police Service located on the corner of the street.

The Receptionist acknowledged Jack as he came in through the double sliding glass doors before he proceeded up the stairs to the third floor where he had an office that he shared with five other officers of the Division.

As he entered the office, it came as no great surprise to find no one else in there. The Transport Division was always stretched pretty thin for manpower and most of the time the majority of the officers allocated to the London area were to be found out on patrol or on active investigations across the vast and complex network of railways, Underground lines and bus routes that fell under the remit of the Department.

Whilst Jack shared an office, he did have his own desk located over on the far side adjacent to the window with a nice view of the intersection of High Holborn and Kingsway below.

Jack's desk was extremely neat, tidy and well organised with a few extra personal touches, his picture of his long-time girlfriend Megan on one side, a couple of family photographs on the other and a couple of model railway magazines in the In Tray.

Sitting down behind the desk, Jack paused a moment and looked across at his picture of Megan before reaching across to the telephone on the desk and pressing the speaker button and speed dialling a number.

"Hello!" Megan's always cheery voice called as soon as she answered the call "How is your first day in the new job?" she asked.

"Interesting" Jack admitted "So far I have notched up a suspicious death and possibly a case of identity theft as well."

"You Regent's never do anything by halves do you?" Megan responded with a sense of amused wonderment.

"Life would not half be dull any other way" Jack admitted "Look, I've got to run some names through the computer but I was wondering when I am done, do you fancy meeting for afternoon tea, my treat?"

"You're on" Megan readily agreed.

"Great" Jack responded "Russell Square Gardens in say forty-five minutes?" he suggested.

"I'll be there" Megan confirmed.

"See you in a bit" Jack replied before hanging up by which time the computer on his desk had now booted up and he was able to carry on.

"Now, where are those names?" Jack asked himself as he rummaged through his jacket pockets until he found the evidence bag containing the personal effects from the body out of which he took the wallet and began to extract the various forms of identification inside with their five different names yet all with pictures of various vintages of the same individual.

At that point another officer came into the room and seeing Jack at his desk came over.

"Hi, you must be the new guy" the officer introduced himself.

"Indeed" Jack confirmed "Lieutenant Jack Regent" he responded as they shook hands.

"Lieutenant Connor Shelby" the other officer confirmed "Welcome aboard."

"Thanks" Jack responded "Erm, whilst you are here, can I ask you something?" he then asked.

"Shoot" Shelby responded.

"The database search system we have on these computers" Jack inquired "How extensive are they?"

"It will let you search Transport Division records and can tap into New Scotland Yard's archive as well with a little fiddling but that is about as far as it goes" Shelby confirmed.

"I think I am going to need a little more than that" Jack responded as he closed the window on the screen and began to type some commands into the computer whereupon a few moments later a new search window appeared.

"Bloody hell" Shelby exclaimed "That's the central system search isn't it?"

"Yes, it is" Jack confirmed "The secure gateway into pretty much every law enforcement and secret security service database there is."

"And you have an access code for it?" Shelby asked, still not quite believing what he was seeing.

"No, but I know someone who does" Jack confirmed as he entered a username and password which promptly let him in "and my Uncle designed the system as well."

"Always good to have connections" Shelby remarked as Jack began to enter the names into the search parameter box.

"It certainly is" Jack agreed "Right, now that is all the names entered, let's see who my dead body really is" he announced before with a click of the mouse the database search commenced.

"How quick is this thing usually?" Shelby asked as he and Jack watched the screen apprehensively.

"It depends a bit on how many other people are using it and how complex the search is" Jack explained "It usually gives you a time estimate after a minute or so."

"I am guessing here that you have done this before?" Shelby asked.

"Once or twice" Jack responded with a wry smile.

"Search parameter complete in two hours" the computer then announced.

"Typical" Jack exclaimed "Ah well, time for afternoon tea with the good lady then."

"Do you want me to keep an eye on this for you?" Shelby asked, indicating the computer screen as Jack got up from his seat and reached across for his gun belt that was hanging over the back of the chair.

"I'd appreciate it" Jack responded as he put his gun belt on "Just don't let anyone touch it until I get back."

"That isn't standard Service issue" Shelby then remarked on seeing the firearm in the holster on Jack's gun belt "Looks practically an antique."

"A present from my old man" Jack confirmed as he took out the old six shot revolver and passed it to Shelby to look at "It used to be his for many years, can't remember where he got it though and now it's my lucky charm as it were."

"So, who is your old man then?" Shelby asked out of curiosity as he handed the gun back and Jack returned it to the holster.

"Sir Edward Regent" Jack admitted.

"The Commander?!?" Shelby responded with aghast.

"Whose username and password do you think I just used?" Jack asked.

"Wow!" Shelby remarked "You are going to be trouble, I can tell."

"Nothing new there" Jack admitted "I had better go" he then declared as he checked the time "See you later" he called before leaving the office.

Unbeknown to Jack as he left the building, his search was starting to set in motion a series of events at a number of locations across the City.

Despite having been in the position of Head of Operations for MI5 for a little over six months since the assassination of his predecessor and former boss Dave Collins, Christopher Dent had managed to settle in well.

Of course, it was only then that he discovered just how much tedious paperwork was involved, a situation more than evident by the stack of files and paper that were covering almost every part of his desk that afternoon.

It was therefore almost a relief when there was a knock on his office door.

"Come in!" Dent called loudly as he closed the file he was working on and put it to one side as his Deputy, Gareth Pointer entered bearing a yellow coloured piece of paper accompanied by a concerned look.

"Sir" Pointer called "Something's come up which I think you need to see" he informed his senior officer.

"Is this going to upset me?" Dent asked, already sensing where this was likely to be going "only I am in the middle of a dozen different things right now, all of them either frustrating or just plain old fashioned annoying."

"Entirely possible Sir" Pointer confirmed.

"All right Gareth" Dent commanded as he pushed the files on his desk to one side and leaned forwards "I'm all ears, you may begin."

"Do you recall Adam Barwell over at the CIA office in Battersea sent us a list of names that he wanted us to watch out for the other day?" Pointer asked.

"Vaguely" Dent responded "So many requests from other Agencies, foreign and domestic come through here, more so since all that Pyramid Group business that I have kind of lost track of them all."

"Well this one was a Priority Alpha list containing four names" Pointer confirmed "apparently in connection with some sort of international financial fraud they said."

"And pigs might fly" Dent responded "In my experience the CIA never tell you everything, there is always an element of deniable vague ambiguity."

"Indeed Sir" Pointer agreed before continuing "It's just that there was a cross agency database search launched about ten minutes ago and the search terms used contained the very same four names that appear on the CIA's list."

"Ah..." Dent responded "Did you manage to identify the source of the search?" he then asked.

"It's been traced to a National Security Service terminal in the Transport Division Headquarters in High Holborn" Pointer passed across the piece of yellow paper he had brought in with him over.

"Database search..." Dent read from the paper "Security Service user access code Alpha One, that's The Commander" he remarked.

"It wasn't him though" Pointer remarked "Our spotter just called in, The Commander called for his car and is due to leave Scotland Yard in the next couple of minutes."

"It's definitely not The Commander" Dent agreed "he can't even remember his own mobile phone number let alone anything as complex as his database access authorisation."

"The terminal used is in an office on the third floor, logged in as one Lieutenant Jack Regent" Pointer confirmed.

"Oh dear..." Dent sat back in his chair and rolled his eyes upwards.

"Isn't that The Commander's son?" Pointer asked.

"The very same" Dent confirmed.

"Well that probably explains the access code" Pointer concluded.

"Are you sure Jack's search matches the CIA's list?" Dent asked "It's not some vague mix up or a computer error, something like that?"

"Gut feeling Sir, no" Pointer replied "I think Lieutenant Regent may have just unintentionally trod on the toes of our American friends."

"Ah hell..." Dent exclaimed as he thought for a moment about the best course of action "Okay, here is what we will do. Does anyone else know about this?" he asked.

"Just me, Emma who received the report and now you Sir" Pointer confirmed.

"Let's keep it that way" Dent instructed "Tell Emma to keep schtum, don't tell anyone else, promise her dinner paid for out of our petty cash if necessary."

"No problem Sir" Pointer agreed.

"Meantime I am going to go and find Tracy and The Commander and discreetly tip them off that their Jack may have just put his foot well and truly in it" Dent confirmed as he got up and went over to the side wall to retrieve his coat.

"Would it not be more prudent to contact Lieutenant Regent directly Sir" Pointer asked.

"Not with the CIA sniffing around" Dent replied "They will already know that Jack has done that search and will probably have a surveillance team on him within ten minutes."

"How will they know if we haven't told them yet?" Pointer looked confused.

"They tap into our system, we tap into theirs" Dent confirmed as he put his coat on "It's sort of an unspoken rule we have between the various national security agencies."

"There goes my faith in our secure communications systems" Pointer remarked.

"Walls have ears as they used to say" Dent responded "In the meantime, I want Jack Regent found and a tab put on him" he requested "but be careful, he's a canny young man and will spot you coming a mile off if you are not careful."

"And if we tread on our American cousins toes along the way?" Pointer asked.

"Make sure you ruin the polish on their very expensive designer shoes" Dent responded with a wry smirk "Keep it a small discrete team though and most importantly of all, keep it quiet" he then added as they both headed out of the office.

"Consider it done Sir" Pointer confirmed.

In Russell Square Gardens, Jack and Megan had just sat down with afternoon tea from the cafe there when Jack paused and looked in the reflection of the stainless-steel milk jug for a moment before pouring the milk into both their cups and then putting it back down.

"Megan" Jack casually asked as he proceeded to sip his tea carefully "Are those two guys still there?"

Megan discreetly looked past Jack's right shoulder towards the north side of the square where she managed to see among the passers-by, two men who she was certain she had also seen earlier when they had met up.

"Tall white guy with a goatee and long dark green overcoat and his little friend in the round steel rimmed glasses with the beige anorak?" Megan asked.

"That would be the chaps" Jack confirmed as he picked up the plate with the last jam scone on it and offered it to her which she politely declined and so he proceeded to eat it himself.

"They are making their cappuccinos last an awfully long time whilst they are standing there too" Megan remarked before looking over the other side of the Square "Do you think they are connected to the two dudes loitering over there" Megan discreetly nodded over to her right.

"Hmmm" Jack mused as he used the reflection of the screen of his smart phone to look discreetly over towards the area and looked as best as he could at the two other individuals.

"What's going on?" Megan asked, sensing something was very wrong.

"Unless I am very much mistaken, it looks like someone has sent their brain trust to keep an eye on us" Jack responded as he proceeded to make a phone call.

"Who are you calling?" Megan asked as she took the opportunity to top up her tea from the pot.

"The Management" Jack somewhat evasively responded as he waited for the call to be answered.

A couple of miles away across the City, The Commander was about to get into his official car in the basement level car park of New Scotland Yard prior to leaving for Holborn when Tracy appeared from the entrance with a telephone in her hand.

"Hello love" The Commander called "Anything exciting happening?"

"I've got Jack on the phone" Tracy confirmed "He wants a word with us urgently" she explained.

"Get in" The Commander urged whereupon they both got in the back before Terry Kinderley, The Commander's official driver duly proceeded to drive off up the access ramp towards the street outside.

"Put him on" The Commander prompted whereupon Tracy plugged her mobile phone into the docking station inside the car and then activated the speakerphone.

"Jack, what's up?" The Commander called.

"Have either you guys or one of our sister agencies put a surveillance team on me?" Jack asked "Only the good lady and I were enjoying a nice quiet afternoon tea in Russell Square Gardens when we noticed that we seemed to be sitting in the middle of a goon convention."

"They are definitely not our guys" The Commander responded "How many can you see?" he asked.

"At least two pairs of goons circulating around, and I suspect there may be a backup team floating around as well" Jack confirmed, looking casually around.

"Definitely not ours then" Tracy remarked "No way can we afford that level of manpower on our budget."

"MI5?" Jack ventured.

"Chris Dent would have come to us before putting a team on you I would have thought" The Commander responded "So would have Sir Richard for that matter and I can't envisage MI6 having any interest."

"Now I know I am new at this business" Jack continued "but these goons have a certain look about them that says to me they come from the other side of the Atlantic Ocean."

"Hold that thought" The Commander responded before looking across at Tracy who was already on another phone making a call.

"Afternoon" Tracy called with sincere authority as soon as she was connected "This is National Security & Police Service Divisional Chief Superintendent Caverner" she announced "Yes, that one" she then confirmed "I want to speak to your boss" she requested.

"Any luck yet?" Jack asked.

"Just rattling some cages now" The Commander confirmed.

"No, I want to speak to him now!" Tracy was then heard in the background to insist which both Jack and Megan heard over the phone.

"So we can hear" Jack responded with a wry smile.

"Ah, Barwell, there you are" Tracy called when she finally managed to get through to Adam Barwell, the Head of Operations at the London Office of the US Central Intelligence Agency "Have you got goons watching our Jack by any chance?"

"Bugger...." Barwell responded over his mobile phone from his seat in the front of the anonymous white surveillance van that was parked around the corner from Russell Square.

"That'll be a yes then" The Commander responded knowingly.

"I don't suppose Adam is sitting in the front of a white Mercedes Benz Sprinter van with what looks like a rather dodgy front left tyre that is likely to attract the attention of the Traffic Division by any chance?" Jack asked as he observed the van parked in the street nearby.

"Erm, yes" Barwell confirmed "This is all rather embarrassing" he then remarked.

"Jack" The Commander called over the phone "Get some fresh tea and cakes in, Tracy and I will be joining you shortly and Adam, call off your goons and join us."

"I'll be right there Commander" Barwell confirmed as he nodded to his associate sat alongside him in the back of the van to call off the surveillance teams.

"And bring your CIA company credit card" Jack added "You're paying."

"Bloody hell, what is this, a convention?" Dent asked himself as the taxi he was travelling in pulled up in Russell Square and he immediately recognised The Commander's official car parked immediately ahead.

As he paid the driver and got out of the taxi, Tracy and The Commander emerged from their car as well and their eyes met.

"Ah, Christopher" The Commander called "I am so glad you could join us."

"Afternoon Commander, Ms Caverner" Dent responded, still somewhat confused at what was unfolding.

"Will you join us for afternoon tea?" Tracy asked, indicating in towards the gardens "Our friend from the CIA is paying."

"Oh well, if the CIA is paying then I'll have the largest cream scone they have got" Dent enthusiastically responded as he proceeded to follow Tracy and The Commander.

"Over here!" Jack called over from their table to which Barwell was adding extra chairs in order to accommodate everyone.

"Well this is nice" The Commander remarked as he and the others sat down "Shall I be mother?" he then offered before proceeding to pour everyone tea.

"So" Tracy began "I am guessing here that we are all approaching the same problem from several different directions, so who wants to start?"

"We haven't been formally introduced" Megan remarked as she took a sip of tea.

"Oh, yes" The Commander responded "Those of you who don't know, this is Megan, Jack's lady friend. Megan, this is Adam Barwell, he is the local guy in charge of the Central Intelligence Agency..."

"Hi" Barwell called in his broad American accent.

"...and this is Christopher Dent, our man from MI5" The Commander continued.

"A pleasure Miss" Dent responded.

"Wow..." Megan remarked.

"Shall I begin?" Jack ventured.

"I am all ears" The Commander prompted as he began to eat a jam scone, piled high with clotted cream with much enthusiasm.

"All right, I'll make this simple and easy to follow" Jack confirmed "I have a dead body by the side of the main London to Brighton railway line."

"All sounds pretty simple so far" Tracy commented.

"This however is where it gets interesting" Jack then continued "someone basically bashed the poor guy's skull in then chucked him onto the railway in a pretty lame attempt to make it look like he committed suicide by jumping from a moving train."

"Ouch..." Barwell responded.

"Quite" Jack agreed before continuing "so when I went through his wallet found at the scene there were five different identities in there, all with photos of the same guy all be it taken at different times in his life" he then produced the documentation in its plastic evidence bag and passed it around for the others to see.

"Would I be right in thinking you ran a database search for the names when you got back to the office?" Tracy asked.

"Indeed" Jack confirmed.

"And that was when the alarm bells began to ring" Dent remarked.

"The list of names I gave you a few weeks ago?" Barwell ventured to which Dent nodded in confirmation.

"What list?" Jack asked.

"I got a file sent to me via diplomatic bag from Washington" Barwell explained "Someone high up in the CIA wanted me to keep an eye out for anything flagging up with any one of four names they sent me."

"Did they say why?" The Commander asked.

"No, they never do" Barwell admitted "If you ever do ask the response when you eventually get one is always 'don't ask' so I didn't."

"So, I guess the names Jack here searched for were on this list of yours?" Tracy asked.

"Indeed" Barwell confirmed.

"As soon as young Jack here started his database search, using your identification and password to access the main multi agency system I might add" Dent explained "that was when the alarms went off and I headed out to have a word."

"I presume at the same time my search flashed up on Chris' system, it also lit up your computer like a Christmas tree?" Jack asked Barwell.

"Indeed" Barwell confirmed "I quickly sought instructions and they ordered me to put a team on you straight away as apparently the names you searched for are on some file somewhere linked to some guy we have an interest in apparently."

"Can I see those?" The Commander asked as the evidence bag containing the identity documents had now reached him.

"Where is the body now?" Dent asked.

"It should be on its way to Redhill Morgue by now" Jack confirmed "I've got our top forensics pathologist Doctor Yardell on the job, he's doing the full autopsy tomorrow morning."

"I know this guy" The Commander remarked to which everyone around the table looked at him in response.

"Would you care to shed some light on him?" Jack asked.

"Leonard James Raffety" The Commander confirmed "that is as real a name as we have ever had for him" he explained "I know he had other identities which these documents seem to confirm."

"Assuming they are real and that they haven't been planted to throw us off the scent" Dent ventured.

"Or deliberately set off the alarms to bring us all together and sending us on a wild goose chase" Barwell added "That's been done before" he warned.

"Quite" Tracy agreed as she finished off her jam scone.

"What do you know about this guy Raffety?" Jack asked.

"Sir Richard Crowthorne is probably the best one to ask for the details" The Commander admitted "but I encountered him when I was a young boy in Lewisham" he explained "Raffety is - sorry - was one of the best cat burglars probably in recorded criminal history."

"So we should have a file on him?" Tracy ventured.

"Oh, we have lots of files on him" The Commander responded "There is just not much in them."

"I don't get it" Dent responded.

"Me neither" Barwell added.

"It was widely but unofficially recognised that Raffety was an exceptional cat burglar" The Commander went on to explain "In fact he was so good that in over forty years in the business he was never caught."

"That's pretty impressive" Megan remarked "and that is speaking as someone who is new to all this."

"He tended to target premises where the occupants were only part time residents" The Commander continued "where the owners only stayed in them week days whilst working in town, that sort of thing."

"Less chance of getting caught and more chance of high value items being available for the taking" Barwell commented "pretty smart."

"Sir Richard even hired him for a job once in the early 1980's to access the Westminster flat of a prominent member of the Government who they reckoned was passing secrets to the Russians and taking payments in illegal gold bullion" The Commander recalled "Got him too, banged to rights and sent down for ten years."

"Nearly brought down the Government with him if I recall" Tracy added.

"A few sweeteners to the press and some adjustments in the paperwork soon sorted that out" The Commander confirmed "Sir Richard always was rather good at that sort of thing."

"Was Rafferty still active in his chosen career path?" Jack asked.

"As far as I am aware, yes" The Commander replied "Of course being the exemplary professional, he never bothered us by getting caught and many of his victims often had valuables that they would rather not have come to the attention of the authorities for whatever reason so a lot of his work was never even reported."

"Why would my bosses in the US be interested in a London cat burglar?" Barwell asked.

"A dead London cat burglar at that" Dent added.

"Maybe he burgled the wrong place and upset someone?" Tracy ventured.

"It would explain his unpleasant and untimely demise" Jack remarked.

"Strange" The Commander commented "Two old school crooks dead on the deck in the same afternoon."

"Come again?" Jack asked.

"The late Mr Oldman?" Tracy remarked.

"You've lost me" Jack responded "More tea anyone?" he then asked proffering the pot around before topping up some of the cups in response to various nods.

"Someone shot dead a guy by the name of Frederick Oldman outside his local boozier in Hounslow earlier this afternoon" Tracy explained.

"Also known as Freddie 'Fast Fingers' Oldman" The Commander confirmed "on account of his nimble skill at cracking locks, safes and particularly deposit boxes. Same generation of old school criminal as Rafferty, probably even knew each other I would not be surprised."

"No way is that a coincidence" Dent responded "There has to be a link somewhere."

"So, where do I go from here?" Jack asked "I still have a very unhappy dead guy in the morgue and I need to find out who put him there and why."

"If I were a betting man I would venture he may have come unstuck as the result of the last job he attempted" The Commander suggested "Take a good look at where he has been in the two or three weeks leading up to his death, old school crooks like Raffety can take weeks, even months sometimes to carefully plan a job so the pointers will be there somewhere."

"Also take a good look at where he was dumped" Tracy prompted "If the other identities on him were planted to throw you off the scent then there may be other conveniently placed evidence just waiting to be found."

"I'll see if I can calm down my superiors" Barwell remarked "If along the way anything comes up that may be of use I will see it makes its way to you discreetly."

"Thanks, I would appreciate that" Jack responded.

"I'll see if we have anything on him back at the office" Dent confirmed "Maybe Sir Richard's old records will throw up something that may be of use."

"In the meantime, I think I had better change my system password" The Commander remarked.

"I had better help you with that love" Tracy responded "Last time you tried to do anything remotely technical with the computer you managed to crash the entire New Scotland Yard mainframe."

"It was a typo..." The Commander protested in faint defence.

"Yeah..." Tracy responded knowingly with a wry smirk "Keep telling yourself that love."

"What if I need to do another of my little cross agency searches?" Jack then asked.

"Just give me a call" Dent confirmed "I am sure something could be arranged that won't set off every alarm in the country."

"My Lord" Adam Reaper, Facilitator General for the Ixion Brotherhood organisation and the gunman from the Oldman shooting called with a respectful bow "To Life Immortal..."

"Ah, welcome back" Orbison called as he rose from his dark altar and turned around to greet his associate "So how did it go?"

"Like clockwork my Lord" Reaper confirmed "The target has been neutralised."

"What about his associate Mr Granger?" Orbison then asked with a tone of concern.

"I am afraid he got away my Lord" Reaper confirmed apologetically, bowing as he did so.

"That is most regrettable" Orbison remarked.

"My Lord" Reaper continued, his head still apologetically bowed "There was no time to locate and neutralise him as well as the authorities were quickly on the scene."

"Blessed be the peacemakers" Orbison sarcastically quoted "I require Granger taken out of circulation as quickly and as cleanly as possible" he ordered "He must not be allowed to betray the Brotherhood."

"I have just the man for the job, it shall be done my Lord" Reaper reverently confirmed.

"Bless you brother" Orbison called, giving Reaper an inverted genuflection "To Life Immortal..." he then declared whereupon Reaper respectfully left.

"Is there a problem Michael?" Jenna Lotte, Orbison's wife also known to his many online followers as Lady Chaos called as she came into the room.

"Just a little bookkeeping to take care of my dear" Orbison confirmed they met in front of the altar and embraced "There are still a few little details to purge from the universe before we can go ahead and build up our new world order."

"Oh I do love it when you talk like that" Lotte responded with a giggly smile, this and her body language showing that she was clearly under the influence of some sort of strong hallucinogenic substance.

"Mmmmm" Orbison mused as he looked into her eyes with a lustful gaze "If you are looking for a personal sermon from me then meet me in our chamber in five minutes" he instructed.

"I'll be there" Lotte confirmed before departing again with another giggle.

Orbison waited until he was alone once again before leaving the altar room and returning to his office. Sitting at his desk with its extensive computer equipment mounted all around, he reached inside a drawer and produced an old-style glass and metal syringe which was pre-loaded with some sort of green coloured liquid.

"By the power of the Ixion Brotherhood" Orbison began to chant "I call upon the dark lords to whom I am merely a dedicated humble servant to guide me and be with me" he announced at which point he proceeded to inject himself in his lower left arm with the syringe until the entire contents were inside his blood stream and he sat back, his eyes closed and taking in the sensations he was now experiencing from the narcotic substance he had just injected.

"Ixion rises!!!" Orbison then loudly declared before quickly getting up and leaving the room, a new sprightly spring in his step.

A cold dark November morning meant that despite it being eight o'clock in the morning, the sun had barely struggled to shine when Lieutenant Shelby parked the patrol car outside the entrance to the Mortuary Wing of Redhill General Hospital located a short distance to the south east of the town of the same name and with the London to Brighton main railway line passing its western boundary.

"Have you ever been to one of these before?" Shelby asked as he and Jack got out of the car.

"No" Jack admitted as they proceeded towards the main entrance to the Mortuary Wing a short distance ahead "but then again a dead body is a dead body, isn't it?"

"Not always" Shelby warned as they passed through the automatic sliding doors and entered the building.

"Oh..." Jack responded.

"Let's just say that large greasy breakfast you had on the way down this morning might just make its way back up again" Shelby explained.

"Ewww..." Jack remarked "Thanks for that colourful image Connor, you are a real pal."

"Just trying to prepare the new guy for the worst" Shelby responded.

"Ah, there is the good Doctor Yardell" Jack indicated ahead.

"Morning Lieutenants" Doctor Yardell called as they met in the Reception Area "We made an early start so I am afraid you have missed the good bit" he explained as he escorted the two officers down the clinically clean hospital corridor.

"Would that be the revisiting breakfast stage by any chance?" Jack asked to which Doctor Yardell laughed.

"What can I say" Doctor Yardell responded "Welcome to the Security Service!!"

"Thanks..." Jack replied, not looking at all reassured.

"Here we are gentlemen" Doctor Yardell announced as they reached a door marked 'Autopsy Room 2' and led them inside.

"Oh dear..." Jack responded, holding his hand to his face in response to the smell in the room that assaulted his senses the moment he walked through the door "I take it that is our guy?" he then indicated ahead to where the naked body of a male, just a thin white sheet providing a little modesty was lying on the marble slab table, a variety of instruments and containers surrounding it on shiny stainless steel trolleys.

"Give me the edited highlights if you would please Doctor" Jack then requested, trying not to look too closely at the body.

"What you have here is an early sixties IC1 male in good general health..." Doctor Yardell began.

"...apart from the fact he is dead of course" Jack cut in.

"Yeah, apart from that minor technicality" Doctor Yardell conceded "Two gold teeth which made identification a lot easier and a pacemaker which judging by the manufacturers code on it was installed about seven years ago."

"The big question Doctor" Jack then asked "How did he die?"

"He was murdered" Doctor Yardell confirmed "although it wasn't the battering to the head that killed him, that was to hide the bullet wound in the back of the skull out of which we dug this little chap" he then produced a small clear evidence bag containing a blood-stained bullet.

"Whoa..." Shelby exclaimed.

"I need to do a few more tests and get the ballistics guys to look at the bullet here but I would say he was executed almost ceremoniously" Doctor Yardell then proceeded to lift up one of the corpse's arms and showed it to them "Look at the faint marks where he was bound by the wrists and ankles which occurred at the time of death."

"Curiouser and curiouser" Jack remarked "So at some point he was captured by someone..."

"Or a group of someone's, he was a pretty muscular guy even for a man half his age" Doctor Yardell commented "He would have put up quite a fight I would wager."

"They then bound him" Jack continued his summary "Shot him once in the back of the head, bludgeoned him soundly and then dumped him on the railway line to make us think he committed suicide by jumping out of a train."

"The odd thing is" Doctor Yardell continued "The execution was professional, clean, precise yet the subsequent work on him trying to disguise the killing was quite frankly so ineptly amateurish as to be almost embarrassing."

"Anything else on him?" Jack then asked.

"He's got a couple of tattoo's" Doctor Yardell confirmed "mostly of the sort you get in the Forces I would wager although one small one on his back looks a lot more recent" he then proceeded to hold the body and roll it towards him to expose the area around the right shoulder blade where there was a small tattoo approximately two inches across.

"What the hell is that?" Jack asked as he took out his smart phone and proceeded to take a couple of pictures of it before Doctor Yardell replaced the body back down again.

"Looks like some sort of burning circle with wings" Shelby remarked as they all looked at the image on Jack's smart phone "Very odd"

"It's probably nothing" Jack admitted "but they do say God is in the details."

"You are a philosophical one, aren't you?" Shelby remarked with a smirk.

"Believe me, with my upbringing it sort of becomes second nature" Jack confirmed "Along with a strongly enforced streak of cynicism, self-doubt and suspicion, I find I live longer that way."

"No prizes for guessing who your parents are" Doctor Yardell remarked sarcastically.

"Anything else Doctor?" Jack then asked.

"He had about three or four months left to live when he died" Doctor Yardell then confirmed "Advanced liver cancer, gone beyond possible treatment."

"It would be interesting to find his registered G.P. and see if anything comes up in his medical history" Shelby suggested "It might give you a few more leads."

"Do you want to cover that angle?" Jack asked.

"Sure" Shelby agreed "I'll start making some phone calls when I get back to the office."

"Thanks" Jack responded "In the meantime I am going to take another look at where he was found, see if I missed anything."

"If anything else turns up I'll call you" Doctor Yardell then confirmed as he drew the sheet over the body "Toxicology will be tomorrow I would have thought."

"Thanks Doctor" Jack confirmed before he and Shelby turned to leave.

"What about this guy's home address?" Shelby asked as they exited the hospital building and returned to the car.

"All of the addresses in his wallet were fake" Jack responded as they got in the car "Until I have a firm actual address for this guy I can't do anything on that front."

"Maybe the search for his Doctor might turn up something?" Shelby suggested as he started the car.

"I hope so" Jack agreed "as for the moment all I have is a corpse with a number of different names and a weird tattoo, not much to go on."

"So, what's the plan?" Shelby asked as they drove off towards the exit out onto the main road.

"Drop me off at Redhill Railway Station" Jack instructed "then you head back to the office."

"You got it" Shelby confirmed as they headed back towards the town centre.

Over the years Janice the Receptionist has seen so many things happen and so many different people pass her desk in the foyer of New Scotland Yard that she had almost become immune to many of the more bizarre and peculiar individuals she had encountered during her time there.

That morning was like most others, the usual mix of officers, visitors and dignitaries coming and going, indeed it was becoming so hum drum that she was relieved when Commander Cassini, the Head of Covert Surveillance appeared through the glass sliding doors, saw her standing behind her desk and smiled as he came over to her.

"Good morning gorgeous" Cassini called as he approached before taking her left hand, lifting it up and kissing it.

Since a seemingly innocuous meeting over a coffee during the middle of the Pyramid Crisis over six months earlier, the two were now officially a couple, something that had attracted a lot of favourable attention and comment from their colleagues, friends and relations in that time.

"Good morning Garibaldi" Janice responded, teasing Cassini about his first name, something about himself he was always a bit embarrassed "What brings you into my little kingdom?" she gestured around her desk and the reception area immediately around it.

"Briefing in an hour" Cassini confirmed "Hopefully it should be over in time for lunch if you are interested?" he then suggested.

"You're on" Janice confirmed with a big smile but then her attention was called away to something happening outside the large glass sliding doors to which Cassini also turned to look at the same time.

"What the...?" Cassini exclaimed as a man came rushing in, seemingly panicked and desperate as he attempted to evade the two patrol officers who were trying to stop him.

"Hold it right there pal!" Cassini called as he drew his weapon and aimed at the man who responded by collapsing to his knees on the floor.

"I'll summon the cavalry" Janice called as she went for the telephone on her desk.

"I want sanctuary!" the man called out.

"You want a bath!" one of the officers who had now managed to hold him remarked scornfully.

"My name is Trevor Granger" the man then called out loudly, the desperation still clear in his voice as the two restraining officers managed to get his hands behind his back and apply handcuffs which allowed Cassini to stand down and put his weapon away "I demand sanctuary" he then continued "I need to see a senior officer immediately."

"Anyone upstairs at the moment?" Cassini asked.

"The Commander is giving evidence at the Pyramid Inquiry Hearing but Divisional Commander Caverner should be in" Janice confirmed as she returned to the telephone and was about to press the large red button on her display that would have connected her with the top floor when Tracy emerged from the lifts nearby.

"What's all the excitement?" Tracy asked as she arrived on the scene.

"Seems we have an uninvited guest" Cassini remarked as the two restraining officers dragged Granger to his feet.

"My name is Trevor Granger" the man then repeated "I demand sanctuary and I need to talk to you right away."

"Colleague of Frederick Oldman, the guy who was gunned down in Hounslow yesterday?" Tracy asked with obvious concern.

"Yes" Granger confirmed "I must talk to you urgently" he then reiterated "Nowhere is safe, they will be coming for me, I know too much."

"Let him go" Tracy then ordered whereupon the two restraining officers released the handcuffs and stood back whereupon Granger collapsed to the floor, clearly exhausted and hungry.

"Commander Cassini" Tracy then called "Escort our friend here to a secure office on the third floor and make sure he gets some food and drink."

"You got it Ma'am" Cassini confirmed.

"As soon as you have had something to eat and drink we will talk" Tracy reassured Granger, resting her hand on his shoulder.

"Yes, thank you" Granger responded, now a little calmer and more reassured.

"Come on mate" Cassini called as he helped Granger to his feet "Let's see if the canteen has anything decent left" he remarked as he escorted him away.

"Well that's a turn up for the books" Tracy remarked to Janice "A guy goes missing at the scene of a shooting, I am looking at a full scale, not to mention expensive manhunt and then he just walks in the front door, literally."

"I've been behind this desk since I left school with a few meagre GCSE qualifications ten years ago" Janice remarked "There isn't much I haven't seen come through here believe me."

The driver of the 10:30 Southern service from Horsham to London Bridge looked quite surprised as he brought his eight coach long train of green and white painted Class 377 rolling stock to a stop at Redhill Station platform 2 to find a young uniformed Transport Division Security Service officer standing there by the eight car stop mark sign, high visibility orange vest in hand.

"Morning officer" the driver cheerily called as he opened the cab door "What can I do for you?"

"I need a lift" Jack responded, producing his Security Service warrant card and badge plus his National Rail cab pass which permitted him to travel in the leading cab of any train in the country whilst on duty.

"Sure" the driver confirmed "Come in" he called as he got up to allow Jack to squeeze past the driver's seat and sit on the other side of the cab.

"Thanks" Jack responded as he got himself comfortable.

"So, where to young man?" the Driver asked as the station platform staff gave him the tip to close the doors and then depart.

"Signal number Tango Four Six Seven by Star Lane Bridge" Jack confirmed from his notes "It's all been squared away with the Signaller at Three Bridges" he confirmed.

"No problem" the Driver confirmed as he released the brakes and took power which saw the train begin to move off, snaking through the point work at the north end of Redhill Station before accelerating away on the Up Redhill main line towards the next station at Merstham.

"So, what are you looking for?" the Driver asked a couple of minutes later as he slowed to a stop at the next scheduled station, Merstham where he released the doors and observed in his screens his passengers boarding and alighting.

"I am investigating that body that was found yesterday morning at Star Lane" Jack confirmed as the Driver, seeing that all were clear and it was time, proceeded to close the doors and then drove on.

"I heard about that" the Driver confirmed "Sounded nasty" he remarked as they crossed the busy M25 orbital motorway before plunging into the darkness of Merstham Tunnel.

"My first case as well" Jack confirmed.

"I heard he wasn't hit by a train though" the Driver remarked.

"Indeed he wasn't" Jack responded "Which begs the question of how did he get there."

"The only way to access the line side is one of three ways" the Driver explained "One, via a public access point such as a station or level crossing but those are covered by CCTV, the second is from a train, the third is through a Network Rail Access Point but all those are secured with specialist locks."

"Abloy keys?" Jack asked as the train emerged from the tunnel into the sunshine once more and the driver began to apply the brakes and slow down on approach to the signal visible ahead just before the bridge which took the fast lines overhead at an angle.

"Indeed" the Driver confirmed as the train slowed to a stop "and those are only issued to authorised railway staff, you can't just walk into a hardware shop off the street and buy one."

At that point the driver brought the train to a halt with the signal just ahead of the cab front before reaching for the radio handset whilst Jack stood up and put his high visibility orange vest on in readiness to go track side.

"Driver of Two Charlie Six Eight at a stand on the Up Redhill line at signal Tango Four Six Seven calling Three Bridges Signalling Centre, over" the Driver called over the radio.

"Three Bridges Signaller receiving, pass your message, over" came the response.

"I am just about to drop off that Security Service officer from the Transport Division, over" the Driver confirmed.

"Understood" the response came "Will advise traffic in the area, out."

"Better wait a moment" the Driver advised as Jack prepared to get out at which point a general broadcast to all trains in the area began to come over the radio.

"All traffic in the vicinity of the Brighton Main Line between Earlswood and Purley" the Signaller was heard to call "Be advised that there is a Transport Division Security Service officer line side in the Star Lane area with full PPE and authorisation."

"I guess that is my cue" Jack remarked as he pulled the lever to open the cab door.

"Good luck mate" the Driver called as he watched Jack climb carefully down the steps before stepping onto the ballast and then moving back away from the train whereupon the driver closed the door and with a friendly toot on the horn, pulled away.

Jack watched as the train pulled away and remained still until the last coach had passed him and disappeared off into the distance before looking around the cutting in which the two lines were set towards the bridge where the fast lines crossed overhead.

"Here goes" he remarked to himself before setting off towards the bridge, waiting until he had a clear view in both directions before crossing the line carefully to reach the other side where there was a set of steps that took him up to the fast lines above.

It was with a little concern that Jack ascended the old looking wooden steps that creaked as he walked up them before stepping over the concrete cable troughing onto the weed strewn ballast that marked the area near the up fast running line.

At that point a Gatwick Express approached from the London direction, sounding its horn as the driver saw Jack in his high visibility orange vest standing by the line whereupon he raised his hand in acknowledgement before the train sped past at almost ninety miles an hour in a red blur.

Where Jack wanted to go was on the other side of the line and he could hear the rails nearest to him hissing as another train was approaching so he waited, acknowledging the horn and then watched as a northbound Thameslink train of sleek new white painted Class 700 stock sped past as well.

Once it was clear Jack checked once more before crossing the up and down fast lines to reach the safety of the other side where there was still some blue and white tape fluttering in the breeze from where it had been left by the Scenes of Crime team the previous day in amongst the line side debris of old rails, abandoned sleepers and other assorted waste materials.

Jack looked around carefully among the scattered rubbish and debris in case there was anything on the ground that had been missed but after several minutes of searching in between acknowledging passing trains, he found nothing other than a rusty old fizzy drink can that judging by the state of it had been there for many years.

Moving on, Jack proceeded to the old concrete line side hut, a small structure approximately twelve feet by six feet which would at one time have provided shelter for track engineers but had fallen into disuse many decades earlier.

The old wooden door set into one end had long since collapsed into a pile of rotten remains on the ground with just the hinges remaining attached to the remnants of the doorframe. Jack stepped carefully inside where years of weather and neglect had left its mark with accumulated mud and leaves whilst the old fireplace in the centre of the far wall had collapsed and the tool rack on the wall had long since rusted and fallen off.

"Lovely little fixer upper opportunity handy for public transport" Jack sarcastically remarked as he took a small torch from his utility belt, switched it on and shone its bright light around the dingy interior "some estate agent in central London would try and charge a hundred grand for something like this."

He took a few moments to look around the interior, scuffing his boot through the dirt on the floor but again found nothing of interest.

Stepping back out into the daylight, Jack acknowledged another passing train before looking down the line where the red tail lights of the train were now disappearing into the distance towards the old derelict signal box that he had noticed the day before.

It was old, dilapidated and neglected but still largely intact, nestled in among the shrubbery and weeds that dominated the strip of ground between the running lines and the sheer vertical vegetation covered wall of the cutting side high above.

With a bit of trepidation Jack approached the structure, holding back protruding branches in order to reach the rickety old steps that led up to the door but noticed straight away that instead of being abandoned and unused, it in fact looked like someone had been there very recently with signs of disturbance from where someone had gone up or down the steps.

Jack carefully climbed the steps and reached the top where the door into the signal box was still in place, all be it devoid of its glass and with only a few flakes of its original paint left on its otherwise weathered bare wood surface.

The door creaked ominously as he opened it and stepped inside, producing his torch once again for additional illumination as what light did enter the interior was muted considerably by years of accumulated dust, cobwebs and infiltrating foliage that blocked the main windows despite many of the glass panes being damaged or missing altogether.

There was little by way of fixtures or fittings left inside, a smashed lamp shade whose bulb was long since gone hung from the ceiling, a broken chair was lying on its side in the corner and the remains of the signal lever frame dominated the front below the main windows.

Jack walked carefully around the interior, being careful as the wooden floor felt a little unstable in places through years of neglect but nothing untoward came to his eye until he gave up and turned to leave.

As he turned his torch around, the light of it momentarily caught something below him, glinting off something shiny that was just visible through a gap in the floorboards. In response Jack knelt down and looked closer, shining the beam of the torch through the gap in an attempt to get a better look at what it was without success.

"Nuts..." Jack remarked as he got back up, grabbing one of the old signal levers to support himself only for it to suddenly fail under his weight pressing on it and collapse through the floor into the old equipment room below.

"Whoops..." Jack responded as he coughed through the cloud of dust that was thrown up. The collapse did however reveal a large hole down into the lower level which meant that he could now see what was down there.

"Well I'll be...." he remarked before carefully climbing down into the hole and then going over to the object that had caught his attention, a green holdall type bag of quite elderly design but something that had not been there long as it did not have any accumulations of dust and dirt on it.

Protruding from an opening in the bag was part of a gold chain of the kind you would wear on a wrist or as a necklace and it was this that Jack carefully took out of the bag using a handkerchief so as not to contaminate any potential fingerprint evidence that may have been present.

"Hello there" Jack then commented as he could see that the gold chain necklace was not the only item in the bag, there also appeared to be numerous other valuable items of jewellery inside.

Thinking quickly and sensibly, Jack took out his mobile phone and proceeded to photograph the bag and its visible contents in situ before carefully gathering it up, replacing the gold chain necklace inside and closing the bag.

He took a moment to scan his torch around once more in case there was anything he may have missed before carefully throwing the bag up onto the floor above and then clambering back up.

Stepping out into the daylight with the bag strap over his shoulder revealed that his uniform had taken a bit of a battering.

"Oh great..." Jack remarked to himself with a resigned sigh as he looked down at the dust, cobwebs and debris that was now pretty much all over him before carefully walking down the steps and then dusting himself down as best as he could to try and make himself look reasonably decent once again.

He acknowledged another northbound train as it sped past sounding its horn before walking down the line side cutting away from the bridge towards the steps that led up the side of the embankment and the pathway to the access gate.

Jack was about to lift his foot up onto the first step when his eye caught something nestled in among the ballast which at first glance as it's shiny finish caught a glint of sunlight appeared to be a beer bottle top but it was only on a closer look as he stooped down that the object in fact revealed it to be a brass button with some sort of moulded symbol upon it, almost heraldic in design.

"Would you look at that" Jack remarked to himself as he bent down with a tissue to pick up the button before placing it inside a small clear plastic bag and sealing it whereupon he took a closer look at the contents.

The button's symbol was not overly clear due to a deposit of mud and some minor battering, probably from when it was dropped, the small bit of thread on the reverse indicating it may have become detached from its original garment with some force.

"Now, where is the outfit you belong to my little friend?" Jack asked before carefully placing the button in his tunic pocket, picking up the bag of recovered jewellery and then heading back up the wooden access steps.

"Hello Love" The Commander called as he joined Tracy in the corridor from the lift.

"Oh, you are back early darling" Tracy remarked as they briefly paused to kiss before continuing to walk on alongside each other.

"Sir Richard decided to adjourn for lunch" The Commander explained "The Home Secretary is on the stand next and I think he muttered something about needing a stiff drink as that was what was going to be required to make it through the afternoon session."

"Fair enough" Tracy responded.

"I heard there was some excitement here earlier" The Commander then remarked.

"Janice tell you?" Tracy asked.

"Font of all knowledge that lass" The Commander confirmed.

"You remember that hit and run shooting in Hounslow I attended yesterday?" Tracy asked.

"The Oldman shooting?" The Commander asked as they reached the end of the corridor and after allowing a couple of officers going the other way to pass them, carried on.

"Yes" Tracy confirmed "Well Granger, Oldman's buddy, the one who did a runner from the scene, walked in our front door, literally, about an hour ago screaming like a man possessed and demanding sanctuary."

"I take it we have him on the premises then?" The Commander asked.

"Got Commander Cassini to escort him to the secure section, give him some coffee and a decent meal and I am on my way to see him now" Tracy explained.

"Mind if I tag along love?" The Commander asked.

"The more the merrier" Tracy agreed as they reached a door which was guarded by two armed Security Service officers who acknowledged them before with a loud buzzing sound they released the heavy lock and allowed them entry.

Inside the secure area corridor, Cassini was waiting for their arrival.

"Our boy safe and sound?" Tracy asked as they approached.

"Still a bit nervous but he seems to have calmed down a bit since we got some coffee and food into him" Cassini confirmed as he then showed them into an interview room where Granger was sat on a sofa, a polystyrene cup of coffee in his hand and still visibly nervous.

"Okay" Tracy began as Cassini left the room "What shall we talk about?"

"I seek sanctuary" Granger responded "If I go back out on the streets I will be dead within the hour" he ominously warned.

"Would this have anything to do with the shooting of your friend Frederick Oldman yesterday by any chance?" Tracy asked. "Witnesses put you with the victim immediately before he was killed whereupon you, quite understandably scarpered."

"He never saw it coming" Granger remarked "We were supposed to be meeting this guy in the pub about a deal."

"Drugs?" The Commander asked.

"Jewellery" Granger confirmed before continuing "A contact of ours had come into possession..."

"...stolen..." Tracy cut in.

"Err, yes, a significant quantity of high-quality jewellery" Granger continued "and we were going to see about its err resale shall we say?"

"In other words, you were about to get involved in fencing stolen goods" The Commander concluded "but I thought old Fast Fingers Freddy had retired from the game?"

"He was just there to value the gear" Granger explained "I was then going to negotiate the price and courier it to a safe location for onward disposal."

"Very naughty" Tracy commented.

"Only our contact never turned up" Granger continued "and as he got later and later for some reason Freddy got all nervous and then walked out which was when they got him and they will get me too."

"Who was the contact that you were supposed to be meeting?" Tracy asked.

"I don't know any name, sorry" Granger confirmed "Only Freddy knew who he was."

"Who was the shooter?" The Commander then asked.

"I have been racking my brain for the last twenty four hours trying to think of anyone who I and Freddy may have pissed off over the years and only one possibility comes to mind" Granger explained "I think it may have been a group that we had a few dealings with a couple of years ago, the jewellery may have been stolen from them so I guess they are pretty pissed off about it going walkies."

"This jewellery, who has it?" Tracy asked "assuming that is it even actually exists of course" she added sceptically.

"Our contact must have it I guess" Granger confirmed "assuming that he hasn't met his maker as well that is."

"This group you mentioned" The Commander then asked, "do they have a name?"

"I am not sure" Granger responded "All I know is that it seems to be some sort of religious organisation with some pretty heavy connections that they are not afraid to use."

"Okay" Tracy concluded "I am going to authorise you to be taken into protective custody until we can clear this up if you are agreeable" she asked.

"Oh yes, I don't want to go anywhere until I know it's safe" Granger confirmed.

"All right" Tracy responded as she and The Commander stood up "In which case I will make arrangements to get you to a safe house as soon as possible" she confirmed before they both turned to leave.

Commander Cassini was still waiting outside when they emerged, closing the door behind them.

"So, what do you think?" Tracy asked.

"Seems legit" The Commander remarked "He's still not telling us everything though which given the circumstances is not entirely unsurprising, but he is certainly giving us enough convincing information to make sure we keep him here."

"He's scared, that much is for certain" Cassini commented "You can see it in his eyes."

"And his body language" Tracy added.

"So, what is the plan?" The Commander then asked.

"I'm going to give Christopher Dent a call" Tracy responded "See if I can persuade him to lend us the keys to one of his safe houses somewhere. I am sure we must have a few favours in hand to cash in."

"I had better head back to the Inquiry Hearing" The Commander reluctantly confirmed as he looked at his old pocket watch with a bit of a resigned sigh "I expect I will have nodded off within the hour."

Tracy smirked knowingly.

"I mean I know the Home Secretary is a nice guy and is unlikely, unlike many of his predecessors to wind up with his head mounted on my office wall but dear God he doesn't half know how to waffle on" The Commander then remarked.

"Enjoy" Tracy called "Love you, see you later" she then said as they embraced and kissed before The Commander departed once more.

The Commander proceeded by way of the lifts down to the basement car park where his official driver Lieutenant Commander Terry Kinderley was waiting with his official car to drive him back to the Pyramid Inquiry Hearing.

"Okay Terry" The Commander called as he got in the front passenger seat "Let's get this tedium over with for another day."

As The Commander left in his official car, heading up the ramp to street level, another car arrived, a black Mercedes Benz saloon with darkened windows which parked neatly into the space that had just been vacated.

From the driver's seat emerged a tall man in an expensive looking dark grey suit and tie who closed the door of the car and went straight over to the lift nearby.

From his pocket the man extracted a Security Service Identification Card that once swiped over the sensor, opened the lift doors allowing him to step inside and activate the lift where he immediately proceeded to the third floor.

Despite having never set foot inside New Scotland Yard before, the man was well informed and knew exactly where to go, following the corridor from the lift on the third floor landing to the Secure Area where the two officers were still on guard outside the door.

"Afternoon Sir" one of the officers called as the man approached smiling "Your identification please" he then asked.

"Oh yes, of course" the man agreed as he began to search inside his pockets before finding what he was looking for "Here it is officer" he then called whereupon before the two men knew what was happening he drew a Tazer and fired it at one officer whilst delivering a swift smash of his elbow around the back of the head of the other officer, rendering both of them disabled and unconscious on the floor almost instantly.

"Hmmm..." the man remarked to himself as he calmly proceeded to then drag the unconscious officers, one at a time through the secure door and into the corridor beyond where he then locked them in a cleaners cupboard out of sight.

It was clear his information was comprehensive and accurate as without any question or hesitation he proceeded straight to the right door and opened it to find Granger sat alone with his thoughts.

"Are you here to take me to a safe house?" Granger asked, unaware of the danger he was now in, after all he was, at least he thought he was in one of the safest and most secure buildings in London.

"Not exactly" the man confirmed "I come with the compliments of the Brotherhood" he then announced, producing a gun "To Life Immortal..." he quickly and skilfully aimed before firing three times, once to Granger's head and twice to the chest killing him instantly.

"Have a nice day" the man then sarcastically called before calmly leaving the room.

"Hello Janice" Jack called as he came into the Reception Area on the ground floor.

"Hello stranger" Janice responded "Haven't seen you here in a while" she remarked "Congratulations on your passing out by the way."

"Thanks" Jack responded "I don't suppose that box of tricks behind your desk could tell me if Commander Henderson of the Antiquities Squad is in by any chance?" he then asked.

"He is" Janice confirmed "Sixth floor."

"Thanks" Jack responded "See you later" he then called before heading for the lifts.

On the third floor Cassini was heading back towards the Secure Area with two fresh coffees when he came around the corner and stopped in his tracks when he realised that the two officers who should have been on guard were not there.

"Hello?" Cassini called but there was no response, the only sounds being the hum of the lights and the distant background noise of London traffic outside.

Cautiously he put the coffees down and then proceeded to the door where he noticed that it was no longer secured and with understandable caution he then went through and straight on to Granger's room.

"Granger, are you okay?" Cassini called as he reached the door, knocked on it but when he received no answer he proceeded inside.

"Oh shit...." Cassini responded as soon as he saw Granger's bloodied corpse sprawled across the sofa where he had dropped down dead moments earlier.

It was then that Cassini heard a noise out in the corridor and went back out to see the assassin appear from a side door and proceed with a calm but brisk walk towards the exit.

"Hey!" Cassini called, drawing his gun "Hold it there chap!"

The man responded by merely turning smartly on his heels and firing his gun down the corridor towards Cassini forcing him to duck for cover.

At the same time up on the top floor, Tracy had returned to her office and was on the telephone to Christopher Dent over at MI5.

"So we can borrow some nice cosy pad for a couple of days" Tracy confirmed "That's great, thanks."

It was then that Tracy became aware of some commotion on the radio that was on her desk.

"Code One Hundred, immediate lock down!" Cassini's voice came over the radio loud and clear "Armed intruder on the third floor, one civilian down, shots fired."

"Oh hell!" Tracy exclaimed as she quickly realised the significance of what she was hearing "Sorry Chris, got to go" she then called down the phone before abruptly hanging up and heading out of the office, gun drawn.

Tracy clattered down the stairs as fast as her legs could carry her where, along the way she was joined by a significant number of other officers also responding to the same call.

On the third floor the assassin had become trapped between the lift landing and the Secure Area with Cassini and a number of armed officers preventing him from doubling back the way he had just come whilst ahead he was now faced with an impenetrable wall of officers, all with guns drawn and aimed ahead down the corridor.

"What's the S.P.?" Tracy asked as she arrived on the scene where she found Bob and some of his Specialist Firearms Unit team on site.

"One individual in the area between us and the Secure Area where Cassini and a couple more of my guys are covering the rear" Bob confirmed "He seems to be armed with a single semi-automatic hand gun and according to Cassini that guy who walked in the front door earlier is now brown bread."

"Damm!" Tracy exclaimed "All right, is there any way out of here other than through us?" she then asked.

"If he can break through then it's possible he could reach the Victoria Street side fire escape stairs" one of Bob's officers commented.

"Barry, Zoe" Bob called into his radio to two other members of his team "Victoria Street staircase, get it sealed and covered now" he ordered.

"Anything I can do to help?" Jack asked as he emerged from the lifts and joined the others on the landing.

"Jack, what the hell are you doing here?" Tracy asked.

"I was in the neighbourhood" Jack responded.

"Well stay here" Tracy then ordered "I'll take care of this" she confirmed before checking her weapon and then proceeding down the corridor, her gun pointed directly ahead.

"Give it up pal!" Tracy then called out as she cautiously scanned around the corridor, checking doorways off to each side as she went with Bob and his officers following in close formation.

"There is nowhere you can run to" Tracy then called out "the whole building is in lock down."

There was no response which only served to rack up the tension another notch or two.

"Come on, give it up" Tracy called down the corridor, "There is nowhere left to run, no exit."

"Oh but there is always another exit" the man calmly announced as he appeared in the corridor ahead "You just have to have the belief in yourself to find it."

"Great, a nutter..." Bob remarked to himself.

The man looked around him and quickly concluded that he really was all but out of options other than surrender but he was not going to give up that easily.

Before either Tracy or any of the officers could react, the man suddenly drew his gun and opened fire on a locked door nearby and then forced his way inside.

"Delta Team" Bob quickly called over the radio to his officers stationed in the Victoria Street side stair well "He's heading your way" he warned.

Tracy, Bob and the others headed off in pursuit but by the time they had gone through the door the man had already fled and was about to enter the stair well.

"Armed Security Service Officers!" came the shout as soon as the man burst through the fire exit door into the stair well "Don't move!"

The man was unfazed by this and the Specialist Firearms Officers had no clear shot because of the twisty nature of the stairs which he knew.

Instead he calmly produced a small object from his pocket which he casually tossed down towards the officers below and then carried on upwards.

"What's that?" one of the officers in pursuit asked as the object came clattering down towards them.

"Grenade!" the other officer called as soon as she realised what it was and they quickly scrambled away.

Moments later the device detonated, sending a flash and a cloud of smoky gas throughout the lower part of the stairs just as Tracy and the others emerged through the fire exit door above.

"This guy is serious" Bob commented as they headed upwards, continuing in pursuit.

"He sure as hell isn't coming quietly that is for sure" Tracy agreed as they rushed up the stairs, only just keeping ahead of the noxious gas cloud that was filtering up behind them.

It was only a matter of moments later that the man emerged into daylight on the roof of the building and looked around as he assessed his options.

"Hold it right there!" Tracy called as she quickly followed onto the roof herself backed up by Bob and his team whilst more armed officers including Jack and others appeared from the other roof access points, cutting off all possible route of escape.

"Like I said" Tracy then gestured around her "Nowhere left to go."

"In the name of the Brotherhood I declare this to be my ultimate sacrifice" the man then began to announce, looking up and holding his hands up to the sky.

"Uh oh..." Jack remarked as he said what everyone else was starting to think, a concern that duly seemed well founded when the man proceeded to put his gun to his head.

"TO LIFE IMMORTAL!" he then triumphantly called before turning and running for the edge of the roof.

Before anyone could reach him and stop him however, he had leapt from the roof and dived to the street below where he landed with a loud crash heard amid a cacophony of screams and screeching brakes.

Bob, Jack and Tracy all went over to the edge of the roof and peered over at the scene far below in Victoria Street.

"Well that was odd..." Jack remarked.

"What the hell is going on around here?" Tracy generally asked in a sense of bewilderment.

"You tell me" Bob casually responded as he holstered his weapon "I just work here."

Just over half a mile away in the former Horticultural Halls in Vincent Square, the Pyramid Incident Official Public Enquiry was now into its third month of testimony under the watchful eye of its Enquiry Chairman Sir Richard Crowthorne.

Having resumed after a lunch break, it was currently the Home Secretary, Nigel Davis QC presenting his evidence as various dignitaries, officials and members of the press watched.

The Commander was sat just off to the right of Sir Richard and had now resorted to discretely doodling on a piece of paper such was his general disinterest in the ongoing proceedings whilst waiting for his turn in the witness seat for he was scheduled to be next once the Home Secretary had finally finished.

There was a knock on the door to which Sir Richard looked up and motioned the Messenger who had entered to come forward as the proceedings continued uninterrupted.

The Messenger indicated The Commander and Sir Richard duly nodded.

"Sir" the Messenger whispered to The Commander "There has been an incident at New Scotland Yard" he explained "Your presence has been requested at once."

"Tell her I will be there right away, thank you" The Commander confirmed before turning to Sir Richard who, aware something was happening, had paused the Home Secretary's testimony.

"Not leaving us are you Commander?" Sir Richard asked.

"Sorry, something has happened that requires my immediate attendance" The Commander apologised as convincingly as he could but everyone in the room could clearly tell that in actual fact he was relieved to have a legitimate excuse to leave.

"All right" Sir Richard agreed, not that he really had much choice in the matter "You are excused."

"Thank you" The Commander responded as he got up and slipped quietly out of the room.

A couple of minutes later he was walking into Victoria Street, a short distance up the road from New Scotland Yard where he found a scene of chaos and confusion in progress.

"Looks like something came up" The Commander remarked to the officer who lifted the cordon tape to allow him through.

"More down than up I think Sir" the officer responded.

"I want a name on this comedian within the hour please" a familiar voice was then heard to call "and get the God dam press out of here whilst you are about it!"

"Ah, the wife" The Commander remarked with a wry smile as he headed over to the centre of the scene where a single deck red London bus was parked at a skewed angle with various people gathered around the front of it.

"Hello love" The Commander called as he joined his wife "What did I miss?"

"Granger is dead" Tracy confirmed "Courtesy of this guy who when we got him cornered jumped off the roof and landed in the street where, as if his day wasn't bad enough, he promptly got run over by a bus."

"Ouch..." The Commander commented, trying not to look too closely at the mangled body just visible protruding from beneath the front of the bus.

"So who was this Granger guy then?" Jack asked as he took a closer look.

"You remember that shooting in Hounslow yesterday?" Tracy asked.

"The old-time lag who bought it in a hit and run shooting?" Jack asked.

"The same" Tracy confirmed "Granger was there with Oldman when it happened, did a runner and turned up this morning at our front door begging for sanctuary as he reckoned they might finish the job."

"I think it is pretty safe to say he was right about that" The Commander remarked.

"How did this guy get into The Yard?" Jack asked.

"Through the basement car park I think" Tracy replied "but that still doesn't answer the question of how he got past the security entry system. I've got Simon checking the logs and CCTV now."

"Is it me or have we had a bit of a run on bad guys diving off tall buildings lately?" Jack asked as he too knelt down and peered underneath the front of the bus at the body firmly wedged underneath.

"Must be the year for it I guess" Tracy remarked "Anyway, what are you doing here?"

"I was popping in to see the Antiquities lads when it all kicked off with your uninvited guest here" Jack explained.

"What on Earth does the Transport Division want with the Antiquities Squad?" The Commander asked.

"You remember my dead guy by the side of the railway line from yesterday?" Jack asked.

"Leo Raffety, the professional cat burglar guy?" The Commander asked,

"It seems he was still plying his trade" Jack confirmed as he lifted up the bag he was carrying and put it onto the bonnet of the patrol car that was parked alongside and opened it, revealing the jewellery inside, glinting from the sunshine beaming down upon the contents.

"So it would seem" Tracy remarked "Where did you find that little lot?" she then asked.

"In an old signal box" Jack responded to somewhat disbelieving looks "Honest" he then reassured.

"Well that puts it firmly in the Transport Division's jurisdiction I would say" The Commander commented "Have fun with that potential mess" he then remarked.

"Thanks..." Jack replied with a hint of sarcasm.

"Excuse us please" a Fire & Rescue Service officer called as he and a colleague came through "We would like to extract the body now please."

"By all means" The Commander gestured down as he, Jack and Tracy stepped aside.

They watched as the rescue team proceeded to jack up the front of the bus until the body was sufficiently freed that it could be hauled out into the open.

"Oh dear..." The Commander responded as he turned away feeling somewhat queasy at the gruesome sight that was being revealed as the body was brought out into the clear daylight.

"Hmm..." Tracy remarked as she took a closer look. Unlike her husband, she had no qualms about blood and gore "Interesting little tattoo there" she then commented.

"Tattoo?" Jack asked, his interest piqued.

"Wow!" Tracy commented as she pulled the bloodied torn sleeve down to fully reveal the tattoo "Never seen anything like that before."

"Oh, I have" Jack responded as he took out his mobile phone and called up the photograph he had taken of Raffety's body in the Mortuary earlier that morning and showed it to them.

"Well would you look at that" Tracy remarked as she compared the blood-stained tattoo on the body below them with the one displayed on the phone screen.

"I'd rather not if I were honest" The Commander responded as he attempted to stifle potential vomiting from the gruesome sight a short distance away.

"Suit yourself love" Tracy admonished in response "Honestly Jack, it's amazing he manages to walk past the fresh meat counter in Tesco's without an unplanned reunion with his breakfast sometimes" she then remarked to a wry smirk from Jack.

"Can't be a coincidence" Jack commented "What was the story with the guy shot dead in Hounslow and his friend?"

"They were waiting to meet a guy who was bringing them some jewellery to be fenced apparently, only he didn't show up" Tracy explained.

"I wonder if that would be the very same jewellery I just happen to have right here?" Jack asked.

"It would explain why their contact never turned up" The Commander remarked "considering he was dead by the side of a railway line at the time."

"Either that or everyone is going around with bags full of stolen jewellery" Tracy then added.

"Assuming that it is actually stolen of course" The Commander reminded them.

"Exactly what I intend to find out" Jack determinedly declared "If you will excuse me, I have an appointment on the sixth floor."

"Have fun" The Commander called after him "and mind the piano" he then warned.

"Piano?" Jack asked himself as he headed back inside through the Victoria Street fire exit door.

Several minutes later Jack was in a lift on his way up.

'Sixth Floor' the lift called out as the door opened and Jack stepped out only to immediately walk into an obstruction on the lift landing.

"Ah, I see what he meant about the piano now" Jack then remarked as he found he had to squeeze past not only a piano but several other items of large bulky antique furniture that was crammed into seemingly every space possible with little room to spare.

"Are you all right there mate?" a voice called from the other side of the blockade.

"Lieutenant Jack Regent" Jack called, waving his warrant card up over the top of a large chest of drawers "I was hoping to see your Guvnor."

"You've found him" Commander Mike Henderson responded "Come around the side, we are a little bit pushed for space at the moment."

"Are you branching out into furniture removals and storage or something?" Jack asked as he went over to the left-hand side and found his way through where Henderson, a tall man in a neatly tailored fawn suit and tie was waiting for him.

"Mike Henderson" he then introduced himself with a handshake "A pleasure to meet you at last" he then continued "Apologies for the mess, we seem to have had a bit of a run on recovered stolen antique furniture lately and until we all move to our new premises next year, we have nowhere to store it all."

"My flat could use some furniture if it helps" Jack wryly suggested.

"I might just take you up on that" Henderson responded "I don't suppose you play the piano do you? We've got three of the things cluttering the place up."

"I think my girlfriend might have something to say about it if I showed up tonight with a piano though" Jack remarked philosophically.

"Worth a try" Henderson responded "So what can I do for you young man?" he then asked.

"I've got a big bag of probably stolen jewellery and I thought you might like to cast your expert eye over it" Jack indicated the bag he had brought with him.

"Step into my office" Henderson then prompted, leading the way past the blockade of antique furniture to an office down the corridor.

"Nice vase" Jack remarked seeing the tall porcelain vase standing almost three feet in height just inside Henderson's office door.

"Fourteenth century Ming Dynasty" Henderson announced "or at least that is what the guy who owned it claimed it was to his insurance company. More late 1970's Woolworths as it turns out."

"Cheeky sod" Jack remarked.

"That's pretty much what the guy from the Insurance Company said when he was in here yesterday" Henderson confirmed as he took a seat behind his desk "So, what have you got for me?" he then asked.

"This little lot" Jack duly announced as he hauled the bag onto the desk and opened it up whereupon Henderson dipped in.

"Wow!" Henderson exclaimed as he saw the quantity of jewellery within, glinting and shimmering in the light "Where the hell did you find this little lot?"

"In an abandoned signal box by the side of a railway line just north of Redhill" Jack explained.

"Really?" Henderson responded, somewhat surprised.

"It was about two hundred yards down the line from where the previous afternoon I recovered the body of a deceased male who has been identified as an old school cat burglar by the name of Leonard or Leo Raffety amongst other identities" Jack confirmed.

"Good God" Henderson exclaimed "Raffety has been on our top ten most wanted for the thick end of forty years" he explained "We never got so much as a sniff of evidence to nail him though."

"Well I can safely say his light-fingered habits are now very much over" Jack responded "Someone shot him, smashed him over the head and then dumped his body sometime the night before last or early yesterday morning."

"Poor sod" Henderson remarked "I mean we know full and well he was a burglar and a bloody good one at that, but he was one of the better ones, old school, always had high standards and never robbed anyone who he knew could not afford the loss."

"You don't think he burgled someone and they took their revenge do you?" Jack suggested.

"We have had cases in the past where burglars have been disturbed in the act and wound up with something thrown at them, but the homeowners usually then call the authorities, not murder them and dump them on a railway line" Henderson commented.

"There was something else odd about all this" Jack went on as he took out his mobile phone "Raffety's body had a tattoo on it that was fresh" he then proceeded to show the photo to Henderson who looked at it.

"Unusual design" Henderson remarked "Not prison art which is what you would normally find on an old hand in the thievery trade, no this is something else."

"What makes it more interesting is I have just seen the very same tattoo on the arm of the guy who just dived off the roof of this very building not half an hour ago" Jack continued.

"Was that the commotion I heard a while ago?" Henderson asked to which Jack nodded "What was all that about?"

"This guy managed to break into the building and shoot dead a chap by the name of Trevor Granger" Jack explained "He was in the secure area because yesterday his associate, another old school crook by the name of Frederick Oldman was gunned down in the street, probably by the same guy."

"The mortuary boys will be demanding overtime at this rate" Henderson remarked.

"It gets better" Jack continued "The reason why Frederick Oldman and Trevor Granger were together yesterday is because they were waiting for a contact to arrive bearing, and I quote 'a significant quantity of stolen jewellery' which I would wager is what sits before us right here" he indicated the bag and its contents on the desk in front of them.

"So if we can identify at least some of these items and work out where they came from then it may just provide you with a few pointers?" Henderson ventured.

"I hope so" Jack admitted "So far I have not much to go on, only the somewhat embarrassing incident where I set off every alarm going in MI5 when I did a system search on Rafferty's various alternative identifications."

"What would MI5 want with an old school jewel thief?" Henderson asked.

"The question more accurately should be what does the CIA want with an old school jewel thief" Jack responded, "It was their list that they passed to MI5 that set off the aforementioned alarms which meant yesterday afternoon a nice quiet afternoon tea with my girlfriend turned into a full blown Spooks convention."

"That is most odd" Henderson agreed "The only thing I can think of is that someone they are interested in has lost something valuable and they are following anyone who may have had anything to do with it going walkies."

"So, what have we got?" Jack asked as Henderson proceeded to carefully take items out of the bag and start to look at them with the aid of a small magnifying glass "Only I am pretty much down to typing random words into Google in order to find a lead at the rate things are going."

"There is quite a broad selection of jewellery here" Henderson offered his experienced opinion as he looked through the pieces carefully "A lot of it is late nineteenth and early twentieth century, good quality, English made going by the hallmarks, this is top rate stuff."

"I am willing to bet that whoever this belonged to is likely to be extremely pissed off that it's gone missing" Jack remarked.

"Extremely" Henderson agreed.

"Has anything like this, in this sort of quantity been reported stolen in recent times?" Jack then asked.

"Not that I am aware of" Henderson confirmed "which means either the legitimate owner has not realised yet or else they don't want the authorities poking around in their business."

"Which means they take care of the problem personally" Jack remarked "hence the dead body."

"But then why did they not take the stuff back?" Henderson asked.

"Maybe it was hidden there by Raffety and whoever killed him was disturbed and didn't have time to search for it?" Jack suggested.

"It's a theory that fits the facts" Henderson agreed "I'll tell you what I will do, if you leave this here with me I will get my best gold experts on the job and see if we can trace where this came from for you."

"Thanks" Jack responded "I'd appreciate it."

Orbison was quietly contemplating things in his study when there was a timid knock on the door which broke his chain of thought and caused him to momentarily curse under his breath.

"Yes?" he then called whereupon one of his associates entered.

"My Lord" the associate called "apologies for the interruption but you should see the news, ITV Channel 1" he indicated towards the television nearby.

"Okay..." Orbison responded as he reached across the desk for the remote and turned on the television, quickly changing the channel to the desired one which was showing the ITV London News.

"A spokesman for the National Police & Security Service has confirmed that one man who was in protective custody inside the New Scotland Yard building was murdered by the intruder before he took his own life by jumping off the roof into the street below" the news reporter standing in front of the cordoned off area in Victoria Street confirmed.

"Ah..." Orbison remarked in response as he realised the significance of this development.

"No further details have been released on the identities of either of the two men involved and no comment was received when I asked about a possible link to the drive by shooting in Hounslow yesterday which according to unofficial sources is connected with this incident" the reporter continued.

"Get me our man in Scotland Yard please" Orbison then instructed whereupon the associate took out a mobile phone and dialled a number.

"Ringing Sir" the associate then confirmed, handing the phone over.

"Brother" Orbison called as soon as he was connected "Give me news."

The associate looked on as he watched Orbison listen carefully to the report he was receiving from his unidentified source, nodding in understanding as he did so.

"Thank you Brother" Orbison then responded "Stay safe, To Life Immortal" he then called before hanging up.

"Instructions Sir?" the associate asked.

"See to it that our Brother now resting is retrieved and proper care taken of his earthly remains" Orbison instructed "Meanwhile we will pray for his soul now departed and give thanks for his services to the Brotherhood."

"Yes My Lord" the associate confirmed.

"We will need a replacement for him however" Orbison then commented "Contact Facilitator General Reaper and have him draw up a suitable shortlist of candidates from within the Third Circle based on experience and dedication, I would like it ready in an hour please."

"It will be done My Lord" the associate confirmed "To Life Immortal" he then declared before respectively backing out of the door and closing it.

"Got him!" Fuller called in triumph from his computer workstation in the Main Control Room at New Scotland Yard.

"Give me some good news" Tracy then called as she came over to join him.

"Our dead guy down in the street with the bus on top of him" Fuller began "I managed to borrow access to MI5's facial recognition system while they were not looking and fed some of our CCTV feeds through it and here he is."

"Neil Faversham" Tracy read from the details now showing on the screen "Forty One, ex Army veteran and now a Religious Facilitator, whatever the hell that is."

"It's a new one on me" Fuller admitted.

"The military background explains his assassination skills at least" Tracy commented "Does he have form?"

"Calling up his files right now" Fuller responded but then he encountered an unexpected problem "What the hell...?" he then exclaimed as the screen in front of him began to blank out with big red flashing markings all over the details he was trying to access.

"What's going on?" Tracy asked with obvious concern.

"Someone somewhere has put a Level 1 Clearance block on his jacket" Fuller explained "A quadruple cipher lock that probably only one or two people in the World would have the key to unlock."

"MI5?" Tracy asked.

"Maybe" Fuller responded as he concentrated intently on trying to figure a way around the problem "although I know their systems very well indeed and this is beyond their usual level."

"What about the CIA?" Tracy decided to play a hunch.

"Possibly" Fuller agreed "especially as it was their list of names that Jack searched for that caused that little ruckus yesterday."

"Then again..." Tracy tailed off as an idea occurred to her before looking across the Control Room "Someone get me Sir Richard Crowthorne on the phone, PDQ!" she then ordered.

"Ah..." Fuller remarked "Do you think we have stumbled into one of Sir Richard's little pet projects by any chance?" he asked.

"That is exactly what I intend to find out" Tracy confirmed as she saw one of the Control Room Operators waving their arm to attract her attention.

"Line Three Ma'am" the Operator called whereupon Tracy gave a wave of acknowledgement and thanks in return before reaching down, picking up the telephone handset and pressing the button to connect the call.

"Sir Richard" Tracy called in her tone of voice that instantly told him that she was being diplomatic but also meant he was pretty much instantly in trouble "Can I have a word?" she then asked.

"What can I do for you my dear?" Sir Richard asked as he stood out by the back entrance of the Horticultural Halls having adjourned the Inquiry for the rest of the day to take the call.

"I've got a lot of dead bodies piling up" Tracy began to explain "One yesterday in Hounslow, another dead in my own building and the perpetrator now zipped up in a body bag having jumped off the roof and then getting run over by a bus."

"Nasty way to go" Sir Richard responded.

"Only thing is I just had Simon run the identification of the killer through the system and we have been blocked by a quadruple something or other with a Level 1 Clearance requirement" Tracy continued "Now I know this is a wild stab in the dark but based on years of experience, I haven't by any chance stumbled into one of your little pet projects by any chance?" she asked.

"I have so many things running around in my mind I find it difficult to remember many of them" Sir Richard tried to evade but knew deep down that was not going to get him very far.

"Nice try" Tracy responded "Your memory is the best in the job, try again."

"All right then" Sir Richard relented "Do you have a name?" he asked.

"The name of our dead assassin is one Neil Faversham" Tracy confirmed, reading from hand written notes as the information on the screen was now completely blanked out "Apparently he is ex forces and now works as a 'Religious Facilitator' whatever the hell that is as it is a new one on me."

"Ah..." Sir Richard remarked.

"Oh, so you do know him then" Tracy immediately picked up on the tone of his response.

"I never actually met the fellow" Sir Richard admitted "Tell me, did he say anything prior to his untimely demise?" he then asked.

"Said something about life being mortal or something" Tracy confirmed.

"To Life Immortal?" Sir Richard ventured, hoping he was wrong.

"Yes, that was it" Tracy confirmed as she remembered Faversham's final puzzling words.'

"Bugger..." Sir Richard responded under his breath but Tracy still managed to hear it.

"Oh, so this is one of your little pet projects then?" Tracy asked.

"I am afraid you have stumbled onto something we have been trying to keep a lid on" Sir Richard reluctantly confirmed "Does anyone else know about this?"

"Jack has been working on a case involving a body line side near Redhill" Tracy confirmed "There may be the remote possibility of a connection to the two people this Faversham guy killed and some stolen jewellery may also be involved."

"Put the kettle on, I'm coming over" Sir Richard declared "Actually, scrub the kettle, get the best brandy out of The Commander's safe, we are all going to need a stiff drink."

"Ah..." Tracy responded.

"Half an hour" Sir Richard then confirmed "I have to collect an extra guest for our little get together first."

"See you in half an hour" Tracy confirmed before Sir Richard hung up and the call was disconnected.

"Shall I cancel all overtime, put Big Bob and his guys on alert and restock the vending machines in the canteen?" Fuller asked

"Oh, probably" Tracy responded philosophically.

"Commander!" Sir Richard called as he emerged from the main entrance of the Horticultural Halls where he had run from the rear entrance in order to intercept him before he had left.

"Sir Richard" The Commander responded as he turned around "You've got that look on your face that always fills my crack team of Security Service accountants with dread" he remarked.

"We'll use your car" Sir Richard indicated to the Ford Mondeo parked in front of them whereupon he and The Commander duly got in the back.

"Where to Sir?" Lieutenant Commander Terry Kinderley, The Commander's official driver asked.

"St. John's Wood" Sir Richard confirmed "and step on it, time is pressing."

"Sir?" Kinderley looked in the rear-view mirror at The Commander.

"What he said" The Commander confirmed with a shrug of the shoulders "I am as much in the dark as you" he then admitted.

"Yes Sir" Kinderley confirmed as he started the car and quickly pulled out into traffic with the lights and siren in full cry.

"So how has your day been then?" Megan asked as she and Jack sat in a coffee shop just around the corner from New Scotland Yard.

"So far, quite interesting" Jack admitted "Thus far I have attended an autopsy, found a big bag of probably stolen jewellery, watched as what turns out was probably my prime suspect threw himself off the roof of the Yard and have finished the day with more questions than answers."

"Busy day then?" Megan responded.

"Something like that" Jack confirmed "I even paid a visit to the Antiquities Squad on the sixth floor earlier" he then continued "They are a bit overloaded with recovered furniture up there now, I don't suppose you fancy a piano in the flat do you?"

"We have barely enough room with all your model railway stuff let alone a piano" Megan responded "Anyway, you don't play any instruments do you. I never had you down as the musical type."

"I played the triangle when I was in infant school" Jack admitted "Always got the one that was out of tune though" he then recalled.

There casual conversation was however cut short by Jack's Security Service mobile phone ringing which caused him to look down at with disdain.

"Lieutenant Regent, Transport Division" Jack then answered.

"Jack? It's Mike Henderson, Antiquities Squad" came the call.

"Oh hello Sir" Jack responded "I am afraid it's a no from my good lady on the piano."

"Worth a try" Henderson jokingly responded "I thought you might like to know we got lucky on some of that jewellery you left with us earlier" he confirmed.

"I'm all ears" Jack responded.

"A couple of the items have been traced as having been sold at a specialist auction in London about five years ago" Henderson explained "They were sold to a buyer who paid the whole twenty seven and a half grand cost with a bankers draft drawn on a trust savings account in the name of one Michael Orbison."

"Ah, a name at last" Jack responded as he noted down the name on a paper napkin as it was the only thing he had available to hand to write on at the time.

"I am sending the bank account details over to you by secure text message in a moment" Henderson confirmed "Unfortunately we haven't had any luck with the rest of the merchandise yet, but we will keep plugging away, anything to take our minds of our little furniture problem."

"That's great, I really appreciate it, thanks" Jack confirmed.

"Anytime" Henderson responded before hanging up.

"See, all you have to do is be a little patient and as if by magic a lead appears" Megan remarked with a smile.

"I think I will run this name through a computer before I head home" Jack confirmed as having finished their food and drinks, they both pushed their chairs back and stood up.

"Don't be too late home" Megan reminded Jack "It's your turn to do the washing up tonight."

"I'll be there" Jack confirmed.

"We're here" Sir Richard declared before leaning forward "Just pull in up ahead Terry, cheers" he then called to the driver.

"Very nice" The Commander remarked once they got out of the car a few moments later in front of an impressive block of meticulously maintained Art Deco style 1930's apartments located in the expensive and fashionable St. John's Wood area of north west London, not far from the world famous Lord's Cricket Ground nearby. "Why are we here?" he then asked.

"The last refuge of the scoundrel" Sir Richard explained which in fact told The Commander nothing whatsoever as they proceeded inside and made for the ornately decorated elevator which they then proceeded to take up to the top floor.

"Did you know that St. John's Wood is the only station on the London Underground map that contains no letters from the word 'Mackerel'?" The Commander remarked as the lift ascended.

"Really?" Sir Richard responded "What about...? Oh, no, that doesn't work."

"Jack told me that the other day" The Commander explained "Completely threw my mind out for a good twenty minutes afterwards, even found myself staring at a tube map at one point."

"Indeed" Sir Richard responded as the elevator slowed to a stop on the top floor.

"So, where to now?" The Commander asked as the doors opened and they stepped out onto the landing whereupon he noticed something significant ahead "or are the two guys from the Specialist Protection Unit of MI5 lurking over there outside that door by any chance something to do with this?"

"No flies on you Commander" Sir Richard remarked as they proceeded ahead to the apartment door that the two plain clothes officers were stood either side of.

"Good afternoon gentlemen" one of the officers remarked, there being no need for any identification to be produced as he proceeded to knock on the apartment door before opening it and allowing them to enter.

Once inside and with the door closed again behind them, The Commander was in for a shock when a familiar figure appeared.

"Brian Dawson, I thought you were in Belmarsh Prison" The Commander called "What the hell are you doing here?" he asked.

"In return for co-operation on certain, erm..." Sir Richard began but tailed off.

"Pet projects of yours?" The Commander asked.

"Among other things" Sir Richard admitted "I arranged for his detention to continue under strict conditions of house arrest."

"It's not as cosy or convenient as you think Commander" Dawson explained "although it is peaceful, no telephone calls, no emails."

"Which brings me back to my original question gentlemen" The Commander responded "Why are we here?"

"The delightful Ms Caverner has requested my presence most urgently at New Scotland Yard on a matter of some importance and Mr Dawson here is my expert in residence on the subject that we will be discussing" Sir Richard explained.

"Anything in particular?" Dawson asked "I would prefer to be prepared, I hate to find myself suddenly having to ad-hoc answers, especially in such illustrious company."

"This concerns the activities of a certain Mr Orbison" Sir Richard confirmed.

"Ah, I see" Dawson responded.

"Who?" The Commander asked, completely in the dark on the subject.

"All in good time my old friend" Sir Richard reassured him "all in good time."

"Ah, there you are" Shelby called as Jack returned to the office in Holborn and made straight for his desk.

"Afternoon" Jack responded as he started up the computer "Did I miss anything?" he then asked.

"I have found your dead guy's registered General Practitioner" Shelby produced a piece of paper and passed it across "and from that I have managed to locate a home address in a particularly nice, rural and extremely expensive part of Surrey where the late Mr Rafferty lived with his wife and teenage daughter."

"Good work mate" Jack responded "I think we will go and give his drum a spin in the morning."

"Sounds good to me" Shelby readily agreed "I'm off home, err what are you doing?" he then asked.

"Security Service Rule Number Three" Jack explained "If all else fails, try typing something into Google."

"What are rules one and two?" Shelby asked out of curiosity.

"Rule Number One is 'Tracy is always right' whilst Rule Number Two is 'The Commander is always right except when superseded by the application of Rule Number One' Jack explained with a wry smile before returning to the computer "Divisional Commander Caverner wrote the first one, The Commander wrote the second one, the third one is my own personal contribution."

"So what are you searching for?" Shelby asked.

"Some of that jewellery I recovered was sold in auction a few years ago and I have the name of the buyer" Jack confirmed "Some guy by the name of Orbison apparently although there is no guarantee that he has not given it or sold it to someone else in the meantime" he admitted "so this could wind up being the proverbial chase of untamed poultry."

"Huh?" Shelby responded.

"Wild goose chase?" Jack explained.

"Oh..." Shelby remarked in realisation.

"So, here we go" Jack confirmed "First hit, Roy Orbison, singer."

"The guy who sang 'Pretty Woman' and 'Only The Lonely' by any chance?" Shelby responded "He's dead isn't he?"

"Since December 1988 so it's not him obviously" Jack commented as he proceeded to refine his search "Ah, this is more like it, Michael Orbison, also known as Lord Chaos apparently."

"Can't say I have ever heard of him" Shelby responded.

"Me neither" Jack agreed "but he does live in the right place and the details do match up. It seems he is some sort of social media star which presumably means he make a lot of money doing something or other online rather than getting off his backside and getting a proper job."

"Such is the world these days" Shelby commented "We live in a global online goldfish bowl these days."

"Yes" Jack agreed "One day you are nobody, the next you are a trending Twitter hash tag."

"I'm off home, I'll see you tomorrow" Shelby then declared "Goodnight Jack."

"Goodnight" Jack responded.

"Blimey, they will let anyone in here these days, won't they?" Tracy remarked as Sir Richard arrived in The Commander's office with The Commander himself and Dawson following behind whilst the two officers who were entrusted with guarding him remained outside.

"Who, me?" The Commander jokingly asked.

"I presume your good lady means me" Dawson responded.

"Indeed" Tracy confirmed with a distinctly unimpressed look "So what is the Ghost of Christmas Past doing here may I ask."

"I'm the 'expert' apparently" Dawson explained as they all took a seat "So, what shall we talk about."

"I'll bring you up to speed love" Tracy informed her husband "We got a name on the guy who dived off the roof earlier, one Neil Frobisher, an ex Army veteran who was apparently a Religious Facilitator according to his records."

"A what?!?" The Commander responded.

"That's exactly what I said" Tracy confirmed "So when I got Simon to wash his name through the computer we came across a teeny-weeny little problem."

"Ahem" Sir Richard coughed which quickly indicated to The Commander what the problem was.

"Let me make an educated guess" The Commander remarked "Would by any chance this happen to be one of your little rainy day projects perchance Sir Richard?" he asked.

"The gentleman in question is a member..." Sir Richard began before pausing a moment for thought "A follower, no, a believer I think is perhaps the more accurate description, of an organisation called the Ixion Brotherhood."

"Still none the wiser" The Commander admitted with a shrug of the shoulders and looking over at Tracy at that point he could see she was pretty much as in the dark as he was.

"The group or collective or brotherhood or whatever you want to call it is the creation of a man called Michael Orbison" Sir Richard went on.

"Isn't that the guy some journalist from the Daily Mail did a hatchet job on a few years ago?" Tracy recalled "Called himself Lord Calamity or something like that."

"Lord Chaos" Dawson confirmed "The various groups and organisations I have been involved with over the years have come across him and his followers in recent years as they have become more prominent but I quickly learnt that he was a man who should be kept at arms length and downwind at all times."

"And this guy is of interest I take it?" Tracy asked.

"The CIA have been taking a discrete look at him for a couple of years now" Sir Richard confirmed "MI5 were only really made aware of his rise in prominence in the last few months, prior to that he was a forgotten name on their official 'Nutter List' buried in a dusty filing cabinet, stuck in a disused toilet in the basement of Thames House."

"Acquaint me with him" The Commander requested.

"Orbison began in the 1960's with the hippy movement, peace, CND, flower power, all that stuff" Sir Richard began "He even had the dreadlocks and the gaudily painted VW camper van with dubious MOT."

"Drugs?" Tracy asked.

"Lots" Sir Richard confirmed "Recreational mostly but he did get his collar felt in the mid-seventies on suspicion of dealing in narcotics but the charges were dropped after the CPS got pressure applied on it from the Home Secretary of the time, an old friend of yours, Trevor Sharman no less."

"Still hate that guy" The Commander admitted.

"Oh yes, I remember Sharman from when I did some consulting work for the Home Office" Dawson fondly recalled "Obnoxious little shit with delusions of grandeur if I recall."

"That sounds about right" The Commander grinned in response.

"Orbison, from his modest council flat in Basildon began to form a new religion" Sir Richard then continued "He would write pages and pages of thoughts which followers could obtain a copy of in return for a cheque for a couple of quid and a stamped addressed envelope."

"Now that's old school communications" Dawson remarked with a wry smile.

"Indeed" Sir Richard agreed before continuing "By the mid 1980's he had built up a mailing list of approximately five hundred subscribers to his monthly musings, enough to attract the attention of MI5 and an entry onto their 'Nutter List' but nothing more."

"Did he make any money out of this?" Tracy asked.

"Not entirely sure to be honest" Sir Richard admitted "His early days are still only scantily documented but he was definitely making a reasonable income out of it."

"I first encountered him about ten years ago" Dawson then added "Orbison was quick to seize the opportunities afforded by the introduction and ease of access that became available to him thanks to the Internet and later, Social Media."

"Indeed" Sir Richard agreed "All of a sudden he was able to move from a few hundred people receiving a publication printed on an old rotary Banda machine and sent out once a month through the post, to the possibility of having the entire world accessible through his keyboard and he went for it, big time."

"He charges a fee to read his 'teachings' as he calls them online" Dawson explained "This along with the extras such as subscription fees, book sales, e-book downloads, branded merchandising even, plus a thriving online streaming channel has made him extremely rich."

"How rich?" The Commander asked.

"Rough guess" Sir Richard thought carefully "I would wager he is raking in about two to three million a month at the moment, more possibly from certain other connected activities we suspect he is involved with."

"And thanks to financial services provided by former associates of mine" Dawson added "The taxman has not seen a penny of his money in over thirty years."

"What's his philosophy?" Tracy asked.

"It's complicated" Sir Richard admitted "It fills at least three books now which are available in paperback, online and e-book for your Kindle if you are interested."

"I'll wait for the movie..." The Commander joked in response.

"In a nutshell, the human race is a mess and will eventually self-destruct so let's unleash chaos, speed things up a bit and when all is said and done he and his followers will be the last people left standing" Sir Richard neatly summarised.

"As I thought" Tracy concluded "Nut job."

"Unfortunately, it would appear that Mr Orbison has decided that he is tired of waiting for the rest of mankind or 'The Great Unworthy' as he prefers to call them, to annihilate each other so it would seem he is quietly manipulating his international band of followers to accelerate the process a bit" Dawson ominously warned.

"There has been an increase in the number of his followers who have been committing mostly petty acts of violence" Sir Richard explained "Sufficiently minor enough to keep below the radar but not enough to go unnoticed by those of us in the intelligence community who keep a close watch for such things."

"So why is this the first we have heard of it?" The Commander asked.

"The rise of the Ixion Brotherhood is something that was considered at the highest level a few months ago" Sir Richard began with some slightly embarrassment laden reluctance "and at that time it was decided that the err domestic security services..."

"That would be us good old-fashioned plod I presume?" Tracy remarked with a stern and unimpressed look.

"Err, yes" Sir Richard reluctantly admitted "As I was saying, it was decided to keep you unaware of the Ixion Brotherhood and Orbison's rising prominence as it was hoped it would be something we could keep a lid on."

"Well that worked!" The Commander sarcastically commented.

"All was going reasonably well until a couple of months ago when the CIA got wind of Orbison's money laundering operation" Sir Richard then continued.

"I can shed some more light on that aspect" Dawson then added "Orbison has literally tens of millions of pounds stashed in bank accounts and safety deposit boxes around the world, some of it from his Ixion Brotherhood supporters through subscriptions, donations and legacies, other amounts from far less scrupulous sources" he confirmed.

"So what is Mr Orbison into dare I ask?" Tracy inquired.

"The vast financial resources he has built up over the years combined with an extremely intelligent business mind has meant he has been able to offer money laundering services to pretty much anyone who proverbially knocks on his door" Sir Richard continued "including certain global extremist groups, freedom fighters in some of the crappier parts of the world, drug dealers, the Mob, all sorts of unsavoury characters, in return for a ten percent commission of course."

"Nice work if you can get it" Dawson remarked.

"What about the man himself, Orbison?" The Commander asked.

"He's getting on a bit" Sir Richard remarked "but we do know he has an insatiable appetite for recreational drugs, teenage girls and fine wine."

"Sounds like a few Members of Parliament I have known over the years" Dawson remarked with a wry smile.

"His personal life has been a long line of short term relationships" Sir Richard continued "There have been at least a dozen women who have been his 'wife' in not so legal terms, all get bestowed with the title of 'Lady Chaos', usually he meets them as soon as they are out of school and drops them once they either cease being a teenager or get pregnant with many having attempted or indeed succeeded in committing suicide not long afterwards."

"So this guy leaves a trail of human wreckage in his wake" The Commander remarked "I'm starting to really hate him already and I haven't even met him" The Commander commented "Yet..." he then added with determination.

"The tattoo..." Tracy then remarked with a spark of realisation.

"Tattoo?" The Commander responded.

"The burning wheel of fire?" Tracy then asked.

"Err..." The Commander was clearly none the wiser.

"I don't suppose you ever did Classic Literature when you were at school did you?" Tracy remarked.

"My education was not what you would consider 'normal' as such" The Commander admitted.

"In ancient Greek mythology, Ixion was punished by Zeus for his misdemeanours by being bound to an eternally spinning burning wheel" Tracy explained "The tattoo on Faversham is of a spinning burning wheel and he seems to be a member of the Ixion Brotherhood."

"Jack says he found the same tattoo on the body he is investigating" The Commander responded.

"How the hell is young Jack embroiled in this mess?" Sir Richard asked with clear concern.

"Jack is investigating a dead cat burglar by the name of Raffety who was found by the side of the railway line near Star Lane Bridge the other day" The Commander explained "The body had the same design of burning wheel tattoo that we found on Faversham."

"You had better warn him to be careful" Sir Richard ominously warned "If Orbison gets wind of anyone from the authorities poking around in his business he could set one of his Facilitators on him."

"I have heard that description before" The Commander recalled.

"It's was on the employment description for Faversham" Tracy informed her husband.

"It's one of the descriptions used for some of the dark servants Orbison employs within the Brotherhood" Sir Richard explained "The whole organisation is broken down into levels or circles" he continued "The First Circle is Lord and Lady Chaos, then the Second Circle are like the heads of departments in a big business organisation, he has a Chief Accountant called a Chief Financial Facilitator, then there is the Facilitator General, a man called Adam Reaper, we don't know a lot about him other than he is the resident fixer and makes things happen."

"Sounds a bit like a certain departed former colleague of mine" Dawson remarked "But I will get to him in a bit, do continue Sir Richard" he then prompted.

"The Third Circle are the Facilitators themselves like the late Mr Faversham" Sir Richard duly continued "They are the muscle, the guys who actually go out there and act on behalf of the Brotherhood keeping things in order and neutralising any problems or threats that may arise."

"I don't think I want to meet them somehow" Tracy remarked.

"Quite" The Commander readily agreed.

"Once you get below the Facilitators, you get the Fourth Circle which are the Subscribers, the true believers who contribute generously to the coffers as part of their devotion to the Brotherhood" Sir Richard went on "then finally you have the Fifth Circle which are the Believers who buy the books or whatever and follow the Brotherhood without actually getting physically involved whilst the Sixth Circle are the Followers who take an interest, contribute occasionally but are not really part of the programme as it were."

"I don't suppose there is a membership list available by any chance?" Tracy asked.

"Err, regretfully, no" Sir Richard confirmed "MI5 did try and get one of their agents inside a few months ago but he disappeared, last seen being followed by a couple of Facilitators and never seen again."

"Probably under six foot of reinforced concrete by now" Dawson commented.

"You mentioned something about speeding up the process?" Tracy picked up on a point made earlier.

"Mr Dawson?" Sir Richard looked across.

"Ah, yes" Dawson responded "I am sure everyone recalls the Pyramid Organisation of which I was a senior member" he began.

"Yeah, it rings a bell" The Commander replied with a hint of sarcasm.

"No doubt therefore you also recall an outside contractor we hired as, well I suppose our version of a Facilitator General called Gary Hansell?" Dawson then asked.

"Last I saw of him he was flying out of a window on the twenty fifth floor of The Shard" Tracy recalled "I do believe his fall was subsequently broken by a combination of the platform canopy of London Bridge Station and the roof of the 18:34 to Uckfield as I recall."

"Despite his somewhat crude methods and his fondness for getting his gun off" Dawson continued "the late Mr Hansell was a very efficient procurator of goods and services without too many awkward questions being asked, unfortunately it also appears he may have been doing a little extra curricular business on the side during our time with us, in particular sale of certain goods and materials to Orbison, his Organisation and certain suspected associates."

"When we started the Pyramid Inquiry" Sir Richard explained "I had a couple of my Section Fourteen people take a good look through Hansell's life and his accounts."

"A glaring omission on our part I fear" The Commander admitted "The Home Secretary was adamant that he wanted the whole Pyramid Affair investigation tied off quickly so that the Public Inquiry could get underway. With Hansell dead and no next of kin that we were able to trace, that avenue of investigation was closed down pretty much straight away."

"Fortunately I believe in being thorough" Sir Richard remarked "It's an irritating habit I am sure but as soon as someone like whoever is the incumbent Home Secretary or one of his minions tells me or anyone else I trust not to bother investigating something, I have this undying urge to do the exact opposite."

"And what did you discover?" Tracy asked.

"Hansell was contracted by us" Dawson began to explain "to acquire a number of items including weapons and explosives, the latter including an experimental explosive that is usually referred to as Type X232."

"That green stuff" The Commander recalled.

"That, as you put it so succinctly, green stuff" Dawson confirmed "Only it seems that Hansell not only acquired sufficient quantities to satisfy his contract with us, he also acquired a substantial amount more of it which he traded onto a third party without our knowledge or consent."

"Orbison?" The Commander asked.

"A deposit of fifteen million pounds sterling was made into an offshore account held by a known alias of Hansell the day before his little acrobatic act off of The Shard" Sir Richard confirmed "My financial guru's traced the source of the cash to another offshore trust fund that is connected with the Ixion Brotherhood."

"Oh dear..." Tracy responded, a feeling also shared by The Commander as well.

"If I am right" Sir Richard concluded "and I hope to God I am wrong, Orbison or his Facilitators may have a sizeable quantity of uncontrolled high explosives in their possession along with gawd knows what in terms of weapons."

"If you are right" The Commander remarked "then that means..." he tailed off in thought.

"The Ixion Brotherhood could be moving up to a war footing" Dawson confirmed with a grim look "effectively what we may have is an all new terrorist organisation right on our doorstep with unknown members ready to act across the world."

"I can see why you wanted to keep a lid on this" Tracy agreed "Just the panic alone that would be generated by the dumber sectors of the popular press and media could generate paranoia that could result in injuries and deaths before Orbison and his minions have even begun."

"So, what do we do?" The Commander asked.

"Keep a very close watch on anything that may be connected with the Ixion Brotherhood" Sir Richard urged "nip it in the bud as soon as it emerges and for God's sake keep the press out of it."

"If they have the X232 explosive" Tracy remarked "then we need to find it, seize it and preferably destroy it quickly and quietly before they use it."

"Mr Dawson" The Commander turned to the man who was once his enemy not so long ago "I need your help."

"I'll see what I can do" Dawson responded "Of course there would have to be certain considerations in return for my co-operation."

"If you help us, I will speak to the Attorney General and the Prime Minister and get your charges sufficiently watered down that you avoid a custodial sentence once the Pyramid Inquiry is concluded" The Commander confirmed.

"Seems reasonable, agreed" Dawson nodded his head "So, what can I do for you Commander?"

"Use your extensive list of contacts, friends and influence" The Commander instructed "I want to know if Orbison has friends in any key areas of Government, the security authorities, anywhere where he can obtain influence. If he managed to knobble one Home Secretary all those years ago then he is bound to have more on his side elsewhere."

"Shouldn't be a problem" Dawson agreed "It may need a little discrete cash spreading about, a few brown envelopes dropped into certain pockets."

"I can take care of the finance" Sir Richard confirmed "You just get to work."

"In which case I had best get back to my apartment and get to work" Dawson confirmed as he stood up and prepared to leave "It's a pleasure to be working with such esteemed company" he then declared before turning to leave where he was met outside the office door by his two MI5 minders who were to escort him back to his home and the continuation of his house arrest.

"You trust him?" Tracy asked with a hint of incredulation as soon as Dawson had left and the office door was closed.

"Honestly?" Sir Richard frankly responded "as about as far as I could throw him, which off the record would be straight through a window if I could."

"Thanks" The Commander remarked "but I think we have had our quota of defenestrations for this year already."

"Defenestration?" Tracy asked.

"The art of throwing a person, usually alive, out through a window, usually without opening it first" The Commander explained "I read about it in a magazine once."

"I'm not sure which is the more disturbing" Tracy wryly remarked "throwing someone through a window or that it happens so often that there is an official description for it."

"It has to be said that since he surrendered to the authorities, Dawson has been honest, co-operative and straight down the line without exception" Sir Richard admitted "and right now he is all we have got."

"Still would like to throw him out of a window though" The Commander muttered.

Jack had decided on an early start the next morning, it was barely seven o'clock when he passed through the ticket barriers of Holborn Underground Station and headed across the road towards the Transport Division offices.

Pausing on his journey only to grab a coffee, pastry and a baguette sandwich for later, he soon arrived in his office where to Jack's surprise, it turned out he wasn't the only one having an early start when he found The Commander there waiting for him.

"Dad..." Jack began "Err, I mean Sir" he then quickly corrected himself although The Commander did not mind "If I had known you were here I would have brought breakfast for two."

"Thanks Jack" The Commander responded "but I am not hungry" he confirmed as he got up and they met in front of the desk.

"To what do I owe the pleasure?" Jack then asked, "I sense this isn't a social call just to see how I am settling in somehow."

"No, I am afraid not" The Commander admitted "Something has come up and I think you may have accidentally stumbled into it along the way."

"Not bad for three days on the job" Jack wryly admitted "even for this family."

"Quite" The Commander agreed with a weak smile "Tell me, does the name Michael Orbison mean anything to you?" he then asked.

"Ah..." Jack responded "If my theory and the background work Mike's lads over at the Antiquities Division did is correct then that is the name of the legitimate owner of the large stash of highly valuable jewellery I recovered yesterday."

"I can't tell you much officially" The Commander began to explain as best as he could "but this Michael Orbison character is a person of significant interest to the Security Services in some very high places."

"Oh..." Jack looked a bit despondent "That goes some way towards explaining the goon convention that I inadvertently kicked off the other day. Does this mean I am about to lose the case I am working on?" he then asked.

"Really I should request you be taken off it" The Commander reluctantly admitted "but instinct tells me if I did that you would probably just carry on investigating regardless anyway."

"Would I?" Jack asked.

"I would" The Commander confirmed "and it is pretty clear you are the sort of officer who is set to follow in the family footsteps."

"But I absolutely never under any circumstances want to be Administrator General" Jack pointed out.

"Neither did I" The Commander admitted "Still don't if I am honest."

"So, this Orbison character" Jack carried on "I did a little digging around and found out that he is some sort of religiously opinionated social media star or something like that."

"He has a following called the Ixion Brotherhood" The Commander confirmed "and a lot of influence, both spiritual and financial."

"Ixion? As in the chap who offended Zeus and got nailed to an eternally spinning wheel of fire as a punishment?" Jack asked.

"I think that was the fellow, yes" The Commander confirmed.

"Well that explains the tattoo's then" Jack concluded "so can I presume that if I find anymore dead people with the same tattoo then they are linked to this Ixion Brotherhood?" he asked.

"I think it is fairly safe to say that, yes" The Commander confirmed.

"Do you think he will want his jewellery back?" Jack then asked.

"I would probably advise against going up to his place and knocking on the door" The Commander advised "That would almost certainly prove to be a very bad idea."

"Ah, in other words you want me to be careful and not put my foot in it" Jack concluded "which means there is something you are not telling me isn't there."

The Commander paused in silent thought for a moment before deciding to come clean.

"All right" The Commander agreed "I'll tell you the rest but not here."

"I was going to do a little target practice downstairs" Jack then remarked as he extracted the old revolver from its holster "Why don't you join me?" he suggested.

"All right" The Commander then agreed "but I do remind you I can't shoot straight for toffee as that there old thing will testify if it could talk" he confirmed, nodding towards the revolver which had at one time been his own service issue weapon for many years.

"After you Sir" Jack then showed the way ahead although The Commander needed no guidance as to where to go having been Divisional Commander of the Transport Division in that very building for over three years some time ago.

"So" Jack then asked as they arrived in the shooting gallery located in the basement and he picked up a pair of ear defenders whilst The Commander did the same "This Ixion lot, bunch of nut jobs or a group of serious wackos?"

"More the latter" The Commander admitted as he drew his Glock pistol and checked it "From what I have been told, this Orbison guy calls himself 'Lord Chaos' if you believe."

"Catchy moniker" Jack remarked as he put the ear defenders on, aimed towards the paper target in the distance and then fired all six rounds available in quick succession.

"He has made a hell of a lot of money pontificating on social media, books, videos, etcetera" The Commander continued to explain once Jack had finished shooting and was emptying his spent shell casings into a bucket next to them on the floor "and basically wants humanity to destroy itself so that he and his followers can inherit the Earth or some such nonsense."

"So what's the problem?" Jack then asked before pausing to allow The Commander to fire some shots towards his own paper target where he noticed that he was squinting quite badly in order to see the distance.

"Unfortunately it would appear Orbison has grown tired of waiting and so is now starting to use his considerable accumulated wealth and influence over his followers to speed up the process as it were" The Commander confirmed as he retrieved his paper target and looked at it with disdain.

"The guy who chucked himself off New Scotland Yard's roof yesterday morning" Jack then asked as he reloaded his revolver and prepared to shoot again "Was he one of the Ixion minions by any chance?"

"Looks like it" The Commander confirmed before watching Jack fire another six rounds in quick succession "Where the hell did you learn to shoot like that?" he then asked on seeing the very neat centrally located pattern of holes in the paper target ahead.

"The Falkland Islands" Jack confirmed "It's err a long story" he then admitted.

"What isn't around here" The Commander wryly remarked.

"When you say he is accelerating the process" Jack then asked, "what exactly do you mean?"

"For your ears only and this conversation never happened" The Commander warned to which Jack nodded his head in complete understanding before he continued "Do you remember Gary Hansell?"

"The nutter who fell out of a window halfway up The Shard and landed on the concourse of London Bridge Station?" Jack asked as he reloaded once more.

"That's the chap" The Commander confirmed "It turned out in addition to working for the Pyramid Organisation as their muscle and bag man, he also had a very nice little earner in the form of an illicit and thriving guns and ammo dealing business."

"Oh, lovely...." Jack remarked.

"And just before his demise" The Commander continued as Jack was getting ready to shoot again "it appears that he may have sold Michael Orbison a not insignificant quantity of R232 type explosive."

"That green stuff that almost got me killed?" Jack responded, lowering his weapon and recalling how he only narrowly avoided a disaster just over six months earlier involving the R232 type explosive at considerable risk to himself.

"Yeah..." The Commander reluctantly admitted.

"No wonder it's being kept quiet" Jack then remarked before firing his last six shots "So you are saying I should be careful?" he then asked.

"From what I understand" The Commander went on to confirm "Orbison has a deep mistrust of authority figures, anyone in a uniform and indeed anyone outside his own circle and anyone who crosses him get a visit from his Facilitators as he calls them."

"Facilitators?" Jack asked "You mean he sends the boys round to 'deal with the problem' like that guy yesterday who then dived off the roof" he then concluded.

"Pretty much, yes" The Commander agreed.

"So would I be right in thinking that our roof diving Facilitator or whatever they are called was probably responsible for the murder of Raffety, my Star Lane body?" Jack asked.

"I think it would be a safe wager, him or one of the other Facilitators, yes" The Commander concurred.

"There is still something missing though" Jack commented "Let's assume Raffety stole the Tom Foolery from Orbison's drum, was either caught in the act or found subsequently and he set the dogs, Facilitators, whatever on him, why dump him by the side of a railway line where he knows we will find him?"

"Yes" The Commander responded "Something doesn't add up there" he admitted "Normally I would expect the body to have been dumped in a river or buried somewhere possibly never to be found until much of the flesh evidence that he was murdered and not run down by a train had decomposed away."

"Unless it was a warning to others?" Jack suggested "A sort of extreme 'Keep off the grass' message?"

"Perhaps" The Commander agreed as he and Jack returned their ear defenders to the rack and proceeded to head out and back upstairs.

As they approached the general office door however, they were met by Shelby who had a number of men with him who looked on sternly as Jack arrived.

"Morning Jack, Administrator General Sir" Shelby called "Some gentlemen from the Flying Squad are here to see you, urgently" he nodded behind him towards the men.

"What the hell does The Sweeney want with me?" Jack asked.

"Lieutenant Jack Regent?" Divisional Commander Tim Blake of the Flying Squad, commonly known by its nickname 'The Sweeney' called.

"That's me" Jack confirmed cautiously.

"We've been asked take over your Raffety case" Blake explained.

"Tim" The Commander called as he joined the conversation "What brings you guys here?" he asked.

"Well, you Sir" Blake explained, clearly confused.

"I'm sorry, I don't follow?" The Commander responded, now almost as confused as Jack.

"Your message last night" Blake continued to explain "from your office, said we were to take over the Leo Raffety investigation from Lieutenant Regent here first thing this morning and seize all files, evidence and material relating thereto."

"I issued no such order" The Commander confirmed "and if I had I would have come to you in person or spoken on the telephone in conjunction with the Lieutenant here, you know that."

"It did seem a little unusual it has to be said" Blake then admitted.

"Hang on a minute" Jack then interjected "Am I right in thinking that someone presumably with high level access to Scotland Yard communications issued an order in your name..." he pointed to The Commander "...to basically take over my investigation?"

"So it would appear" The Commander concluded before turning back to Blake "Tim, what else was in this message I didn't actually send you?" he then asked.

"We were to seize all materials, detain Lieutenant Regent for questioning and keep the evidence secured until it could be collected by the Central Archive Registry" Blake confirmed as he extracted the paper copy of the original message he had received and it passed it across.

"Good God..." The Commander concluded as he looked at the message details closely "This is from the secure internal command messaging system as well."

"That's definitely your address on the system and your code" Jack agreed as he then took a look at the paper "To all intents and purposes you sent this, or at least someone who hacked into the system and pretended to be you did."

"What do you want us to do Sir?" Blake then asked.

"I think until we can find the source for this mysterious communication, the status quo should be maintained" The Commander concluded in thought.

"So, it's still my case?" Jack asked.

"As far as I am concerned" The Commander confirmed "but tread carefully, this Orbison guy could be trouble."

"Trouble is my middle name" Jack confirmed with a wry smile.

"Orbison?" Blake asked as he recalled the name "Michael Orbison?"

"Yes" The Commander confirmed "Don't tell me you have heard of him as well?"

"There were reports of a burglary about two weeks ago" Blake recalled "I got a call from one of my former colleagues who is now a Divisional Patrol Officer in Basildon asking if we wanted to look into it" he explained "Large quantity of jewellery stolen from someone named Michael Orbison, reported by his partner but as soon I sent a couple of my lads over to take a look, we got a call from the Ministry of Justice telling us to leave well alone."

"Sounds like this Orbison guy has protection in high places" The Commander concluded "I don't like it" he added.

"Well if you would like" Blake suggested "I could give young Jack here some support, wash what he has through our files and see if anything comes up."

"I'd appreciate it, thank you" Jack responded before turning back to The Commander "Erm, what does this guy actually look like out of interest?" he then asked.

"Got a picture of him in this file that Sir Richard gave me yesterday" The Commander confirmed as he fumbled about opening the file before finding the photograph he was looking for and passing it across.

"That him?" Jack then asked, looking at the surveillance photograph which showed Orbison and a young woman along with some other people in the background at an unidentifiable location "Who's the girl, granddaughter?" he then commented on seeing how young she looked compared with Orbison.

"His 'wife' apparently" The Commander confirmed "The current Lady Chaos, one of a long line apparently, the name we have for her is a Jenna Lotte, only sixteen years old as well."

"So at least old enough to be her grandfather then" Jack remarked disapprovingly.

"You know that name rings a bell" Shelby responded on hearing the name and he went back to his desk nearby and picked up a file before passing it across to Jack "Yes" he then confirmed "I managed to find Raffety's details last night, he has a wife and daughter, a Michelle and Jenna Lotte."

"Interesting" The Commander remarked "Very interesting indeed."

"Did you manage to confirm that address by any chance?" Jack asked.

"Indeed, it is a nice little cottage in the country near Reigate" Shelby confirmed.

"In which case I think we had better go and take a look, we will pick up some breakfast on the way" Jack declared.

"Have fun" The Commander called "and let me know what you find."

"Will do" Jack agreed before The Commander left with Blake and his officers following closely behind.

"Can I offer you a lift back to the Yard Sir?" Blake asked as they exited the Transport Division building, stepping out into the street of Kingsway immediately outside.

"Err, no thanks" The Commander responded gratefully "I need to attend to this potential security leak in our communications."

"Understood" Blake agreed "If I get any more orders from you or indeed anyone else that look shifty I will give you a call."

"I'd appreciate it" The Commander replied as he watched Blake and his officers get into their car before driving off.

The Commander took a moment to watch the Flying Squad's unmarked Ford Mondeo car disappear off into the distance before taking out his mobile telephone and withdrawing into the shadow of the adjacent building to make a call.

"Simon" he then called as soon as he was connected "Where are you?" he then asked.

"On a bus approaching Tottenham Court Road, eastbound" Fuller confirmed.

"All right" The Commander confirmed before looking down at the fake message to Barwell in his hand with a concerned expression "Find Sir Richard Crowthorne, don't use the regular channels and then both of you meet me in Russell Square in twenty minutes, we may have a problem" he then instructed before hanging up and then proceeding to cross the busy Kingsway road over to the main entrance of Holborn Underground Station in the distance.

A few moments later he had passed through the ticket barriers just inside the main entrance of the station and was heading down the escalators towards the Piccadilly Line where despite it being the height of the morning rush hour, he managed to easily board the next northbound service just in time.

A couple of minutes later the six-car train of Piccadilly Line 1973 Type Tube Stock was emerging into the light at the next stop of Russell Square where as soon as the doors opened, The Commander alighted and made his way along with everyone else off the platform and through the lower level passageways to the exit.

Initially he thought about taking the spiral staircase up to the surface but then realised he was not as young and agile as he used to be and so settled for squeezing into the waiting lift car instead for the ascent to the surface ticket hall and the exit out into the street.

Turning left towards Russell Square itself, he noticed Fuller getting off a bus directly ahead whereupon he put his fingers in his mouth and whistled loudly to get his attention.

"Morning Sir" Fuller called as, checking carefully the traffic in each direction, he crossed over the road and they met up "Sir Richard is on his way, should be here in a minute" he then confirmed.

"Thanks for coming" The Commander responded.

"Something is wrong I presume?" Fuller asked, seeing the look on The Commander's face along with his body language which made him appear as if had way more than the usual worries heaped onto his shoulders.

"Possibly" The Commander admitted "Ah, there is Sir Richard" he then indicated ahead as The Commander's official car pulled up alongside and a few moments later Sir Richard got out of the back.

"Park around the back Terry, I'll call you when I need you, cheers" The Commander then called to his official driver.

"Yes Guv" Kinderley replied before driving off leaving the three men alone.

"Something up?" Sir Richard asked, sensing the urgency already.

"We need coffee" The Commander then announced before leading the way into the Pret a Manger coffee shop and, after picking up a baguette sandwich, making his way up to the counter where the friendly girl duly proceeded to serve him.

"What are you gentlemen having, I'm buying" The Commander then asked.

"Blimey" Sir Richard responded, almost in a sense of shock "Err, double espresso please."

"I'll have a Frappuccino" Fuller then added.

"Hello" The Commander then called to the counter assistant, "that there baguette, one tea, one double whatsamecallit, and a fraper.... I forget..."

"Frappuccino?" the assistant asked to which Fuller nodded in confirmation.

"Yes, that" The Commander confirmed "Sorry, I'm a tea man, coffee is like a foreign language to me."

Quickly the drinks were made and passed over to their respective consumers whilst The Commander duly took out a twenty pound note and paid.

"Good grief" Fuller remarked on seeing the cash transaction "someone in this town paying in cash, in this day and age."

"How quaint" Sir Richard added with a wry smile.

"Thanks" The Commander called to the assistant before he led the way across the shop floor to a vacant round table in the corner and they all sat down.

"So" Sir Richard asked as he sipped his coffee carefully as it was still extremely hot "to what do we owe the pleasure."

"What do you make of this?" The Commander asked, passing over the message that Blake had received earlier.

"Let's see" Fuller proceeded to study it carefully, knowing full well that it was probably the technical details of the message rather than the message itself that were the most relevant here "It's a coded message, sent to Tim Blake by you Sir, using the internal secure comms network and looking at this, was authenticated by the central computer as using your own personal secure identification code."

"How many people know my personal code and also have the access to the system that would be needed to create and sent this message?" The Commander then asked.

"I know when we set up the internal secure messaging system when I started Section Fourteen a few years ago that it was designed to be pretty much as secure as it gets" Sir Richard remarked.

"Indeed" Fuller quickly agreed "When I set it up, I got a friend of mine in GCHQ to try and hack it using every trick she knew, never even so much as got up to the front door."

"This message was received by Commander Blake" The Commander explained "It was authenticated as genuine and coming from my personal system with my personal code on it" he continued "except for one teeny-weeny little problem, I never sent it."

"Oh..." Fuller responded.

"Ah..." Sir Richard then added "Then we have a problem?"

"There was another incident that Commander Blake told me about as well which may be related" The Commander then continued "a little while ago he got a Cease and Desist Investigations Order from the Ministry of Justice over a case that seems to be related to this matter."

"Someone is trying to cover their tracks and getting us to do the dirty work for them" Fuller concluded.

"Quite possibly" The Commander agreed before turning to Sir Richard "If someone sent this message pretending to be me, what are the implications? How far could the damage be?" he then asked.

"Well..." Sir Richard remarked as he sipped his coffee and then picked up the message to take another look at it "There is a distinct possibility that someone has found a way into the system undetected which suggests either a breach we don't know about or someone on the inside colluding with whoever may be behind this."

"The ultimate conclusion however is far more scary" Fuller then added "If this message is authentic in terms of method of delivery aside from its obviously dubious source, it means that potentially all of our secure communications protocols are compromised" he ominously warned.

"All of them?" Sir Richard asked, clearly and understandably worried.

"Pretty much" Fuller agreed "Security Service, Section Fourteen, X-Ray Division, MI5, MI6, the London office of Interpol, pretty much everyone in the Intelligence & Security Community."

"But this came from your system account did it not?" Sir Richard asked.

"Seems to have done, yes" The Commander confirmed.

"To do this would need someone on the inside" Fuller explained "Someone who can access a Security Service computer system up to and including Command Level One and has the technical know-how to exploit it and any potential back doors that may exist."

"Which means that potentially we have a traitor in our midst" The Commander reluctantly concluded as he drank his tea.

"And potentially another one in the Ministry of Justice and or The Home Office as well" Sir Richard added "not that I trust either of those bunch of clowns as far as I can throw them mind."

"I think we are going to need some new communications channels" The Commander remarked.

"I may be able to set up something" Fuller agreed "I need time though, forty-eight hours at least and a ton of money."

"You've got twenty-four and only half a ton of money" The Commander responded to a look of not being totally unsurprised from Fuller.

"In my day it was all done with discreet calls between red telephone boxes" Sir Richard recalled almost fondly "Remember to press button 'A' and don't forget to check for Soviet bugs before dialling my old Guvnor used to constantly remind us."

"Blimey, what's a telephone box?" Fuller remarked with a wry smile "So who could be behind all this?" he then asked.

"The Ixion Brotherhood?" The Commander suggested.

"Who?" Fuller responded with a puzzled look.

"A little problem on the horizon we have been trying to keep a lid on that looks like it is starting to become, potentially a very big problem" Sir Richard admitted.

"Can't say I have heard of it" Fuller confirmed "What's the connection to this?" he indicated the message.

"Michael Orbison, also known as Lord Chaos is the founder and supreme leader or whatever he calls himself of the Ixion Brotherhood" Sir Richard explained "Basically they are a bunch of well organised religious zealots with a lot of money, a hell of a lot of followers and potentially a lot of green explosive tucked away somewhere."

"That green shit that nearly blew up young Jack and also wiped out poor old Dave Collins a while back?" Fuller asked with obvious concern.

"The same" The Commander confirmed with a grim look "It turns out Gary Hansell, you remember, the guy who flew out of a window on the twenty fifth floor of The Shard just over six months ago had a little side-line in weapons peddling and there is strong evidence to suggest he sold this Orbison character a truck load of it."

"Oh dear..." Fuller responded "No wonder you have been wanting to keep a lid on it" he then remarked.

"The intelligence we have suggests there are followers of this Ixion group everywhere thanks to the widespread influence of social media spreading Lord Chaos' teachings far and wide" Sir Richard continued.

"Are you suggesting that there may be a mole inside the Security Service?" Fuller asked.

"It's possible" The Commander confirmed "and if the message that Tim Blake got purporting to be from the Ministry of Justice is as we suspect a forgery as well then there is the possibility that they have a mole too."

"Walls have ears..." Sir Richard remarked.

"Well..." Fuller took another closer look at the message paper "I might be able to do some discrete digging around and see where this really came from with a little work."

"I'd appreciate that" The Commander confirmed.

"From that it may then be possible to identify its true source and see who may have really sent it" Fuller continued.

"Whilst you are about it, perhaps you could check all our communications channels and see if there are any other spurious messages floating around?" Sir Richard suggested.

"Not a problem" Fuller readily agreed "As long as I can find an entry point into the system, I can trace everything from there" he confirmed.

Sir Richard finished his coffee and then looked across at The Commander who was clearly thinking as he stared out across the cafe towards the front window.

"Commander?" Sir Richard called but to no initial response.

"Sir?" Fuller then tried to get his attention.

"Commander" Sir Richard tried a different tactic "There is an infinite number of monkeys outside who want to talk to us about this script for Hamlet they've worked out."

"Okay..." The Commander responded, still distant in thought until he suddenly snapped back again "Err what?" he then called.

"You seemed to be away with the fairies as my old grandmother used to say" Sir Richard explained.

"I have just had an idea..." The Commander began to slowly explain.

"Oh dear" Sir Richard remarked.

"What?" The Commander responded.

"It's just that whenever you have an idea" Sir Richard explained "that is usually the point where all hell breaks loose, the overtime budget goes out of the window and the Home Secretary starts repeatedly banging his or her head on their desk for a week or until they pass out, whichever comes first."

"Are my ideas really that bad?" The Commander asked.

"Yes" both Fuller and Sir Richard answered simultaneously.

"Ombudsman General Glock is still wading through the tidal wave of paperwork that landed on his desk after your last idea" Sir Richard confirmed.

"I'm sure he will manage" The Commander responded, "I just wondered what would happen if we were to stir the proverbial pot a little, kick over a few rocks and see what crawls out?"

"I know I am going to regret asking this but what exactly do you have in mind?" Sir Richard cautiously asked.

"I suggest we shake the tree a bit" The Commander suggested "Rattle him a bit and see what happens."

“You do know this guy has connections and followers everywhere don’t you?” Sir Richard warned.

“Which makes it all the more important that we nip this chaps plans in the bud before he does any damage” The Commander insisted.

“The CIA won’t like you sniffing around” Fuller warned.

“Just adds to the fun” The Commander responded with a wry grin.

“So, what angle do you propose to take?” Sir Richard then asked.

“Orbison seems to be making and handling vast sums of money from a variety of sources” The Commander explained “some legitimate, others I think we can safely suspect less so.”

“Do I sense the approach of the ‘Taxman Cometh’ routine?” Fuller asked.

“It’s been done before” Sir Richard agreed “Claimed a fair few high-profile scalps over the years as well.”

“Exactly” The Commander responded, “We send in the Financial Irregularity guys in to give his accounts a thorough going over and see what floats to the surface.”

“With lots of negative publicity over potential tax dodging” Fuller then added “The popular press will lap that up.”

“And if there are any persons of influence who are allies of this Orbison and his merry band” The Commander then continued “the chances are as soon as the whole potential tax dodging line appears in the press, they will be falling over each other to put as much distance between themselves, their bank accounts and the whole sorry mess as fast as possible.”

“Will that be enough though to force Orbison to retreat back beneath whatever rock he crawls out from under?” Fuller then asked.

“Probably not” The Commander conceded “which is where Jack comes in.”

“The body by the railway line case?” Fuller asked.

“Juicy murder or three, suicide off the roof of New Scotland Yard, sinister tattoo’s” The Commander summarised “all the makings of a potential media frenzy if ever I have seen it.”

“Then I presume all we have to do as soon as the news breaks is see who scuttles for cover like cockroaches when the lights come on?” Fuller suggested.

“It could work” Sir Richard remarked “At the very least it may force Orbison to draw back from his position and go back to quietly spouting his nonsense well away from anywhere it can do any harm.”

“What about our compromised communications though?” Fuller pointed out “If this Orbison guy is as clever and connected as I am being told throughout all this then surely he is going to get wind that we are preparing to send the boys from the Inland Revenue round before the ink is dry on the search warrant.”

“Oh, I want him to know” The Commander explained “I want him to be fully conversant with the fact that we are coming to kick his door in and seriously ruin him unless he basically shuts up and goes away.”

“And if he doesn’t as you put it, shut up and go away?” Sir Richard ominously warned.

“Then I shall have to think of a Plan B” The Commander admitted “However, whatever tactic we use against this guy and his merry little band, there is a number one priority that must be observed no matter what and that is the safe recovery of that green explosive stuff before he decides to try it out.”

“I’ll drink to that” Sir Richard heartily agreed.

"Hmm, nice little place in the country" Jack remarked as he and Shelby arrived at the gate which marked the start of a short meticulously tended gravel driveway that led up to a thatched cottage set in gardens that still looked beautiful even though they were now in the cold grip of winter.

"I guess crime really does pay" Shelby responded as they proceeded up the driveway towards the front door which was when something important occurred to him "Err Jack, do we have a warrant?" he then asked.

"Details, details" Jack dismissed his enquiry with a wry smirk as he stepped up to the door and rang the bell.

"I was just asking that’s all" Shelby responded.

"Look, I am sure in a few moments she will answer the door and invite us in for tea and biscuits" Jack remarked as he then tried the doorbell again.

"Whereupon we tell her that her husband is dead, and her daughter has married a loony old enough to be her grandfather" Shelby added "Going to kind of put a dampener on things wouldn't you say?"

"Of course there could be a completely different scenario here" Jack then commented as with a note of concern he opened the door having realised it was in fact unlocked all the time.

"Ah..." Shelby remarked.

"You go around the back" Jack instructed as he drew his old six shot revolver.

"Okay" Shelby declared as he drew his own considerably more modern looking Glock pistol before heading away to the door at the rear of the house.

Jack with his gun pointing ahead, carefully opened the door and stepped inside where he found nothing untoward in amongst the neat English country cottage interior, the only sounds being his breathing and the genteel ticking of an antique grandfather clock in the front hallway.

"Back door was wide open too" Shelby then called as he appeared on the other side of the room having entered the house by way of the kitchen.

"How many live here did you say?" Jack then asked.

"Electoral Register says just his wife and supposedly the daughter as well" Shelby confirmed.

"Check upstairs" Jack nodded towards the stairs nearby "I'll finish looking around down here" he confirmed.

"Roger that" Shelby agreed before heading upstairs.

Jack looked around the interior of the room, carefully opening drawers and cupboards but finding nothing of immediate interest before moving on into the kitchen.

"What a mess" Jack remarked as he saw a quantity of completely defrosted and melted food items strewn on the counter adjacent to the freezer.

"Nothing upstairs, all in order it looks like" Shelby confirmed as he returned.

"That is no way to treat an Artic Roll" Jack almost mournfully remarked.

"It looks like someone was defrosting the freezer and then got interrupted before they could put the stuff back in" Shelby commented.

"The freezer is on though" Jack turned around and looked at the tall aluminium finish chest freezer before reaching for the handle and instinctively only opening it slightly.

"Ah..." he then remarked as they both looked on with a sense of shock upon finding a body wrapped tightly in clear plastic crammed inside.

"The lady of the house I presume?" Shelby asked.

"Probably" Jack agreed "but which one, the wife or the daughter?"

"Hard to tell" Shelby commented.

"I don't think we will know for sure until the Scene of Crime guys have extracted and defrosted her" Jack confirmed as he respectfully closed the freezer door again.

"Shall I summon the aforementioned Scenes of Crime guys?" Shelby then asked.

“Indeed” Jack agreed “Mind you I reckon at the rate we have been throwing bodies at them over the last few days we should be qualifying for some sort of frequent customer discount by now” he mournfully added.

Shelby reached for his mobile phone to make the call as Jack looked all around his surroundings as if in search of inspiration.

“Wait here” Jack then instructed Shelby as he was waiting for his call to be answered “I’m going to have a shuftly around.”

“Right you are” Shelby responded “Give me a shout if you need me” he then called.

Jack walked slowly through the house, taking in the details of each room carefully that would normally be missed if one had just passed through. Little things like the holiday souvenirs tucked away on mantelpieces, family photos in silver frames, paintings on the wall, all added to a greater picture of who lived there than any file back at the office could ever tell him.

Eventually Jack found himself in what appeared to be some sort of study or hobby room, from its generally slightly disorganised nature, probably where the man of the household spent his relaxation time, the small tray of vintage postage stamps on the old polished walnut desk with a pair of tweezers and a magnifying glass alongside giving some indication of the late occupant of this room’s personal interests.

“Scenes of Crime are on the way” Shelby then called as he joined Jack in the study “About half an hour they said.”

“Great, thanks” Jack responded as he continued to study the details in the room carefully before sitting down in the old leather button back chair that sat in front of the desk, the material creaking with age and fatigue.

“No computer” Shelby remarked as he looked all around.

“Not everyone is permanently glued to a screen these days you know” Jack responded as he started to discreetly look through papers and items on the desk “There are still a precious few left who eschew the modern world you know.”

“Anything interesting?” Shelby asked.

“Some correspondence here” Jack confirmed “Seems that Raffety’s daughter was applying for some sort of musical scholarship with a number of top college’s” he commented “presumably all that went west when she hooked up with that obnoxious Orbison guy.”

“You’ve never met the guy” Shelby responded, surprised by Jack’s already obvious dislike for a man that he had not so much as even seen let alone spoken to.

“I’ve heard enough about him, his ideologies and his trail of human wreckage that he leaves in his wake, Raffety’s daughter being the next in line no doubt, to tell me that this is a man that should be kept on a leash and downwind at all times” Jack explained as he continued to search in and around the desk.

“What’s in here?” Shelby then went over to a cupboard and opened the door to then look on with interest at what he found inside “Here Jack, take a look at this” he then called, standing aside to show him the tall glass fronted cabinet inside which could be seen three shotguns, secured in a rack with very secure locks.

“It’s the countryside” Jack remarked, having swivelled around in the chair to look “Most rural places like this have shotguns, pretty much par for the course.”

“Hmmm...” Shelby responded as he closed the cupboard door again “I hope you are right.”

“Do you see any rabbits around here?” Jack then asked as he returned to the desk once more and continued his search.

“No...” Shelby responded.

“Well there you are then” Jack confirmed before concluding his search of the desk “Well, there’s not much there.”

“That’s a very odd painting to have on a study wall” Shelby remarked as he stepped over to take a closer look at an old framed print of a painting of three Victorian police officers in a London street, the picture itself looking old and faded whilst the frame itself was in much the same neglected condition.

“I wonder if the late Mr Raffety had a sense of humour?” Jack asked as he stood up and joined Shelby in front of the picture that he then proceeded to hold by either side of the frame before carefully lifting it off the wall.

“Ah ha...” Jack then called as removing the painting revealed an old style safe mounted in the wall “Now we are getting somewhere” he declared.

“How are you going to get in it?” Shelby asked as he watched Jack study the old-fashioned cast metal door of the safe carefully.

“Fortunately, it’s just a lock type, no combination so I should be able to get this open easily” Jack explained as he reached inside his uniform tunic and extracted a small leather pouch which he opened up to reveal a number of lock picking tools.

Shelby looked on astounded as he watched Jack work on the lock before a few moments later, pausing with a look of glee on his face, he then reached for the handle and it moved, allowing him to open the safe.

“Where the hell did you learn to do that?” Shelby asked.

“Just a little skill I picked up from my parents” Jack confirmed “Well Tracy to be precise” he explained as he proceeded to open the door which revealed the contents in the light for the first time.

Shelby took out a torch and shone it in the safe so that they could see the contents better which was when the first thing that Jack saw in there immediately caught his attention and he took out a handkerchief from his pocket.

“Bag please” he then called as he took a pistol out from the safe, held between thumb and forefinger, protected by the handkerchief to prevent any possible contamination of evidence before dropping it into the clear plastic evidence bag that Shelby produced who then proceeded to seal it.

“Anything else in there?” Shelby asked as Jack resumed his search of the safe, taking out its contents and placing them on the desk.

“This looks like it” Jack remarked as they looked down at a leather dossier and a small lock box, the latter of which he then proceeded to open as it had its small key already present in the lock.

“More keys” Shelby commented as the lock box was opened to reveal several keys as well as a vintage Omega watch and some antique looking wedding rings.

“Interesting” Jack took out the collection of keys, all mounted on one large ring and took a keen interest in one key in particular “This looks like a safety deposit box type key.”

“You’ve seen one of these before?” Shelby asked.

“Oh yes” Jack confirmed “I have had experience with such things, the question is where is the box that this key goes with?”

“What about that leather folder?” Shelby then asked as he picked it up, looked at it and then passed it to Jack who took it over to the desk and opened it before carefully taking out the contents.

“Newspaper cuttings” Jack confirmed as he leafed through the pieces of paper contained inside “Some photographs as well by the looks of it.”

“All about Michael Orbison” Shelby commented as they both looked through the newspaper clippings, some of them dating back many years, a fact emphasised by the yellowing and faded nature of the paper they were printed on.

“Looks like someone has been doing some research” Jack agreed “and judging by these photos, some surveillance work as well.”

“So this guy Raffety” Shelby asked “He was a cat burglar you say?”

“Indeed he was” Jack confirmed “and a very good one too by all accounts, even did work for some Government agencies on the side if what I understand was being hinted at is correct.”

“This does seem a bit odd for someone who is casing a target for a burglary though” Shelby then remarked “There is lots of information about the man dating back years, decades even but nothing about what I would perceive as the target for any intended larceny.”

“I agree” Jack responded “There is a lot more to this than just a burglary, either Raffety stumbled on something Orbison and his minions didn’t want him to see or something else is at work here.”

“I think I’ve found something else here” Shelby then produced a slip of paper that was stuck down the back of the folder and showed it to Jack who took it and examined it carefully.

The piece of paper was a bit of newsprint that had been torn off the blank bottom page margin when it had been used to hastily write a note in blue fountain pen. All it said was a number and some letters.

“H&P, 13186” Jack read and then paused in thought for a moment.

“13186 is the number on this safety deposit box key” Shelby pointed out after double checking the engraved numerals on it to make doubly sure.

“Hawthorne & Pearce” Jack then declared like some kind of revelation.

“Who and who?” Shelby asked.

“It’s an old family firm bank in West Kensington” Jack explained “It specialises in accounts and safety deposit boxes for those members of the society who want to draw as little attention to their financial business as possible, particularly high ranking members of the Security Services, politicians and those from the other side of the legal divide.”

“Just the sort of place an old school cat burglar like Raffety would use to lock away his loot” Shelby concluded.

“And his secrets I would wager” Jack confirmed “I think I had better pay Hawthorne & Pearce a visit later and take a look at what secrets this little key is hiding.”

“Is that him?” one of the Surveillance Officers located in a small room behind a two-way mirror asked as he photographed a number of passengers arriving at Gate Fourteen of Gatwick Airport’s South Terminal.

“Let’s take a look” Dent responded as he put down his coffee and came over, taking the camera and looking through the viewfinder.

“IC6 male, six foot two, slim build in a beige overcoat, carrying a blue holdall” the first Surveillance Officer suggested.

“Yes, that’s our boy all right” Dent confirmed “Looks like our friends in German Intelligence were on the money this time.”

Dent and his two Surveillance Officers watched intently as the target of their operation approached the Passport Control Desk and was seen to hand over his official documentation.

“Zebra Three from Oscar One” Dent called into his radio to his operative on the Passport Control Desk who could hear him by way of the hidden device in her ear “We need to see that passport please” he then requested.

“Here we go” one of the Surveillance Officers called as they looked at the feed from a hidden CCTV camera located behind the desk as the passport details page came into view.

“Freeze that” Dent called before peering closely at the screen “Emmanuel Jesus Balista, born Cape Town, fourteenth April 1983” he confirmed.

“No, not on our list” the other Surveillance Officer confirmed as she checked a folder containing various identifications.

“Cloned stolen passport from someone with a similar surname most likely” Dent confirmed before reaching for the radio “Okay Zebra Three, we got it, let the nice man go on his way with a big friendly smile.”

They then watched as the passport was duly stamped and handed back to its owner before the subject picked up his holdall and walked away.

“All right boys and girls” Dent then called over the radio “Our suspect is in play” he confirmed “IC6 male, approximately six feet two, slim build, beige overcoat and blue holdall, heading for the Airport exit now.”

“Zulu Five received, in position” came a swift response.

“I want eyes on this guy at all times as well as anyone he meets up with” Dent then continued “I want to know where he goes, where he is staying and what is in that holdall” he instructed.

“Zulu Five to Oscar One” then came a call “Target is approaching the railway station, looks like he is heading for the Gatwick Express on Platform Six.”

“Be on that train” Dent quickly ordered “and let me remind you all that under no circumstances is anyone outside of this team is to know about this guy or what we are up to, that includes the Security & Police Service, is that understood?”

“Understood Sir” came the response over the radio.

“So when are you going to tell the Director General what we are up to?” the other Surveillance Officer then asked.

“When he asks me what the hell I am up to and not a moment before” Dent determinedly confirmed.

"Our friend has arrived My Lord" Reaper informed Orbison as he entered the Broadcast Chamber, a few minutes before he was scheduled to begin his latest online sermon.

"Excellent" Orbison responded, practically rubbing his hands with glee "See that arrangements are made to ensure his visit is not troubled by the interference of certain security organisations" he then instructed.

"Already in hand My Lord" Reaper confirmed "Meanwhile, this just came in from one of our Brothers" he then passed across a piece of paper.

"A safety deposit box" Orbison remarked as he read the details "How quaintly old fashioned."

"It looks like whatever it was that old thief had managed to discover is locked away there" Reaper then confirmed.

"Very well" Orbison declared "Assuming we don't have the key..."

"We don't My Lord" Reaper then confirmed "It must have been well hidden when we searched his house the other night".

"In which case we must take action" Orbison declared "Send for five of our bravest and most dedicated Brothers" he ordered "Their souls must be prepared for Martyrdom to the Brotherhood, their minds at peace and their hearts thumping with passion."

"I've already taken the liberty of notifying a suitable group drawn from the Third Circle" Reaper duly confirmed "All they need is the word."

"My dear friend" Orbison responded with a smile "the word is given" he confirmed.

"My Lord, without a key..." Reaper began to point out.

"Worry not Brother" Orbison calmly reassured him as he went over to a wall safe and proceeded to open it "Our good patron saints have granted us the key right here" he declared as he produced from inside the safe a bar of green X232 high explosive and a sealed detonator which he then reverently handed over, accompanied by a discrete genuflection.

Reaper looked at the explosive and its accompanying detonator in his hands with an expression almost of admiration.

"I want the contents of that box or its total and unequivocal destruction within two hours" Orbison then clearly instructed.

"By your command My Lord" Reaper confirmed with a respectful bow.

"To Life Immortal" Orbison replied.

It was almost midday by the time Jack had returned to London and with Shelby having gone on back to the office, he travelled alone to West Kensington Underground Station.

Exiting out into the daylight, Jack knew exactly where he was going, the ornate and almost quaintly old-fashioned premises of the family owned firm of Hawthorne & Pearce, a private banking and safety deposit firm.

Jack had been there before a few years earlier so he already knew the way but had forgotten that they closed for one hour for lunch and when he arrived at their door duly discovered that there was still fifteen minutes remaining until they were scheduled to reopen.

"Nuts..." Jack remarked to himself but then turned his attention to his own nutritional requirements, crossing the road to Terry's Café located on the opposite corner from the bank.

Something did very briefly catch Jack's attention as he crossed the road though, but his hunger and thirst soon overcame this as he entered the café.

"Jack, long time, no see" Terry, the owner of the café called from behind the serving counter as the young Security Service officer entered.

"How have you been?" Jack asked as he took a seat on one of the tall stools in front of the counter.

"Oh, you know, same old same old" Terry confirmed "How about you?"

"Busy would be a pretty apt description I think" Jack readily admitted.

"And an Officer of the Security Service now no less" Terry added.

"Indeed" Jack confirmed "Three days now, at least I think it's three days, it's all gone by in a bit of a blur to be honest."

"What'll it be then?" Terry then asked.

"Coffee, black and a bacon sandwich, don't skimp on the ketchup please" Jack then requested.

"Coming right up" Terry then declared.

A few moments later Terry brought over Jack's coffee.

"Thanks" Jack responded before, with a thoughtful look as he took a sip "tell me" he then continued "Is there still a tatty blue Vauxhall Astra, dubious MOT and with four moody looking occupants parked outside, just up the road from Hawthorne & Pearce?" he asked.

"Blue Astra..." Terry responded as he brought Jack's sandwich over before discreetly looking over him through the window to the street outside "Yep, still there" he then confirmed.

"Ah, it's probably nothing" Jack then dismissed his concern and turned his attention to his lunch.

In fact there were five individuals rather than four in the car with three squeezed rather tightly into the rear seats of the vehicle.

In the front passenger seat sat Reaper who looked on towards the main entrance of the bank with an expression of intense concentration and thought.

"All right my Brothers" he then announced to the others in the car "We all know why we are here; this is for the Brotherhood."

"For the Brotherhood!" the others reverently declared in unison.

"Brother Clive" Reaper then addressed the driver "Remain here and keep the engine running" he instructed.

"Yes Sir" the Driver respectfully confirmed.

Back in the café, Jack was munching his way through his bacon sandwich and casting occasional glances back through the window behind him at the car he had earlier identified.

"Go on, prove me wrong" Jack remarked to himself as he then saw the large bronze doors that marked the main entrance into the bank begin to open.

However, as it turned out that was the moment that the men in the car had been waiting for as they quickly bundled out of the car, weapons in hand and rushed the Assistant who had just opened the door and was about to head back inside.

"Damm!" Jack quickly reacted as he leapt off the stool and drew his gun before heading out the door.

"Lima Tango Nine Nine Three" Jack then called into his radio as he raced across the road, dodging around passing traffic "Ultraviolet Priority message."

A few miles away in the New Scotland Yard main control room, one of the dispatch officers on duty quickly picked up the call.

"This is Lima Alpha Control receiving" the dispatch officer responded, "Pass your message."

“Armed robbery in progress!” Jack called into the radio as he reached the other side of the road and headed directly towards the bank where the sounds of screaming, shouting and most ominously of all, gunshots could now be heard “Hawthorne & Pearce, West Kensington.”

“Understood Lima Tango Nine Nine Three” the dispatch officer confirmed as she pressed a couple of buttons on her desk “Armed Response and the Flying Squad have been red flashed and back-up is on the way.”

“Thanks” Jack responded as he reached the door and positioned himself up against the pillar before carefully peering around to look inside.

Inside the bank, most of the staff were now face down on the floor as two of the attackers stood over them, guns pointed straight at them whilst the other two who had entered the bank were nowhere to be seen as far as Jack could see from his vantage point.

In fact the other two were with the Manager who they had grabbed and, with a gun held to his head, forced downstairs to the lower level where the safety deposit box vault was located.

“Open it, NOW!” Reaper ordered.

“I told you, it’s on a time lock, I can’t open it” the Manager protested.

“Brother...” the other man present called whereupon they both listened in silence for a moment to the sound of distant sirens approaching outside.

“We don’t have time for this” Reaper then confirmed “Give me the plastic” he then indicated the bag the other man had brought in with him, slung over his shoulder.

Outside, Jack had moved away from the door and was attempting to get onlookers to stand well back when the first back-up arrived.

“Afternoon Jack” Divisional Commander Bob Thornton of the Specialist Firearms Squad called as he quickly got out of the front passenger seat of his marked Security Service vehicle almost before it had come to a stop “What’s occurring?” he then asked.

“Four men” Jack confirmed as the rest of Bob’s team, also fully armed and with full body armour deployed from the vehicle and joined them “automatic weapons and the willingness to use them.”

“Right, we’ve got this” Bob then declared “Have they got any transport?” he then asked.

“Tatty blue Astra parked over there” Jack pointed over towards the car “Oh drat...” he then realized he had forgotten about the possibility that there may have been a fifth assailant, driving the car.

As soon as the driver of the car saw the officers look towards him he realized it was time for a swift exit and gunning the engine, he accelerated away only to lose control and swerve into a parked van nearby, the impact throwing him from the seat where he had not been wearing his seat belt and impacting his head into the windscreen.

“Gaz, Zoe” Bob motioned to two of his officers who quickly responded by heading over to the car and with guns drawn and pointing ahead, opened the car door, turned off the engine and then checked the driver where they found him unconscious but still breathing.

“I could see two in the lobby but I don’t know where the other two went” Jack then informed Bob and his team “It’s possible they may have gone down to the vault floor though.”

“Stay here” Bob instructed “Everyone else, with me” he then called before leading his team into the bank.

“ARMED SECURITY SERVICE OFFICERS!!” Bob then called “DROP YOUR WEAPONS AND PUT YOUR HANDS ON YOUR HEADS!” he ordered.

To the surprise of both him and his team, the two armed raiders in the lobby did as asked, quickly dropping their guns and turning around to face them, their hands up in surrender.

“Brian, Ahmed” Bob then called to two of his officers “Do the honours, the rest of you let’s get these good folk out of here.”

Jack watched as some of Bob’s team quickly rushed the bank employees who had been held hostage in the main lobby out into the street and to safety. They were followed a few moments later by the two arrested men who were bound head and foot and so had to be carried to the waiting Security Service prisoner van that had just arrived.

Back inside, Bob and the remaining members of his team began to advance, guns drawn, down the stairs towards the basement level where the safety deposit box vault was located. As they approached however, they were forced to stop when someone appeared coming towards them.

“Hold it right there!” Bob called.

“It’s all right don’t shoot” a voice called “I’m the Manager” the man then confirmed as he appeared, trembling with fear and with his hands held high.

“Come on” Bob then grabbed him and hauled him past his officers.

“There’s two of them down there, they are trying to open the vault door with explosives” he then warned.

“Jesus!!” Bob responded, “Is there anyone else in the building?” he then asked with an obvious sense of urgency.

“Everyone except myself were being held in the lobby” the Manager confirmed.

“Everybody out, NOW!” Bob then called urgently over the radio.

“Oh hello, The Sweeney is here” Jack remarked as two Ford Mondeo saloon cars with sirens and lights in full cry screeched to a halt in amidst the chaos outside the bank and Lieutenant Commander Blake emerged from the front passenger seat of the lead car quickly followed by the rest of his Flying Squad team.

“Hello Jack” Blake called as he joined him on the pavement outside the bank, now cordoned off by patrol officers who had just arrived on the scene and quickly taped off and evacuated the immediate area “Fancy meeting you here” he remarked.

“It’s a small world” Jack admitted.

“Everybody clear out of here!” Bob called as he suddenly emerged from the bank with the Manager and the rest of his team and began to run away from the building “Move it, MOVE IT!” he then urgently reiterated.

“What the...?” Blake exclaimed but quickly followed the others and together with Jack they went around and ducked down behind one of the Flying Squad’s cars.

“What’s happening?” Jack asked as he and Bob crouched down behind the bonnet end of the car.

“Whoever these comedians are, they’ve got explosives and they are trying to use it on the vault door” Bob confirmed, breathing heavily from having run so quickly, no mean feat given the weight of weaponry and body armour he was carrying as well.

“Explosives?” Blake asked seeming in disbelief “Really?”

It was at that exact moment that the ground shook and a deafening noise was heard as an explosion erupted from the lower level of the building, the green flash from it preceding a shockwave a moment later which on reaching the ground level, blew out the door and windows and sent dust and debris into the street forcing everyone outside to duck down and take cover as a result.

“I think that is a pretty big yes” Jack responded as he and the others got up and looked back towards the bank where the dust was still hanging thickly in the air and the alarm was sounding amidst the last echoes of the explosion dying away.

“What is this, amateur hour?” Blake remarked “Who the hell tries to knock off a safety deposit job in broad daylight?”

“Someone rather desperate I would wager” Bob remarked.

“Was that a green flash I saw when it went off?” Jack then asked around as, dusting himself off, he, Barwell and Bob moved cautiously back towards the building.

“I think so” Blake confirmed “Is that significant?” he then asked.

“Maybe” Jack confirmed “Just maybe.”

“Good grief, what the hell happened?” came a familiar voice from behind them causing them all to turn around and see The Commander standing there amidst the rapidly dissipating dust cloud looking around at the mess.

“Some comedians decided to try and play bank robbers by the looks of it Sir” Bob confirmed “We have two under arrest in the van, their getaway driver is on his way to hospital under armed guard shortly and the two who were none too clever with explosives by the looks of it are probably still downstairs, dead I would wager.”

“Better check it out though” The Commander responded.

“Yes Sir” Bob confirmed “Come on” he then called to those of his team who were not otherwise engaged in other duties “Follow me, let’s go and see what’s left of them.”

Jack, Blake and The Commander all followed Bob and his team through the damaged main doors of the bank where inside there as a strong contrast to the view earlier, now the interior was dark, the lights no longer functioned, debris was strewn everywhere and dust hung heavily in the air.

“Mop, bucket and a lick of paint, it’ll be fine” Jack remarked as he looked around the wrecked interior of the bank.

“Vault floor stairs are over there” Bob indicated ahead before carefully leading the others, picking their way carefully through the mess until they reached the stairs.

“Light coming up Sir” one of Bob’s team called as he produced a large and powerful torch which he switched on and shone ahead down the staircase.

“Watch your step everyone” Bob then instructed before they gingerly headed down the steps, reaching the wrecked interior of the vault floor a few moments later.

“Well that looks like one of them” Bob looked down, using the torch mounted on his weapon to illuminate the scorched body on the ground, one of the raiders who was clearly killed instantly when the explosion occurred.

“Yuck” Jack responded, “So where is the other one?” he then asked.

“Could be in a million bits” The Commander advised cautiously “You’ve seen what that green explosive stuff can do yourself.”

“Don’t remind me” Jack responded.

“Well despite the amateur theatrics” Blake remarked “It looks like their efforts did manage to get the door open” he nodded up ahead towards the large round vault door which was showing signs of severe damage and was now ajar, the light from inside the safety deposit box room shining through gap between it and the substantial and equally damaged frame.

“Here, give me a hand with this” Bob called to the others as he pulled at the door, attempting to open it further.

Blake, Jack, The Commander and a couple of Bob’s team all grabbed onto the huge metal door and with their combined efforts and strength were successful in pulling it open further, enough for them to pass through the opening comfortably.

“How come the lights are still working in here?” Jack then asked.

“All large vaults like this have to have a separate power supply to lights and ventilation independent of the main building systems” Blake explained “Health and Safety requirement.”

“Well there is the other one” Bob then called as they saw the body of the second man lying, slumped over a table in the centre of the vault.

Jack went up to the man and looked at his face which was when he noticed that his face was moving ever so slightly. Instinctively he stepped forward and checked for a pulse.

“Bloody hell” Jack then exclaimed “this guy is still alive” he announced.

“Lima Zulu One to Lima Zulu Five” Bob quickly called into his radio “Hold that Paramedic Unit” he then instructed “I’ve got another one alive down in the vault” he confirmed.

“Will do boss” came the response from his officer outside in the street.

As two of Bob’s officers carefully lifted the injured and unconscious man up to take him away, Jack noticed something in his left hand that fell to the floor whereupon he stooped down to pick it up.

“Interesting” Jack remarked as he looked at the piece of paper, holding it up to the light to get a better look at it as it had been damaged by the explosion and what was written on it was not too legible without looking very carefully.

“You’ve got something?” The Commander asked as he joined him in looking at the piece of paper.

“A number, 13186” Jack confirmed.

“13186” The Commander responded and looked around him before proceeding towards one of the banks of safety deposit boxes mounted along each wall and beyond in what was a vast underground chamber before finding it.

“Here it is!” he then called which prompted the others to join him.

“They came in here and did all this just to access one single box?” Blake asked.

“It looks like it” The Commander admitted.

“Made a hell of a Horlicks of it in the process as well” Bob commented.

“Why didn’t they just come in the old-fashioned way and use a key?” The Commander then asked.

“Because, and I know this for certain, they don’t have it” Jack explained as he reached into his uniform tunic pocket “I’ve got it” he then confirmed, producing the key he had found at Raffety’s home earlier in the morning and brandishing it aloft to looks of astonishment from Blake and The Commander who were stood either side of him at that moment.

“I think you have some explaining to do young man” The Commander responded.

“The reason I was here when this all kicked off was I found this key at Raffety’s home earlier and I was coming here to see what it was he had hidden away” Jack explained “That was when this goon squad turned up with what seems to be the same idea.”

“But very different methods” Bob pointed out.

“Quite” Jack agreed “Ah well, when in Rome” he remarked before inserting the key into the correct lock and turning it which in turn released the metal door and allowed him to access the box inside.

“Don’t you need a warrant to do that?” Bob asked cautiously as Jack slid the box out and placed it on the table nearby.

“Probably” Jack admitted.

“I do admit I haven’t allowed such elementary issues to get in my way in the past” The Commander admitted “Seems you have picked up some of my bad habits” he then remarked.

“Some?” Blake commented with a wry smile as Jack opened the box to reveal a black box file inside which he proceeded to carefully take out.

“Anyway” Jack continued “Raffety is dead and so is his wife as we found her stuffed into a freezer this morning and I suspect the daughter could also be at risk so it’s now the proverbial straw clutching time.”

“Another body?” The Commander exclaimed to which Jack mere nodded in confirmation “There goes the pathology budget for another year” he then remarked.

“Right” Jack declared as he took the heavy box file under his arm before returning the metal box back to its original location and locking it once more “Let’s get out of here, find some freshly brewed coffee and see what I have got here.”

The Paramedic Ambulance carrying the two injured raiders raced through the streets of south west London bound for St George's Hospital A&E in nearby Tooting. In addition to the two patients, the back of the Ambulance also contained two of Bob's armed officers and a Paramedic who was checking that the two men were stable for the duration of the journey.

"How are they looking?" one of Bob's officers asked as the Paramedic finished her checks of the second patient, the one dragged out of the vault.

"I think this guy is coming around" the Paramedic confirmed "Lucky boy..." she then remarked as she discreetly fiddled with something out of sight just below the stretcher.

"Very lucky from what I heard" the first Officer agreed.

"That is what happens to the chosen of the Brotherhood" the Paramedic then declared to quizzical looks from the two Officers.

"What?" one of them responded.

The Paramedic said nothing more, just turned around and swiftly shot one of the officers in the neck with a tranquiliser dart whilst the other Officer was similarly taken care of by the patient who it turned out was now far more conscious than they had been led to believe.

"Pull over!" Reaper then called up the front to the driver whereupon the Ambulance slowed to a stop near a small public park.

As soon as it stopped, Reaper and the Paramedic disarmed the two unconscious officers, additionally taking away their phones and radios before hauling them out of the back of the Ambulance and placing them sat, leaning against each other on a bench before returning to the vehicle.

"Okay, let's go" Reaper then called up towards the front whereupon the driver quickly accelerated away.

Outside the bank where the scene was now one of damage repair and recovery, the Security Service had pulled back to an outer cordon allowing the Fire Service and structural engineers in to make everything safe whilst the Bomb Disposal Squad were also now on the scene checking for any more explosives.

"My, my, my" Tracy remarked as she arrived on the scene, alighting from her Security Service motorbike, removing her helmet and surveying the wreckage "What a mess..."

At that point Divisional Commander Jim Appleby also arrived, he had travelled to the site by Underground from Holborn as soon as he heard one of his officers was involved in the incident.

“Afternoon Jim” Tracy called “Are you looking for Jack by any chance?” she asked as they both stood there looking towards the badly damaged building.

“Indeed” Appleby confirmed “Tell me Divisional Commander, does the various members of your family go out specifically looking for trouble or does it just follow you around.”

“Wherever there is a Caverner or a Regent there is usually chaos and mayhem” Tracy wryly admitted.

“Looks like Jack is following in the family tradition then” Appleby remarked.

“Indeed” Tracy agreed.

Since the incident had begun, Terry’s Café nearby had become a sort of unofficial Security Service operations centre and canteen which was where Tracy with Appleby following closely behind proceeded to find what seemed like half the Security Service in there.

“Business is brisk by the looks of it” Appleby remarked as they entered the café and saw the bustling scene before them.

Over near the counter, Jack could be seen with The Commander, Bob and Blake who were about to order a much-needed late lunch.

“Tim, a pleasure to see you again” Terry called as the two men shook hands over the counter, Before Terry had opened the café he was a senior Security Service officer himself who took retirement and knew many of the current staff “What will it be?” he then asked.

“We’re The Sweeney son, and we haven’t had any dinner” Blake called with a wry smile.

“You’ve been waiting years to say that haven’t you?” The Commander asked whilst Jack alongside tried and failed to suppress giggles.

“Let me get these in” Appleby called as he joined them “then young Jack we can all sit down around a table and you can tell me what the hell is going on.”

“Yes Guv” Jack agreed.

A few minutes later and with their food and drink obtained, Jack, Tracy, The Commander, Appleby and Blake sat down around a table in the far corner.

“Okay” Appleby then called as he picked up his bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwich “Let’s hear it, from the top and don’t leave anything out.”

“As most of you know” Jack began having taken a sip of a fresh coffee first “a few days ago the body of one Leonard or Leo Rafferty was discovered adjacent to the down fast running line near Star Lane bridge just south of Coulsdon, his death was not accidental or suicide and he did not die at the scene, instead it appears he was murdered and then the body dumped there subsequently in a very shambolic attempt to make it look like suicide.”

“I take it Rafferty is the owner of the safety deposit box that has generated all the excitement this afternoon?” Blake asked.

“Indeed” Jack confirmed “Lieutenant Shelby managed to find an address for Rafferty and we duly went around first thing this morning whereupon we discovered someone had tragically allowed a perfectly good Artic Roll to melt to make room for Rafferty’s wife who was in fact dead, stuffed into the kitchen freezer.”

“Eww...” The Commander responded, “What a waste of an Artic Roll.”

“Any sign of the daughter you mentioned?” Tracy asked.

“Some of you may be aware, others not” Jack continued “It seems that the Rafferty’s daughter, a girl by the name of Jemma Lotte has somehow got mixed up with this Ixion Brotherhood lot, reportedly now the latest in a long line of ‘wives’ that their leader Orbison has taken over the years.”

“Apparently Orbison likes his ladies young and ditches them the moment their either cease being a teenager or they get pregnant” The Commander added “so he has managed to leave a trail of human wreckage in his wake pretty much unchecked for decades.”

“Sounds like a rather unpleasant piece of work” Blake remarked “Would you like me to send round a couple of my lads to kick his door in and give his drum a spin?” he suggested.

“Tempting” Jack admitted “but for now I think I will keep things low profile.”

“Low profile?!?” Appleby exclaimed with a snort that almost sent the coffee he was drinking across the table “How many bodies have you notched up since you started?”

“Err, two directly” Jack recalled “Rafferty and his wife and a few indirectly if you count the Ixion Brotherhood guy who chucked himself off the roof yesterday and his two victims who are both connected to Rafferty it would seem.”

"And the dead guy down near the vault" The Commander added as a reminder.

“So, what’s in the box?” Tracy asked, motioning towards the box file that Jack had recovered from the safety deposit box resting by his side on the table.

“Whatever it is, someone seemed very hell bent on getting hold of it before you did” The Commander commented.

“Lucky I got here when I did then” Jack responded before a thought suddenly occurred to him “Hang about...”

“What?” Tracy asked.

“How did those guys know about the box?” Jack generally asked, “I only found the key this morning and it and the number of the box it fitted have been on my person ever since.”

“They must have found out from the wife before they killed her surely?” Blake suggested.

“But the key and the details of the box number were secured in a hidden safe that had not been disturbed” Jack pointed out “There was no way they could have even known of its existence.”

“Did you tell anyone else about it before you came here?” The Commander asked.

“Only Lieutenant Shelby” Jack confirmed “You don’t think...?” he tailed off almost in horror at the potential thought that had just occurred to him.

The Commander quickly got on his mobile and speed dialled a number.

“Simon” he called as soon as Fuller answered “I need you to pull the personnel jacket on one of the Transport Division’s Lieutenants’ name of Shelby and then pull apart his life.”

“You think he’s dirty?” Appleby asked with obvious concern.

“If the cap fits...” Jack responded with a tinge of sadness.

“Give Simon an hour and we will have his whole life story thoroughly sieved, sorted, pressed and dried” The Commander confirmed.

“So...” Tracy remarked with insatiable curiosity “Aren’t you going to open it?” she indicated the recovered box file.

“I was just trying to find the right moment” Jack explained “After all, it would be a hell of an anti-climax if it were empty wouldn’t it?”

“Especially with this audience” Blake remarked.

“Okay, here goes...” Jack announced but just as he was about to release the catch that kept the box closed, someone’s mobile phone began to ring.

“Mine!” Bob called as he checked his phone “Sorry, I had better take this if you will excuse me” he then declared, pushing back from the table and leaving.

“I hate it when that happens” The Commander remarked.

“Let’s try that again” Jack then declared as he returned to the box but was only to be interrupted again as Bob on his phone nearby suddenly responded to the news he had just received.

“What?!?” Bob called out “Seriously?” he then responded causing everyone to look around.

“Problem?” Tracy asked.

“The two guys we pulled out of the wreckage of the getaway car and the bank” Bob explained “Looks like they have escaped.”

“Oh great...” The Commander responded, rolling his eyes upwards.

“A couple of Parks Division plod just found my two officers that I sent in the Ambulance to guard them on a park bench a few miles from here” Bob confirmed “tranquiliser darts in their necks would you believe?”

“What the hell is going on around here?” Jack asked generally.

“Bob” Blake asked as he returned to the table “Did you find any I.D. on those two before they left in the ambulance?”

“Nothing so much as a bus ticket” Bob responded, “The only identifying features were matching tattoos on their wrists.”

“Now you’ve got my undivided attention” Jack called as he extracted his mobile and accessed the photo gallery feature on it before finding the image he was looking for and showing it to Bob “Did it look anything like this by any chance?”

“Yeah, I reckon that is pretty much on the money” Bob agreed “Sort of burning wheel thing.”

“Thanks” Jack responded.

“I got to go” Bob then called before nodding with respect and departing.

“Well that definitely confirms what I have suspected for a little while” Jack remarked.

“Which is...?” Tracy asked, almost afraid to hear the answer.

“This Orbison guy and his Ixion Brotherhood are at the heart of this mess and right at the core of my case” Jack explained.

“Tread carefully” The Commander ominously warned “This guy Orbison has connections.”

“And people everywhere by the looks of it” Appleby added.

“I take it that armed robbery is not one of Orbison’s usual hobbies?” Blake asked.

“No, it most definitely isn’t” The Commander confirmed.

“Explains the contradictory nature of the crime then” Blake explained his thinking “On the one hand you have five determined tooled up rent a thugs, that shows professionalism and thinking, then you have them attacking a major financial institution for a safety deposit box in the middle of the day in broad daylight, that is just amateur hour on a huge scale.”

“It says to me something else” Jack responded, “Orbison is desperate” he concluded “He wants whatever inside this box so badly he was willing to risk all this to get his hands on it.”

“Or destroy it to stop us getting our hands on it first” Tracy added.

“I think ladies and gentlemen we have a bit of good old-fashioned jurisdictional conflict going on here” The Commander remarked.

“How come?” Jack responded, “The body was found on railway property, he had been murdered and that makes it a Transport Division job.”

“Which under most normal circumstances would be fine but as we have seen over the last couple of days, circumstances here are far from normal” Tracy remarked.

“Well the armed raid here can safely be labelled as a job for my squad” Blake confirmed “Anything outside of that other than being copied in on anything relevant that may turn up is nothing to do with us.”

“The trouble is the CIA and MI5 are lurking in the shadows” The Commander added “You saw what happened when you did that name search” he remarked to Jack.

“Ah yes, the goon convention in Russell Square” Jack recalled.

“They are only interested in the money laundering aspects of Orbison’s organisation” Tracy commented “although it wouldn’t surprise me if there isn’t a second less obvious agenda underlying that somewhere.”

“Indeed” The Commander agreed “but I do believe it is time we dragged Orbison and his little band of loonies out of the darkness and into the light, clip their wings a bit.”

“So, shall I keep poking around?” Jack asked.

“Oh yes” The Commander confirmed “but be careful, watch your back” he then ominously warned.

“My Lord” one of Orbison’s associates called as he caught up with him in a corridor “Reports confirm mission has failed.”

“The box?” Orbison asked with obvious apprehension.

“Now in the hands of the Security Service it would appear” the Associate confirmed “Exactly where though we don’t know.”

“Walk with me Brother” Orbison beckoned before continuing down the dimly lit corridor.

“Yes, My Lord” the Associate responded, following him one step behind and to one side, his head partially bowed in reverence.

“Tell me what happened?” Orbison then asked.

“Our Brothers were intercepted by Security Service officers” the Associate explained “It would seem that there was one already on the scene and that it was he who subsequently called in armed reinforcements which interrupted the plan.”

“I wonder...” Orbison stopped as his voice trailed off in thought.

“My Lord?” the Associate asked.

“Do you suppose that the officer already on scene is the one I have been hearing sporadic reports about over the last couple of days?” Orbison asked.

“Erm, it’s possible My Lord” the Associate agreed.

“It seems we may have a problem then” Orbison concluded as he resumed his walk, the Associate also resuming his position one step behind and to one side “I think we can safely presume that he is the one now in possession of the late Mr Raffety’s documents.”

“That would be a logical conclusion, yes My Lord” the Associate agreed.

“So...” Orbison then paused once more and turned to face the Associate directly “Who is this young officer who seems to have suddenly developed an unhealthy interest in our organisation?” he then asked.

“Regrettably I don’t have that information My Lord” the Associate confirmed.

“Find out” Orbison insisted “I want to know who he is and everything about him by the morning” he instructed “Usual sources and payments in the usual way should grease the wheels appropriately.”

“Yes, My Lord” the Associate confirmed.

“Meantime” Orbison continued as he stepped over to a door in the corridor that he then proceeded to unlock and open “We have another problem to deal with.”

As the door opened, it revealed the small dark interior of a holding cell, it's solitary occupant a man in his late forties, blindfolded, bound and gagged with his hands suspended from a hook in the ceiling, the dishevelled state of him and his ragged clothes indicating he had been there for some time whilst his various injuries indicated that he had been on the receiving end of some kind of prolonged torture by persons and means unknown.

"What do you wish to do with him My Lord?" the Associate asked.

"Mr Radford here is no longer of any interest to us" Orbison ominously declared "It is time we offered his soul up to our Master in a pure sacrifice."

"I will make the arrangements My Lord" the Associate confirmed as Orbison turned to leave only for one final thought to occur to him.

"Oh, try not to use so much petrol this time" Orbison then ordered "We are supposed to be all ecological and carbon friendly you know."

"By your command..." the Associate responded before bowing and then departing.

Orbison turned back towards Radford and looked at him with an evil smile.

"To life immortal..." he then casually remarked before smirking and then leaving the room.

"Zebra Five to Oscar One" came the call over Dent's radio as he watched from the front passenger seat of his car as he travelled through Central London with his deputy Gareth Pointer driving "The taxi's destination is confirmed as the Park Lane Hotel, over."

"Good call Chief" Pointer remarked as he indicated to turn left at Hyde Park Corner.

"More through luck than judgement Gareth" Dent admitted before picking up the radio "Oscar One to Zebra Four" he then called "Let's find out which room our target is booked into and get it wired for sound and vision ASAP" he ordered "Meanwhile tell our friendly taxi driver to give our guest the scenic tour of central London, buy us a little time."

"What are you thinking Chief?" Pointer then asked as the traffic lights changed and he drove off up Park Lane towards the hotel in the distance "Penthouse or pleb class?"

"I'd put a fiver on a penthouse apartment for our friend" Dent mused "Remember this guy has a lot of money and likes to throw it around."

"Oscar One from Zebra Four" the officer already in the Hotel then called over the radio from the Reception Desk "Our man here confirms that the Target is booked in for the Penthouse Room on the top floor."

“I love it when I am right” Dent remarked with a smirk “All right Zebra Four, get up there with you bag of tricks and work you magic” he then instructed “I’ll be there in a minute, over.”

“Understood, out” came the business-like response.

“Not exactly what I would call low profile Chief” Pointer remarked.

“If what I understand about this guy is correct then I would not have expected anything less” Dent confirmed as they reached the hotel and Pointer pulled the car up outside.

“Park it around the back and then hang around in the lobby for the target” Dent then instructed as he got out.

“Will do Chief” Pointer confirmed before driving off.

As Dent approached the main entrance of the Hotel the door was duly held open for him and he entered the main reception area where he quickly recognised his agent undercover behind the desk whom he approached.

“Good afternoon Sir” the Agent called.

“Afternoon Claire” Dent responded, “How are we doing?” he then asked having briefly looked around to ensure that their conversation was not being overheard.

“Zebra Four is up there now checking the room” Claire confirmed “We got a stroke of luck as it is the one of the rooms which is already pre-fitted with our surveillance gear so it should only take a couple of minutes to check it is all up and running.”

“Lovely” Dent replied as he looked around again.

“Oscar One from Zebra Four” came the call to Dent’s discrete earpiece radio “Room checks out, all cameras and microphones are active and recording, over.”

“Roger that Zebra Four” Dent responded, “Go to the van and monitor” he then requested before making another call “Zebra Five, where’s our boy?” he then asked.

“Zebra Five to Oscar One” came the response from the agent in the front passenger seat of the car that was tailing the taxi containing the target individual “We are one minute away.”

“Showtime” Dent then remarked to Claire “Make sure you give him your best smile, won’t you?” he then suggested.

“As always Sir” Claire confirmed before with a cheeky wink Dent headed off towards the bar on the opposite side of the lobby and took a seat with a newspaper and a drink that was brought to him at just the right moment by a waiter who was also another one of his agents.

Outside, the taxi pulled up and the door was opened for the man to get out of the back whilst a porter took his bags. Passing a fifty pound note to the driver with a casual message to keep the change, the target then followed the porter through the main entrance doors and approached the Reception Desk as Dent looked on discreetly from behind his newspaper.

“All units from Oscar One, target is on the plot, I repeat, target is on the plot” Dent quietly whispered into the radio “From now on radio silence please unless absolutely necessary” he then ordered.

“Good afternoon Sir and welcome to the Park Lane Hotel” Claire cheerily greeted.

“Hello” the target responded with a very distinctive mid African accent “You have a reservation in the name of Adebese please?” he asked.

Claire took a moment to check the computer even though she already knew the answer but it was of course necessary to keep up appearances for the sake of her cover.

“Yes Sir” Claire then declared “We have your reservation, a penthouse suite on the top floor. All I need is your identification and your signature here please” she then passed across a registration form and a pen.

Adebese took the pen and signed the registration before handing over his passport which Claire duly inspected before handing it back.

“These are your keys Sir” she then confirmed as she handed over the key cards “The porter will take you and your bags up. Enjoy your stay.”

“Thank you, I will” Adebese confirmed with a smile that showed a perfect set of bright white teeth except for one gold one before he duly followed the porter towards the lifts.

As soon as Adebese was out of sight when the lift doors closed, Dent put down the newspaper and headed back to the Reception Desk.

“All right everyone” he then called over his radio “The target is in play” he declared “I want constant eyes and ears on him and anyone he meets from now until he is back on the plane home.”

“He seems a pleasant sort of chap” Claire remarked as Dent joined her again.

“Looks can be deceiving my dear” Dent responded, “Once you have been in this business long enough, that will become second nature to you.”

Above the Reception Desk was a large flat screen television which was showing a muted live feed from the BBC News Channel and it was at that moment that Dent noticed a breaking news item being shown which caused him to do a double take.

“Oh dear” he then remarked “What has our Jack got himself into now?” he then asked himself.

Outside Terry's Café was still a scene of organised chaos as the darkness of early evening drew in. The Security Service cordon was still in place and the various onlookers had now been joined by an armada of journalists from newspaper and television organisations both from within the United Kingdom and across the world.

"What a circus" Jack remarked as he, Appleby and The Commander surveyed the scene before them, a particular concentration of people being over to one side where someone was being interviewed by several news organisations, the bright lamps of their camera equipment almost blinding in intensity.

"Oh God, what the hell is he doing here?" The Commander remarked with disdain as soon as he recognised who it was that was at the centre of all the press attention.

"Who's the slime ball in the cheap suit, talking to the press?" Jack then asked.

"Erm" Appleby replied with a slightly embarrassed reluctance "That's the Mayor of London."

"That's the Mayor of London?" Jack responded with a slightly incredulous look "Looks like some sort of second rate used car salesman to me."

"I think second rate is probably being pretty generous" The Commander added.

"I take it you two have met then Sir?" Appleby asked.

"Oh yes, they've met" Tracy remarked with a somewhat concerned tone as she came out of the café at that moment and joined them.

"Ah..." Jack quickly picked up on the way Tracy had responded and immediately understood what was being hinted at here.

At that moment the press conference broke up and the Mayor could be seen making his way directly towards them once he and his two accompanying aides had been allowed to pass beneath the outer cordon tape.

"Administrator General, Divisional Commander's" the Mayor grumpily called as he approached "I do hope that the Security Service's finest is on the case or do I have to settle for you bunch of outdated misfits?"

"And it's nice to see you too" Tracy responded as politely as she could.

"Mr Mayor" The Commander called "What brings you out here on such a cold November evening?"

"A gunfight and a large explosion on the streets of my City" the Mayor responded with clear determination "bodies turning up all over the place, I think this calls for representation from the people of my City at the scene of the latest atrocity don't you?"

“If I may be so honest Mr Mayor” The Commander responded “No, not really, you are just getting under our feet and creating an unnecessary media circus, as usual.”

“Here we go...” Tracy remarked aside.

“I represent the people Commander” the Mayor strongly declared “You would do well to remember that.”

“Actually I think you will find that statistically you represent fourteen percent of the people technically” The Commander remarked “You were elected by two thirds of the miserable turn out of twenty one percent that actually bothered to turn up and vote.”

“I think gentlemen what we need here are cool heads and a new era of co-operation” Tracy tried to interject between the Mayor and her husband who had taken an abject dislike to each other from the moment they had first met a few months earlier just after the Mayor’s election.

“As long as old school Neanderthals like you two are in charge, that’s never going to happen” the Mayor angrily responded.

“Okay, that’s me giving up being nice” Tracy surrendered any hope of diplomacy.

“Anyway, I think you will find that it’s my investigation that is at the heart of this incident Mr Mayor” Jack then interceded.

“And you would be?” the Mayor practically demanded to know.

“Lieutenant Jack Regent, Transport Division at your service Mr Mayor” Jack duly announced.

“Regent...” the Mayor responded with a sense of realisation before looking up with a sense of depressed horror “You’re not...?”

“Our son, yes he is” Tracy proudly confirmed.

“Oh Christ, now there is three of them” the Mayor remarked with a despondent look as he rolled his eyes upwards.

“Don’t worry Mr Mayor” Jack tried to reassure him “Everything is in safe hands with me, they taught me everything I know.”

“That’s what I am afraid of...” the Mayor muttered.

“Can I do anything else for you Mr Mayor?” The Commander then asked, “Only we are rather busy at the moment.”

“Yes as a matter of fact you can” the Mayor responded having now regained his composure “It has come to my attention that certain elements of the law enforcement services of this country have started taking an interest in an individual by the name of Michael Orbison and his voluntary group of charity fundraisers.”

“Never heard of the guy” The Commander convincingly feigned in response.

“That is probably for the best” the Mayor responded, “I am concerned that one of this great city’s leading Intellectual Social Media Celebrities could become the target of unwarranted attacks against his good name.”

“Well we wouldn’t want that now would we” The Commander remarked with the best false sympathy he could muster.

“Indeed we do not!” the Mayor agreed “There must always be careful consideration for the little guy around town in everything we do, these are after all perilous times, especially with you three around.”

“You always say the nicest things Mr Mayor” Tracy remarked with her specially tuned hint of sarcasm.

“I do hope that you bear in mind that at the end of the day we are all on the same side” the Mayor then diplomatically commented “and that we want to ensure the safety of all its citizens without recourse to unnecessary violence and harassment” he continued “There is no room in my city for mayhem, chaos and calamity.”

“Understood Mr Mayor” The Commander agreed, managing to control his anger towards the man before him.

“Very well” the Mayor conceded “I want to be kept fully informed on developments on this case and remember what I said” he insisted.

“Whatever you say Mr Mayor” The Commander responded although he of course had no intention whatsoever of telling him so much as the time of day let alone anything else.

“Good evening” the Mayor then formerly signed off, turned smartly on his heels and departed, his two aides following closely in formation back towards his official car parked nearby.

“What a moron” Jack remarked to which the others smirked in admiration at his sheer honesty “So that just begs the question...”

“What question?” Tracy asked.

“Which one of us is mayhem, which one is chaos and which one is calamity?” Jack asked with a wry smile.

“I think you are officially nominated as calamity” The Commander confirmed to Jack “Tracy and I had mayhem and chaos sewn up and monopolised many years ago.”

“Come on” Fuller muttered to himself as he worked intensely on the bank of four computer terminals that were lined up around him in a semicircle around his workstation in his office at New Scotland Yard “How the hell did you get in?”

“You’re chuntering again” Jennifer remarked as she came in “I could hear the mumbled expletives halfway down the hall.”

“It’s this security breach in our communications” Fuller explained “I have been trying to nail down the source all afternoon and so far, I have found next to nothing.”

“What you need is refreshments” Jennifer responded, producing a paper carrier bag containing baguette sandwiches, one of which she handed out to him along with a fresh cup of coffee.

“Ah, thanks love” Fuller replied as they kissed “I thought you were busy driving the Ambassador of Uzbekistan around this afternoon?” he then asked.

“I was, he was safely delivered to the comforts of his hotel minibar over an hour ago” Jennifer confirmed “It’s half seven in the evening in case you hadn’t noticed.”

“Really?” Fuller quickly looked at his watch in disbelief “I thought it was still afternoon I have been working so hard on this.”

“A little birdie told me about our potential security breach so it didn’t take a degree in astrophysics to work out where you would be and what you would be doing” Jennifer explained “Oh and Emma is with my mother in case you were wondering.”

“Good, good” Fuller responded.

“What’s the plan?” Jennifer then asked.

“Give up for now” Fuller confirmed “I’ve got the system running a multi-platform search of pretty much every system there is for some sort of connection, there has to be a digital fingerprint somewhere, that’ll take most of the night I expect.”

“What would be required to crack our secure communications protocols like that?” Jennifer asked.

“Someone cleverer than me” Fuller admitted “and with a lot of money to burn on some pretty sophisticated equipment to do it.”

“No one is cleverer than you with this stuff” Jennifer complemented her husband to which he smiled modestly in response “No, really” she insisted.

“I can access pretty much every database, communications channel and CCTV feed in existence” Fuller explained “I designed half of the systems the worlds law enforcement agencies use which means I know how to get in them all as I am the only one with the master access code but yet someone seems to have hacked into our secure communications protocols, the Ultraviolet Priority System Channels no less without any problem whatsoever, it should be impossible.”

“Who knows this ‘master code’ or whatever you call it?” Jennifer asked.

“It’s embedded in here” Fuller tapped the side of his head “it exists nowhere else except in one specific location where no one would know to look and even then, there are safeguards.”

“So maybe some computer geek somewhere just made an educated guess and got lucky?” Jennifer then suggested.

“Maybe” Fuller agreed “Maybe...”

“Well come on, let get this box open before anything else happens” Tracy prompted as she and The Commander followed Jack into The Commander’s office and sat down around the desk, Jack carefully placing the box file on the surface.

“Here goes, third time lucky” Jack announced as he proceeded to open the box whereupon all three of them peered inside.

“Not exactly exciting is it?” The Commander responded with a look of disappointment as if he had been hoping to find the box full of cakes or something similar.

“The devil is in the details was what you taught me” Jack remarked as he proceeded to extract the contents which consisted of bound papers, photographs, newspaper cuttings, a memory stick and a digital video tape “and these look like a lots of details to me” he then remarked as he carefully laid out the contents on the desk before them until the box file they came out of was empty.

“Interesting” Tracy remarked as she picked up one of the bound papers and began to look at it “Seems to be a report written by a Private Detective, name of Peter Radford, looks like the results of an investigation into Michael Orbison.”

“This one seems to be by the same P.I.” Jack looked through the other one “This one seems to concentrate on the Ixion group with a lot of analysis of their finances.”

“Who commissioned these reports?” The Commander asked.

“Looks like they were commissioned by Raffety himself” Tracy confirmed.

“Lots of observational photographs here” Jack picked up a pile of photographs “That’s Orbison by the looks of it, and there is Rafferty’s daughter on his arm.”

“Lady Chaos” The Commander confirmed “or unlucky victim of a dirty old man from what I have seen” he added with sincerity.

“Of course, I’ve been blind!” Jack then exclaimed “Raffety was never after Orbison to steal his jewellery, he was after him because he effectively stole his daughter.”

“So what do you suppose Raffety’s plan was?” Tracy asked.

“Remember he had a pretty newly inked Ixion Brotherhood tattoo when we found his body?” Jack asked to which the others nodded in confirmation “Do you think it is possible he deliberately got close to the group and then when he managed to get Orbison’s confidence, swiped the jewellery with the intention of holding it to ransom in return for the release of his daughter?”

“It’s a theory that fits the facts” The Commander agreed “Of course unless someone inside the Ixion Brotherhood suddenly has an attack of conscience and turns Queens Evidence then I somehow cannot see you getting any hard and fast evidence to confirm it.”

“Well according to this report” Tracy summarised some of what she had gleaned so far “Orbison has a history of recreational drug use and has even developed his own one called ‘K200’ which he shares with believers at special secret rally’s.”

“Is it illegal?” The Commander asked.

“I don’t think so as it is not actually named on the official lists under the ‘Misuse of Drugs Act 2001’ according to this” Tracy confirmed.

“What would it take to get it added to the official list?” Jack asked.

“Long term it requires an amendment to the Act of Parliament but in the first instance an interim order can be issued by the Home Secretary under the advice of the National Police & Security Service if an unlisted substance of abuse is deemed to present a clear and present danger to the public” The Commander confirmed.

“In other words all it takes is one phone call from you and its banned?” Jack suggested “I only ask because I really want to ruin this Orbison’s guys day as much as possible as the more I find out about him, the greater my dislike for him becomes.”

“Consider it done” The Commander agreed “First thing in the morning I will call the Home Secretary and get him to start the paperwork.”

“What does it say on that videotape?” Tracy then asked.

“Err, ‘Gemma’s wedding’ according to the label” The Commander confirmed.

“It’s mentioned here in this report” Tracy continued “Apparently the Ixion Brotherhood wedding initiation procedure, they don’t call it a ceremony apparently, for whoever is unlucky to be anointed as the next Lady Chaos involves some pretty nasty things going on.”

“I take it I don’t want to watch this then?” Jack indicated the tape.

“If this report is accurate then I think you will find that classifies as what used to be known as a ‘Video Nasty’” Tracy confirmed with obvious shock and concern “The ‘bride’ is basically paraded before the Brotherhood, then drugged up to the eyeballs before Lord Chaos in effect rapes her in front of everyone.”

“This guy is starting to really zoom up my list of people I hate” Jack confirmed “at this rate he will soon have a list all to himself.”

“Christ, that is a lot of money” The Commander responded as he read some of the figures in the financial activities report “It looks like he uses the vast sums he receives from the Ixion followers for his books, merchandise and drugs to launder further vast sums on behalf of all sorts of unsavoury characters.”

“Makes sense” Tracy remarked “An organisation like that will have a lot of cash moving around all over the world in small amounts, it wouldn’t take too much to secrete a ‘donation’ from someone in the system, launder it and then send it out, ironed and meadow fresh minus a small commission a few days later.”

“No wonder the likes of the CIA are trying to keep tabs on him” The Commander confirmed “the sort of people he is likely to be handling funds for would almost certainly be the sort that would be on their radar.”

“And ours too I would suspect” Tracy agreed.

“I need to find this Private Investigator guy” Jack confirmed before picking up the memory stick and looking at it “Would you mind?” he then asked, proffering it across the desk towards The Commander.

“Err...” The Commander responded, clearly unsure what he was supposed to do with it as despite Tracy’s best efforts over the years, she had failed to make much headway in combating her husband’s lack of skills when it came to modern technology in pretty much any way, size or form.

“Give it here” Tracy then took the memory stick and after swapping seats with The Commander, proceeded to activate the computer on the desk and plug it into the front mounted USB port.

“Ah...” Tracy then exclaimed a few moments later “It’s encrypted, sorry” she confirmed as she took the memory stick out again and handed it back to Jack.

“Not really surprising” Jack admitted “I’ll try Simon, I am sure he can crack it.”

“Let me see if I can find your Private Investigator whilst I have the computer up and running” Tracy then remarked “If he is legitimate then he should be registered with us. What was the name again?” she then asked,

“Peter Radford” Jack confirmed “Looks like he operates out of an office in Docklands, near Canada Wharf.”

“Ah, here he is” Tracy then responded as she found his entry on the system which included a clear photograph of the man which she showed Jack by turning the screen towards him.

“I’ll see if I can track him down in the morning” Jack confirmed.

The Commander by this point was looking through the photographs with interest and one photograph in particular had caught his eye.

“Where do you suppose this was taken?” he then asked, passing that particular photograph which had piqued his interest across for the others to see.

“Looks a bit like an old industrial estate” Jack remarked as they all looked at the photograph which showed Orbison, his ‘wife’, a couple of other men who looked like aides of some kind plus another person who was unidentifiable as he had his back to the camera “although there is something sort of railway like about it” he then added.

“Might be worth getting these photos blown up, see if there is any other detail on them that we can’t otherwise see” Tracy suggested.

“Excellent idea” Jack readily agreed “in the meantime I think it is time to call it a night, I am just going to pop down the corridor to see Simon on my way out though.”

“Are you sure he is still here?” Tracy asked.

“He’s been obsessively working on our communications security breach since lunchtime” The Commander confirmed “Trust me, he is still here!”

Orbison was in his private chambers when there was a discrete knock at the door and a slightly battle-scarred looking Reaper came in bearing a black folder.

“My Lord” Reaper called with bowed head in reverence “I have some information that you requested” he informed him.

“Thank you, Brother,” Orbison responded, taking the folder and placing it on the table in front of him whereupon he opened it “Ah, so this is the young man nibbling at my heels is it?” he then asked.

“Yes, my Lord” Reaper confirmed “He is a newly qualified Lieutenant in the Transport Division of the National Police & Security Service.”

“Lieutenant Jack Regent” Orbison read from the file before his voice tailed off in thought.

“Our reliable source confirms that Lieutenant Regent is a young man of considerable note” Reaper continued to explain “Not only is he regarded almost universally as an extremely capable and strong officer, he is also the adopted son of the National Administrator General Sir Edward Regent and his wife Divisional Chief Superintendent Tracy Caverner-Regent.”

“Interesting” Orbison responded, “So it would seem the legendary Security Service Commander dynasty has acquired a new member to its not inconsiderable ranks.”

“He could be trouble My Lord” Reaper suggested.

“Maybe” Orbison casually agreed “however for now I think we will just keep him at arm’s length and throw a few more curve balls at him until he comes knocking on our front door.”

“As you wish My Lord” Reaper agreed.

“In the meantime I want you to put your best surveillance team on him, start straight away” Orbison then ordered “and I want a comprehensive file on him compiled and on my desk by ten o’clock” he continued “Usual sources, money no object.”

“It will be done My Lord” Reaper agreed “By your command...”

At that point loud cheers could be heard echoing down the corridor outside from the Grand Preaching Hall which was located a short distance away deep underground inside the secret Ixion Brotherhood Citadel Complex.

“The Brothers are ready for you” Reaper then confirmed whereupon Orbison stood up and held his arms out before Reaper proceeded to put his ceremonial robes on.

“Excellent” Orbison announced as soon as he saw he was ready “Announce me my Brother, announce me” he then requested whereupon Reaper duly left the room with Orbison following closely behind.

“Ah, you are still here, thank God” Jack called as he came into Fuller’s office where he and Jennifer were still sat at the desk.

“Evening Jack” Fuller called “What can I do for you?” he asked.

“I’ve got an encoded memory stick that I need unencoding please” Jack requested, brandishing the USB memory stick in his right hand.

“You’ve come to the right place” Fuller responded, taking the memory stick and plugging it into a USB port in front of him before setting to work.

“Busy day?” Jennifer asked as Jack took a seat next to her and Fuller.

“Hectic that is for certain” Jack confirmed “Everywhere I go I keep finding dead people.”

“Welcome to the family business!” Jennifer joked to which Jack smiled meekly.

“Let’s see what we have got here” Fuller then announced as he began to work on the memory stick “Fairly straightforward encryption so a key breaker should deal with that” he declared before pressing a button on the keyboard in front of him whereupon there was an audible series of beeps before the contents of the memory stick duly appeared on the screen “and voila!”

“Nice work” Jack remarked “Less than a minute.”

“Interesting” Fuller remarked as he looked at the file names appearing on the screen in a scrolling list “How do you know Michael Orbison?” he asked.

“His name has come prominently to the front in my murder inquiry” Jack confirmed “Apparently they call him Lord Chaos and he runs this little bunch of religious nutters called the Ixion Brotherhood.”

“Very well done, you win a cookie” Fuller confirmed “only according to this you have got copies of his personal files, transactions, some of his inane scribblings which seems to indicate he has got another of his tedious books on the go, a lot of stuff here.”

“I was told he was some sort of Internet celebrity” Jack remarked “which means I had never heard of him of course.”

“He has an online channel which he uses to broadcast his teachings and general ramblings to his seemingly rapidly growing army of followers around the world” Jack explained.

“No, I still haven’t heard of him” Jennifer admitted.

“He’s not a very nice man from what I have gathered so far” Jack confirmed “Seems he likes to send his minions to eliminate anyone and anything that may threaten his cushy little money earner Brotherhood scam.”

“Another of those online keyboard warriors who really should have their keyboards confiscated then” Jennifer concluded “plenty of those around unfortunately.”

“Ah, here we go” Fuller then remarked “there is a note here with the details of his broadcast channel, encrypted it would appear.”

“Encrypted?” Jack responded.

“According to this you need to pay your subscription up front” Fuller read the details “Twenty-five quid a month apparently.”

“A nice little earner indeed” Jennifer commented.

“All right then, let’s see what Lord Chaos has to say shall we?” Fuller suggested as he moved to a different computer and began to connect it to the online channel with the details he had to hand.

“We are not going to cough up twenty-five quid are we?” Jack asked.

“Hell no” Fuller confirmed as he worked away at the keyboard “All it takes is a little techno jiggery pokery and bingo!” he then declared when the Ixion Brotherhood symbol, almost identical to the tattoos that Jack had been finding recently appeared on the screen in front of them.

“Impressive” Jack remarked.

“Oh, that’s nothing” Fuller responded with a sense of pride “Same principal system as pay to view TV channels” he explained “If you ever want free subscription satellite and cable TV for life then just give me a call” he proudly announced.

“I don’t tend to watch much television these days” Jack admitted “repeats of Babylon 5 and The Sweeney are about all I manage.”

“Oh, here we go...” Jennifer motioned towards the screen where the Ixion Brotherhood symbol was fading to black and was then replaced by the figure of Orbison standing in front of some sort of obscure altar with his head bowed.

"My Brothers of Ixion" he announced, raising his hands up “Welcome...”

There was then a brief interruption as cheering, chanting and music was played before Orbison raised his hands once more and silence duly descended.

“Tonight we welcome for the first time believers from across south east Asia who are now receiving our broadcasts live for the first time” Orbison announced proudly “We hope you will join us in our thoughts and teachings from now on at the same time as we here in Europe and the US, truly uniting the Brotherhood for the first time across the world.”

“What a load of old claptrap...” Jack responded, obviously deeply unimpressed.

“We begin our evening Brothers with our opening oath of allegiance” Orbison then announced whereupon silence descended, the lights lowered a little and there began a slow mournful piece of music played on an unseen organ somewhere in the room that the broadcast was being sent from.

‘Our Brothers, united in allegiance, bound by destiny
Hear our voices all and one,
We hail to our Master Ixion and his chosen one Lord Chaos
We hail to the great book
We hail to its teachings and solemnly swear to support and defend the Brotherhood
For this we commit our very souls,
By Your Command...
To Life Immortal...

“Well that explains where the little ‘To Life Immortal’ tag line comes from” Jack remarked.

“Did this Orbison guy make this stuff up himself?” Jennifer asked.

“As far as I can tell, the whole Ixion Brotherhood is his own creation spawned from the followers of his inane ramblings back in the 1970’s but only really finding its footing when the rise of Social Media allowed him to spread his twittering far and wide” Fuller confirmed.

“The Brotherhood” Orbison was then heard to solemnly announce “respects everyone who respects us” he then ominously continued “but now and then we find someone who is not a true believer, instead they seek to infiltrate, corrupt and disturb us.”

There was a cacophony of groans and cries of disapproval from the audience which Orbison allowed to be heard before raising a hand for silence which he instantly got.

“Tonight my Brothers we have just such a non-believer for you” he then almost joyously announced to cheers and applause as he walked across the stage towards an area which was hidden from the view of both the camera and the audience in the room by a large black curtain.

“Bring forth the traitor!” Orbison then loudly announced whereupon the curtain was pulled back and amid ominous music being played on the unseen organ, a large wooden wheel was revealed to which was bound a man, blindfolded and gagged and seemingly barely conscious.

“Oh dear God...” Jack responded as he recognised the man on the wheel “That’s Raford, the Private Investigator guy I am looking for.”

“I think he is about to get his P.I.’s licence well and truly cancelled” Jennifer commented with a worried look.

“This man has caused great damage to the integrity of the Brotherhood” Orbison then announced “and in the tradition of Ixion there can be only one fitting punishment, the purification of the corrupted soul, on the wheel.”

“The wheel!!” came the cry from the audience almost in a frenzy.

“If I were a betting man I would wager that the audience are pretty much whacked out of their skulls on something” Fuller remarked.

“According to my sources Orbison is a great believer in as well as user and manufacturer of recreational narcotics” Jack commented.

“Quite the busy fellow isn’t he?” Jennifer remarked,

“The Almighty Ixion Brotherhood has found you guilty of treason and as the duly elected leader, it is my solemn duty to pass sentence” Orbison was then heard to loudly declare “That sentence is eternal damnation on the wheel of fire” he then announced.

“Oh dear, I think this is about to get rather unpleasant” Fuller remarked with grave concern.

“To Life Immortal!” Orbison duly called at which point the wheel began to rotate before it was ignited and in moments it and the man bound to it appeared to be enveloped in flames, the rapturous cheering from the audience drowning out the screams from the man.

“Oh God...” Jack turned away from the screen in horror “Turn it off, I’ve seen enough.”

“Now that is what I call a video nasty” Fuller remarked as he quickly cut the feed and the screen went blank.

“Nasty way to go” Jennifer added.

“I could never believe until now that people were capable of such blatant and wanton cruelty to their fellow man” Jack responded, almost in a sense of shock.

“You see now what the human race can do if it really puts its mind to it” Jennifer confirmed “and it isn’t pretty.”

“I need to find out where this Orbison guy operates out of” Jack then declared; the determination clear in his voice.

“Well one thing is for certain” Fuller remarked “There is no way the place that broadcast was being sent from was in his registered address which according to this appears to be a council flat in Basildon.”

“Can you get some screen shots, preferably before that guy got toasted” Jack then asked, “There could be something from the background that may give me some pointers as to where this guy hangs out.”

“I can probably have some glossy pics for you in the morning” Fuller agreed.

“Sounds good to me” Jack responded “Thanks.”

“Right, I think it is home time for everyone” Jennifer declared.

“You are probably right” Jack agreed.

“Indeed” Fuller added “It’s going to take the system most of the night to work on this search I have set it on so I think I can leave it to its own devices.”

“What a lift home?” Jennifer offered to Jack.

“Erm, thanks but I think I will take the Tube” Jack responded, clearly deep in thought “I need time to do some serious thinking” he then confirmed.

“Okay” Jennifer agreed.

Directly opposite New Scotland Yard can be found the imposing art deco edifice of the former London Transport headquarters also known as ‘55 Broadway’ with St. James Park Underground Station situated directly beneath it.

The building had been officially vacant for a little while now ever since Transport for London, the successor to the original occupants had moved to newer accommodation and the interior was in the process of being gradually stripped out and refurbished ready for whoever would be taking it on in the future.

Up on the seventh floor of the otherwise empty building, a couple of men were watching through the windows that overlooked the main entrance to the New Scotland Yard building opposite, using night vision equipped binoculars and cameras fitted with extra-long lenses.

“Hang about Brother” one of the men called just as his colleague had turned away to find a drink “I think we may have something here.”

The other man returned straight away and picked up his binoculars once again, refocusing them down towards the street where his associate was indicating.

“Is that him?” the second man asked as they both observed Jack leaving the building and walking down the short path to the street before heading across the road towards the nearest entrance of the Underground Station immediately below.

“That’s him” the first man confirmed as he reached for a mobile phone and speed dialled a number.

“Does his mother know he is out this time of night?” the second man jokingly remarked having seen how young Jack looked.

“Team Two from Team One” the first man called over the phone “Target is approaching the station now.”

There was a brief moment of silence before a response came “Team One from Team Two” came the ominous reply “Target marked, am commencing surveillance, To Life Immortal.”

“To Life Immortal my Brother” the first man confirmed before hanging up.

“Coffee?” the second man asked, proffering the Thermos flask.

“Yeah, why not” the first man agreed “I doubt we will be needed much more tonight somehow.”

At that moment they both jumped when a door into the large room they were in suddenly creaked as it opened and in walked a man.

“Jesus Christ Brother!” the second man responded as he and his associate relaxed again when they saw who it was “You nearly gave us a heart attack.”

“Then permit me to issue you with some pain relief” the man confirmed whereupon two muffled gunshots rang out and the two men collapsed to the ground, both with bullet wounds to the centre of their foreheads.

From the dark shadows, the man who stepped into the subdued light that was coming through the window from outside appeared clearly for the first time, revealing it to be Lieutenant Shelby, dressed in civilian clothing.

Shelby looked down at the two men lying on the floor before firing again, calmly sending two bullets into the chest of each of them to ensure that they were dead whereupon he then removed the silencer from the end of the gun barrel and holstered his weapon.

“To Life Immortal” Shelby mocked with a wry smile before calmly leaving.

Seven floors below, Jack was passing through the ticket barriers inside the main ticket hall of St. James’ Park Station and heading towards the steps that led down to the eastbound Circle and District Line platform where a train formed of brand new ‘S’ type sub-surface stock was arriving with a District Line service bound for Upminster.

Boarding the train at the first set of doors of the front carriage, Jack cast a casual look down the platform before stepping aboard and then crossing to the opposite doorway where he stood, leaning with his back against the partition.

The doors duly closed and within moments the train set off, accelerating smoothly and quickly towards the next stop, Westminster just a short distance ahead.

Unlike the old rolling stock that these had only recently replaced, these new trains have an open plan layout throughout their entire length with no bulkheads or doors separating the different carriages. This meant that Jack could see right through to the far end of the train as it twisted and turned like a snake around the curves of the line.

Jack was always a very observant young man even before he became a Security Service officer so he quickly noticed that there seemed to be someone potentially following him. Two men in their late twenties or early thirties he estimated, situated about two carriage lengths away down the train, standing together, dressed almost identically in grey suits and blue ties and pretending to be interested in the contents of their newspapers but yet discreetly looking up and directly at him every few moments.

“And for which bunch might those two clowns be working?” Jack wondered to himself as the train slowed for the next stop at Westminster.

As soon as the train came to a halt, the doors slid open and the usual exchange of passengers duly took place with Jack remaining where he was.

Initially his view of the two men he had noticed was blocked by the exchange of boarding and alighting passengers, but they soon cleared out of the way to reveal that they were still aboard but had now used the cover of the other people to move towards Jack and were now at the next doorway up.

“Time for a discrete exit...” Jack then remarked to himself as, just as the doors were about to close, he smartly skipped across the width of the train and stepped out onto the platform.

The two men had to react quickly and stumbled out of the train just as the doors were closing, almost trapping them in it before they managed to free themselves.

By the time they had left the train however, Jack had disappeared from view and it was only blind luck that as the District Line train left that they caught a quick glimpse of him starting to head down the escalator which leads to the Jubilee Line further down in the station.

“Lima Tango Nine Nine Three to Eagle One” Jack called into his radio as he walked down the left-hand side of the escalator.

“Go ahead Jack” The Commander’s voice came over the radio in response a few moments later.

“It seems I have a tail” Jack explained “Two guys have been following me since I left New Scotland Yard” he explained.

“Where are you now?” The Commander asked as he looked across at Tracy who was sat with him in the back seat of his official car, being driven home through the streets of South London.

“Heading towards the eastbound Jubilee Line platform at Westminster” Jack confirmed as he reached the bottom of the first escalator and turned around to proceed across the mid-level of the giant escalator hall and on to the next one.

“Anyone we know?” The Commander then asked with obvious concern.

“Whoever they are, they are not experienced that is for certain so that rules out MI5, MI6 and the CIA for a starter” Jack confirmed as he proceeded down the second escalator whilst his two followers were still playing catch up at the bottom of the first one.

“All Right” The Commander did some quick thinking as he looked out through the front windscreen to see where they were “Get on the next eastbound train and we will try and meet you on route” he instructed.

“Roger that” Jack confirmed before turning his radio off.

“Never a dull moment since Jack joined the firm” Tracy remarked.

“Indeed” The Commander agreed before leaning forward to speak to his driver “Terry, I think Southwark is our best bet.”

“Yes Sir” Kinderley confirmed as he activated the lights and sirens before turning sharply off to the left and driving away at some speed.

Down on the eastbound Jubilee Line platform at Westminster, Jack arrived and looked up to the digital destination display which told him he only had a minute to wait before the next train was expected, a service to Stratford.

Whilst his demeanour was calm, the same could not be said for his two pursuers who practically stumbled onto the platform through an entrance further up and then were forced to quickly regain their composure and discreetly merge in among the waiting passengers all around them.

“Huh, amateurs...” Jack remarked to himself with a smirk as the bright headlights of the train of 1996 type tube stock became visible down the running tunnel in the far distance as it approached, accompanied by the usual whine of the rails and the trains motors which increased in volume as it got closer.

Moments later the train came into the platform and quickly braked to a halt, its doors lining up perfectly with the protective platform edge doors that all the Jubilee Line extension stations were fitted with for enhanced safety.

As the doors all opened in unison, Jack stepped forward and boarded the train, taking a spot standing at the connecting door that led through to the next carriage and with the window lowered, affording him a good view of the carriage immediately behind him where he could just make out the two men squeezing on at the far end amid a large throng of boarding passengers who had appeared on the platform at the last moment and all tried to get on at the same door, at the same time.

Quickly the doors closed again and the train set off for the next stop of Waterloo.

Above ground, Tracy and The Commander were arriving outside the main entrance to Southwark Underground Station, two stops down the Jubilee Line from Westminster.

Just inside the station entrance, a uniformed Metropolitan Division patrol officer was surprised when the car, with its blue lights flashing brightly pulled up outside whereupon Tracy and The Commander emerged and approached him.

“Evening Lieutenant” Tracy called “Are you busy at the moment?” she asked.

“Evening Maam, Sir” the officer responded, still somewhat taken aback “Err no, just on routine patrol and stopped off to grab a coffee” the Lieutenant confirmed.

“Come with us” The Commander requested as they proceeded inside, down the short flight of steps into the ticket hall and then through the ticket barriers.

“Uh-oh” the Station Supervisor remarked as he and a colleague watched the three officers pass them and head towards the escalators that led down to the platforms “There goes the neighbourhood....”

The stop at Waterloo had not changed the situation below ground other than seeing a significant number of passengers leave the train and only a few join it. Jack and his two followers were still exactly where they were when they had boarded at Westminster a few minutes earlier and it was clear by now that both parties knew the other was there and was aware of their presence.

Jack looked down at his mobile when it beeped momentarily with the arrival of a text message, newly installed technology in the Underground now meant that mobile phone signals were now available even this deep below ground level whereas in the recent past it would have been a communications black spot.

He quickly read and composed a response before discreetly tucking the mobile back in his pocket whereupon the on-board automated computer announced the next stop as Southwark.

On the eastbound platform at Southwark Tracy looked down at the text message Jack had just sent her.

“96104, Coach 2, Clowns in Coach 3” Tracy read the message.

“In which case I think we will head down the platform a bit” The Commander prompted.

“If I may Sir, Maam” the Lieutenant interrupted as the three officers strode down the length of the near deserted platform “What’s happening?”

“Bad things Lieutenant” Tracy wryly responded “Well probably bad things, that being based on vague educated guesswork” she then admitted.

“Right...” the Lieutenant responded to himself as he followed the two senior officers until The Commander stopped, checked where he was in relation to the platform edge doors and then remained with Tracy by his side as the sound of the train approaching began to increase substantially.

Jack discreetly smiled as he caught a fleeting glimpse of Tracy and The Commander waiting patiently with the Lieutenant on the platform as the train arrived, his pursuers however did not see them as they were still transfixed on maintaining visual contact with their target one and a half carriage lengths in front of them.

“After you” The Commander graciously stepped aside to allow Tracy to board the train on the fourth carriage first before he and the Lieutenant followed.

Within moments the alarm heralded the closing of the doors before the train moved off at speed once more, diving into the running tunnel on its way to the next stop at London Bridge.

As the train carried on, Tracy, The Commander and the Lieutenant headed down the coach towards the end and the connecting door that led into the third coach where the two pursuers were.

“Do you see anything love?” The Commander asked as Tracy looked discreetly through the connecting door window into the next carriage.

“Two IC4 males, far end, matching suits and hairstyles that look like they stepped out of a time warp from 1987” Tracy confirmed before stepping aside to allow her husband to take a look for himself.

“Bloody hell” The Commander snorted dismissively “Even MI5 work experience newbie’s are better than those two clowns.”

“Lieutenant...” he then began.

“Eisley Sir” the Lieutenant confirmed his name.

“Lieutenant Eisley” The Commander then continued “when we get to London Bridge, I want you to alight from the train and casually walk down the platform towards the front” he instructed “See if you can attract the attention of the two clowns in the next carriage but do not look at them or approach them.”

“Yes Sir” Eisley agreed.

“Don’t worry, we will have your back if anything goes pear shaped Lieutenant” Tracy reassured him.

At that point the train began to slow once more for the next stop which was duly announced inside the carriage as London Bridge and moments later the lights of the platform appeared shining through the windows as the train came to a halt and then the doors of both the train and the platform edge doors opened in unison.

“Let’s go” The Commander motioned whereupon Eisley stepped out onto the platform and began to stroll casually down towards the front of the train whilst ahead Jack also stepped out, stopped on the platform and looked back down.

On board the train still, Tracy and The Commander had passed through the connecting door into the carriage and were closing in on the two pursuers who were just about to alight from the train but had hesitated for a moment when they saw Lieutenant Eisley stroll past on the platform outside.

“That’s quite far enough gentlemen” Tracy called whereupon the two men stopped and turned to see both her and The Commander, guns drawn on them which gave them no other option than to surrender.

“Let’s go fellas” The Commander waved his gun ahead and the men duly followed the instruction and walked reluctantly side by side over to the platform wall where they were joined by Eisley and Jack.

“Nice work” Jack remarked as Tracy and Eisley did the honours with the two captives.

“Hands up and against the wall please” Tracy instructed before she proceeded to search the first man whilst Eisley did the same with the second man.

“Control from Eagle One” The Commander called into his radio as the searches continued whilst passers-by looked on with casual interest and the train doors closed before departing.

“Control Receiving, go ahead Sir” the response quickly came.

“We are going to need a Paddy Wagon to pick up a couple of customers at London Bridge Tube Station as soon as possible please” The Commander then requested.

“Well, well, well” Tracy remarked “What do we have here?”

“Oooh, concealed weapon, very naughty” Jack remarked as Tracy extracted a hidden gun from an inside pocket of the man she was searching and passed it across to him.

“Got one here too” Eisley confirmed as he also found and extracted an identical weapon, a nine-millimetre semi-automatic pistol which he also passed to Jack.

“Guns, guns, guns” Jack remarked as he looked at the weapons in his hands “Oh, and real ones too” he then confirmed as he proceeded to check the safety catches were on before taking out the ammunition clips and then emptying the guns of the one remaining bullet already preloaded in the chambers.

“So, who do you two comedians work for?” The Commander then asked as Tracy discovered another item of interest in a pocket which she produced, a clear plastic grip seal bag containing an unidentified green powder like material.

“That doesn’t look like Sherbet Dip that is for certain” Jack remarked.

“Looks like ‘Greenkies’ to me” Eisley remarked as he too found a similar bag in the pocket of the man he had been searching to which he got looks of bafflement from the other three officers.

“Greenkies?” Tracy then asked.

“K200” Eisley went on to explain “We have been finding a lot of it in South London recently, it seems to be some sort of new designer recreational drug that has been hitting the streets in gradually increasing amounts over the last six months or so.”

“K200, isn’t that the stuff that nut job Orbison has invented?” Tracy asked.

“Death to the unbelievers who take our Lord Chaos’s name in vain” one of the men suddenly called out.

“You have the right to remain silent pal” Tracy called “Take my advice and use it.”

“By Your Command...” the other man then called out.

“That means kindly shut your cake hole in case you two brain boxes hadn’t worked it out” she then reiterated.

“Roger that” Jack then called into his radio having taken a message before turning back to the others “The van is here” he then confirmed.

“All right you two clowns, arms down please” Tracy ordered whereupon they did as asked and lowered their arms.

Eisley and The Commander stepped forward ready to put handcuffs on the two men when they suddenly lunged back and barged both of them aside and tried to escape.

“Oh no you don’t!” Jack responded, instantly reacting by tripping one of the men up which saw him crash face first to the platform floor, breaking his nose in the impact.

Tracy initially gave chase after the other one with Eisley in close pursuit whilst The Commander remained with Jack to restrain the first man who was writhing about in agony on the floor, blood pouring from his nose.

“Eagle One, ultraviolet priority” The Commander called urgently into his radio “One suspect on the run in London Bridge Underground Station, IC4, six foot, wearing grey suit, coat and blue tie, light brown hair.”

“Come on fella” Jack called as he helped the subdued and handcuffed suspect up off the ground before looking at the bloodied and broken nose and inhaling sharply.

“Ouch...” The Commander commented.

“It’s just not your day is it mate?” Jack remarked to the suspect “Come on, we’ve got a band-aid and a nice warm cell waiting for you down at Holborn Nick” he confirmed as they duly led him away.

“Security Service officers!” Tracy called out to the people around as she and Eisley came rushing through the lower level passageways between the Jubilee and Northern Line platforms still in pursuit of the escaping man who was barging his way through, pushing people out of his way with no regard for anyone’s safety but his own.

“GET OUT OF THE DAMM WAY!” Tracy was then forced to shout as some of the passers-by, isolated in their own little worlds through the usage of their headphones, simply did not get the message the first time despite the commotion that was going on around them.

It was clear to those looking on that the suspect being chased was a desperate man by the way he was trying to escape almost in a panic, fearful of being caught as Tracy and Eisley closed in on him.

He managed to skip up the escalator to the ground level booking hall and then vaulted over the ticket barriers but then quickly realised that rather than hitting open ground, his possible escape routes were vanishing before his eyes as the exits from the station were now being locked down and uniformed Security Service officers were starting to enter from all directions.

“Move it, move it, MOVE IT!” Bob called as he and his team entered the booking hall and tried to usher onlookers out of harms way whilst the suspect desperately ran to and fro in an attempt to evade the authorities.

“Hold it right there!” Tracy then called as she and Eisley passed through the ticket barriers and caught up with him where, with guns drawn, they closed in on the target.

The suspect stopped and turned to face Tracy and Easley who stood their ground a short distance in front of him as Bob and his team closed in from behind.

Realising the game was up, the suspect's demeanour changed from one of panic and fear to a completely contrasting one of calm and serenity.

"To the Brotherhood I commit my life and my soul" he began to declare.

"Yeah, whatever" Tracy responded "Just shut up and surrender will you?"

"To Life Immortal!!" the suspect then called out, looking up with his arms aloft.

"What the...?" Bob responded, a sentiment echoed by all else there when at that moment a shot rang out, echoing all around the interior of the booking hall and carrying on down through the many tunnels and passageways that make up the Underground Station complex and causing everyone to instinctively duck for cover whilst the suspect collapsed to the ground in the middle of the concourse, the blood from a single gunshot wound streaming from his centre of his forehead.

"Shots fired, SHOTS FIRED!" came the call over the radio.

"Everyone hit the deck!" Bob called out in response.

"Where the hell did that come from?" Tracy called out.

"Alpha Team" Bob called to his officers "Did any of you just open fire?" he asked to which he quickly received a full complement of negative responses from all of his people."

"What the hell is going on?" The Commander asked as he and Jack emerged at the top of the escalator a moment later with their suspect being held between them.

Suddenly a second shot rang out and the second suspect immediately fell backwards, back down the full length of the escalator, a fall that would probably have killed him if the bullet that, like the one that got his associate a few moments earlier, had not done the job first when it struck him cleanly between the eyes.

Jack and The Commander nearly fell down with him but both managed to just recover and then scrambled up to the ticket barriers where Tracy and some of the other officers were taking cover.

"Would someone mind telling me what the hell is going on around here please?" The Commander then asked.

"I wish I knew" Tracy admitted before turning to her radio "Angel One to Control" she then called "I want London Bridge Station in complete lock down now and all civilians evacuated. Use extreme caution as one of them may be our shooter."

"The Duty Pathologist is going to be tearing his hair out with all the business we keep sending his way this week" Jack remarked.

“Bob!” Tracy then called from between a set of ticket barriers across the concourse “What’s happening?” she asked.

“The shot didn’t come from any of us” Bob confirmed “Looks like we have a loose shooter in here somewhere” he called back.

“He could be anywhere” Easley remarked.

“Or she” Jack responded as they all looked around the vast interior of the station nervously.

“Bob!” Tracy then called “Get the civilians out but make sure they are all searched before you let them go, get the guys outside to collect names and details before they are allowed to leave the site.”

“All right guys” Bob called to his team as he cautiously got up, his main weapon drawn and scanning around with it “You heard the lady, let’s get these people out of here.”

“Chances are the shooter has probably scarpered by now” Jack remarked.

“Maybe” The Commander agreed “but let’s not take anything for granted just in case” he then cautiously advised.

“All right everyone” Bob called to the civilians and station staff, most of whom had managed to huddle together in the same general area “I want everyone to stand up slowly, make no sudden movements and then move quickly and quietly over to the exit up on my left here” he instructed.

With obvious and understandable reluctance, the civilians and station staff started to slowly get up, many of them helping each other before they were escorted in small groups to the exit where outside they would be searched and checked before being allowed on their way.

“Who is the most senior Transport Division officer on site?” The Commander asked.

“I have a nasty feeling it’s me” Jack confirmed “Everyone else is probably outside on the cordon or managing the crowds that shutting down this place is creating elsewhere on the network.

“That’s the last one out” Bob then called from the far side of the concourse.

“Right” Tracy responded as she and the others cautiously rose from their cover positions behind the ticket barriers and looked around before turning to Jack “It’s your turf” she then prompted.

“All right then” Jack declared before taking a deep breath and then stepping boldly forward, holstering his weapon confidently as he did so “Commander Thornton” he then called to Bob with a renewed sense of authority “I want this entire station searched from bow to stern to confirm that the shooter is no longer on the scene.”

“You got it Guv” Bob responded with his ever present can do like attitude “All right, you heard the man, let’s get moving shall we?” he then prompted his team who quickly set about their task.

“Lieutenant Easley” Jack then turned to the officer to his right “With immediate effect I am hereby deputising you into the Transport Division for the rest of the evening if there are no objections from the Metropolitan Division?” he looked towards Tracy who merely shook her head with a smile in agreement.

“Yes Sir” Easley confirmed.

“I want you to proceed to the Station Supervisors Control Room” Jack then instructed “I want all the CCTV from inside and outside the station held and sent to Holborn for analysis right away, the person behind this has got to appear on camera somewhere.”

“I’m on it Sir” Easley confirmed.

“Lima Tango Nine Nine Three to all units at London Bridge” Jack then called into his radio “Gold Commander on site” he then confirmed before asking “I want confirmation that the entire station is evacuated, all trains stopped and everything locked down ninety seconds ago.”

“It would seem our Jack is no longer the apprentice” Tracy remarked to her husband as they looked on with pride as he went about the job of organising the search and the start of the investigation with obvious enthusiasm as well as professionalism.

“Control from Gold Commander” Jack then called as he stood over the body of the first man to be shot where he still lay, a pool of blood forming around him “As soon as Bob and his guys confirm we are secure, we will need a meat wagon for these two dead guys and tell the Duty Pathologist I want names on these goons by the morning, wake him up, drag him out of the pub if you have to, whatever it takes, do it!”

Fifteen minutes after executing the two Brotherhood members in the former London Transport Headquarters building, Shelby reached the south end of Horseferry Road and turned to his right to walk into Thorney Street, a small side street nestled between tall buildings and largely ignored by many who passed the end of it on a daily basis.

It was late in the evening and with the gentle patter of rain coming down, there was no one about to see Shelby as he walked up to an anonymous looking door set into the rear of one of the buildings. He paused for a moment to look up at the CCTV camera mounted above him which turned to face him before the door in front of him clicked and he was able to enter.

The door led straight into a stairwell that descended into a basement level located far below the unconnected building above, illuminated by dust covered bulkhead lamps on the wall at regularly spaced intervals although a couple were not working whilst one was flickering on and off ominously which merely added to the spooky atmosphere.

At the bottom of the staircase, the only exit was through another anonymous door set into the wall, a door with no external fittings, not even a handle. In order to access what lay beyond, Shelby took the glove off his right hand and placed his palm flat on a black section of glass set into the wall immediately alongside the door frame.

The screen quickly lit up in response to his touch and his hand was scanned before with a buzzer sound, the door opened, and he was permitted to enter.

In contrast to the utilitarian staircase outside, the interior of the deep basement level was a well fitted out office complex, an initial reception area being reached first before continuing on down a well-lit corridor of offices towards a specific doorway at the very far end.

No sooner had Shelby reached that door and politely knocked than a voice was heard to call from within.

“Come in!” the voice called and so with a little trepidation Shelby entered.

“Ah, there you are my boy” Sir Richard Crowthorne called as he rose from his seat behind his desk and went straight to the drinks cabinet on the wall of his office “You look like you are in need of refreshment” he then observed as he proceeded to peruse the selection of cut glass crystal decanters containing many fine spirits that were on offer in the cabinet.

“Thank you, Sir,” Shelby responded, still standing.

“Oh, for goodness sake lad” Sir Richard admonished the youngster “sit down and relax, here” he then passed Shelby a glass of Scotch “This will help” he suggested.

“Yes Sir” Shelby responded, sitting down in one of the leather backed arm chairs in the room and taking the glass before sampling a little of the drink it contained.

“So, how did it go?” Sir Richard then asked as he sat down on an adjacent chair, armed with his own glass of Scotch.

“The targets have been neutralised Sir” Shelby confirmed “Our friendly building security guard will be turning a blind eye until he ‘finds’ the bodies tomorrow morning and then calls in the cavalry.”

“Excellent” Sir Richard responded “You’ve done well” he then told the young officer “I know from many years of experience that it is never easy doing ‘Wet Work’ especially when it is your first time like tonight.”

“I had a good teacher Sir” Shelby complimented his superior with a raise of his glass which Sir Richard duly reciprocated.

“Even just a couple of years ago I would have taken on the job myself but I just can’t seem to muster the stamina anymore” Sir Richard ruefully admitted “My Doctor would probably say it is too much of this stuff” he indicated the glass of Scotch which he then quickly proceeded to finish with a satisfied sigh “Ah, what does he know, personally I think it’s just old age catching up with me.”

“What happened to the other two Ixion Brotherhood goons who were following Lieutenant Regent?” Shelby then asked.

“Ah, you haven’t heard?” Sir Richard responded as he put his glass down, contemplating for a moment a refill and then thinking better of it “It turns out our canny little Jack spotted them straight from the off and managed to arrange a little meet and greet for them at London Bridge Underground Station.”

“So they are in custody then Sir?” Shelby asked.

“Err, not exactly” Sir Richard responded with a hint of reluctance apparent in his voice “The Security Service had them cornered until someone shot them dead in the ticket hall.”

“Really?” Shelby responded, shocked at this unexpected development.

“Details are a bit sketchy at the moment” Sir Richard admitted “The reports are still coming in but it seems that both subjects were taken out within moments of each other, a single round to the head right between the eyes.”

“Professional job” Shelby concluded.

“Indeed” Sir Richard quickly agreed “Now whilst I am sure that Orbison and his merry band of lunatics are not the ones to take being arrested lightly, I am pretty sure even he would not resort to having his own people executed in order to prevent them slipping into the hands of the authorities.”

“That would indicate there are other players in this merry little game” Shelby concluded.

“Indeed” Sir Richard confirmed “and given how many particularly unpleasant people Orbison has laundered money for over the years, it could be absolutely anyone.”

“Gold Commander to Zulu One” Jack called into his radio as he surveyed the scene immediately outside the main entrance of London Bridge Station from the front step of the Transport Division Mobile Operations Unit, a converted former London Transport single deck bus which were it not for its blue flashing lights, would have blended well in with the conventional buses parked nearby in the still sealed off bus station area.

“Bob” Jack then called again after receiving no response “What’s the situation?” he then asked.

“Gold Command from Zulu One” came the slightly crackly response from Bob who was located a couple of hundred feet below Jack in the lowest level of the Underground Station “Just finishing our sweep of the station interior now” he confirmed as he looked around at some of his armed officers who were just completing the checks of the final parts of the station complex to be searched “Nobody’s home.”

“All right” Jack responded with a sense of frustration “Pack up your team and come on up.”

Nearby, a marked Security Service Transport Division patrol car came screeching to a halt whereupon Divisional Commander Appleby emerged from the front passenger seat and surveyed the scene with a sense of disbelief.

“What the hell is going on?” Appleby asked himself as he looked all around at the evacuated and sealed off area encompassing the mainline railway station, the Underground Station beneath it, the adjacent roads and side streets and several other premises that fell within the tape cordon that surrounded it, within which were a plethora of emergency service vehicles with blue lights flashing whilst numerous people from various agencies were milling around.

“Jack, your Guvnor’s just arrived” Easley called from inside the Mobile Operations Unit where he was looking over the shoulder of a Transport Division I.T. Technician who was reviewing the station CCTV footage for any clues.

“Ah... Thanks” Jack responded with a little hesitation before brushing down his uniform tunic and seeing everything was straight before stepping down onto the pavement just as Appleby came up.

“Good evening Sir” Jack called.

“Good evening Lieutenant” Appleby responded as they two officers met “Any chance you can explain this circus that seems to be in progress?” he then demanded.

“I was on my way home when I ran into a couple of problems Sir” Jack replied.

“Coming through!” came the call of a couple of Paramedics as they passed through with a stretcher on which was the body of one of the dead men, covered in a sheet and being taken to a nearby Coroner’s Ambulance to be taken away.

“Who was that?” Appleby then asked as he and Jack watched the stretcher being loaded up.

“One of the aforementioned problems” Jack then confirmed before stepping back again as the second dead man was brought through “and there goes the other one” he then added.

“Do you want to take it from the top?” Appleby then wisely suggested.

“All right then Sir” Jack agreed before continuing “I was on my way home when I became aware of two IC4 males in their mid to late twenties following me” he began to explain “They first appeared to me at St. James’s Park Underground Station and when I changed trains at Westminster they continued to follow me which is when I decided to take action to stop and identify the two individuals.”

“Go on...” Appleby then prompted.

“Err, well I managed to arrange for a couple of officers to meet me at London Bridge when the eastbound Jubilee Line train I was on arrived” Jack carried on “and when I arrived we managed to detain both individuals. Unfortunately there was subsequently a scuffle during which one of the suspects managed to break free and make a run for it.”

“Doesn’t look like they are running now” Appleby observed.

“Err quite” Jack was forced to agree “I and one of the assisting officers managed to restrain the first suspect once more whilst two other officers pursued the second suspect through the station until they had him cornered in the ticket hall thanks to the prompt arrival of back-up. However at that moment the suspect was shot and killed by an unknown assassin who moments later also took out the second suspect with an identical single shot right between the eyes.”

“Sounds nasty” Appleby remarked.

“As the senior Transport Division officer on site, in fact the only Transport Division officer on site, I duly deputised Lieutenant Eisley of the Metropolitan Division to help whereupon I had the entire area sealed off, a controlled evacuation performed and then had the whole complex searched by Bob Thornton and his guys from top to bottom” Jack then concluded.

“And have you found anything Lieutenant?” Appleby “Apart from the two dead guys in that meat wagon over there?”

“Not a sausage Sir” Jack then reluctantly admitted “no weapon, no shell casings, no signs of forced entry into restricted areas, we got nothing.”

“So an entertaining evening was had by all then” Appleby concluded with a bemused expression.

“I think there are two dead guys over there who might disagree with you Sir” Jack remarked.

“Gold Commander” one of the Transport Division officers on site called across to which Appleby reacted by rolling his eyes upwards “The press are here” he indicated the distant television lights and flashing cameras visible on the far side of the cordon where the media had gathered in response to the events of that evening.

“You’ve been in the job two minutes and already you are a Commander?” Appleby remarked with a sense of disbelief.

“Runs in the family I guess” Jack shrugged in response.

“All right then ‘Commander’ you are the one in charge of this circus” Appleby then declared “You get to speak to the press.”

“Me Sir?” Jack responded with a look of some surprise.

“You” Appleby confirmed with a wry smile “I meanwhile am tired, fed up and going home to bed.”

“Goodnight Sir” Jack responded as his superior officer turned smartly on his heels and shaking his head slightly in a mixture of bemusement, bewilderment and disbelief he walked away back to his car.

“Good God!” Megan exclaimed when, to her surprise she recognised the Security Service officer who was on the BBC News report making a statement to the press outside London Bridge Station about that evening’s events.

“Hi, I’m home” Jack was heard to call as he entered the apartment.

“Quick, get in here” Megan called out with excitement “You are on the telly!”

“Don’t remind me...” Jack responded as he collapsed, exhausted onto the sofa alongside her.

“You look good on screen” Megan remarked “A natural in front of the cameras I reckon.”

“Not an experience I want to repeat in a hurry” Jack admitted as they continued to watch the news report that had now moved back to the BBC’s correspondent on the scene having now heard everything that Jack had said to the press at the time.

“Oh I think you were great” Megan hugged Jack and kissed him on the cheek “my little super star.”

Across the other side of London, Megan was not the only one who had taken a close interest in the BBC broadcast and Jack’s appearance in particular.

“Well, well, well” Orbison remarked as he removed his reading glasses now that the news item was concluded and he turned off the television in his study “The prodigal son himself...”

At that moment Reaper appeared at the door and Orbison beckoned him in.

“Come in Brother” Orbison called “I do believe I have just had a revelation” he declared.

“My Lord?” Reaper responded with a quizzical look.

“Courtesy of the mighty British Broadcasting Corporation no less” Orbison continued “I have seen the prodigal son for myself, the potential thorn in our side, Lieutenant Jack Regent of the Transport Division of the National Police & Security Service, the son of The Commander and Tracy Caverner.”

“The Royal Family of the United Kingdom’s law enforcement industry?” Reaper responded “Interesting...”

“Very interesting don’t you think?” Orbison confirmed.

“What do you want to do My Lord?” Reaper then asked.

“I would very much like to meet him” Orbison declared “Talk to our contacts in the Security Service, see if they can arrange an introduction.”

“Yes My Lord” Reaper confirmed with a reverential bow “By Your Command...”

The next morning saw The Commander looking over a file whilst munching on his toast at breakfast, a concerned look on his face that Tracy sat directly opposite him, knew all too well.

“Everything all right love?” Tracy asked.

“Yes...” The Commander responded although it was clear he was still deep in thought and not really listening to what his wife was saying.

“I put chilli powder in your marmalade for extra flavour” Tracy remarked.

“Taste’s great” The Commander confirmed as he continued to concentrate intently on the contents of the file, going back and forth through the pages.

“I’m not wearing any underwear...” Tracy then teased with a wry smile.

“Good...” The Commander then responded before suddenly looking up and doing a double take “What?” he then asked.

“Must be an absolute page turner you have there” Tracy then commented.

“It’s the personnel jacket of Lieutenant Shelby” The Commander explained “Central Records sent it over first thing and it’s very, very strange.”

“What in particular attracts your attention love?” Tracy asked as she finished her coffee and got up, grabbing her uniform tunic off the back of her chair and came alongside her husband as she put it on.

“It’s all very neat” The Commander explained “Comprehensive education and qualification history, notes from his training course, two commendations, a disciplinary rap for accidental discharge of a firearm, all very neatly packaged and presented for our consumption.”

“You think its phoney?” Tracy asked.

“I think it has the proverbial fingerprints of a certain Mr Crowthorne written all over it” The Commander confirmed “Something about the way it’s been crafted, the brush strokes...”

“You mean Sir Richard has planted one of his little apprentices in the Transport Division?” Tracy suggested.

“It’s a theory that fits the facts” The Commander confirmed as he closed the file and finished the last bite of toast “and one I intend to run past old Tricky Dicky later this morning, just as soon as I have finished annoying the Home Secretary.”

“Oh I do wish I was a fly on the wall for that one” Tracy remarked with a wry smile as they headed out of the kitchen towards the front door of their apartment “Do they still genuflect in the Home Office every time you show up?” she asked.

“Either that or cower underneath their desks” The Commander confirmed “Indeed possibly both” he admitted.

“Come on love” Tracy urged as she took his arm in hers and they headed out of the door “Let’s go to work and create some mayhem and chaos” she suggested.

“Sounds like a plan my dear” The Commander agreed as they left.

In the basement car park of their apartment block in Vauxhall on the south bank of the River Thames, Terry Kinderley was already waiting with The Commander’s official car and watched in the rear view mirror as Tracy and The Commander appeared from the stairwell and approached the vehicle.

“Are you really not wearing any underwear?” The Commander then suddenly asked as he remembered what Tracy had said earlier when his attention was most definitely drawn elsewhere.

“That’s for me to know and you to find out my love” Tracy responded with a knowing smile as they arrived at the car.

“Ooooh...” The Commander remarked with a smile as he opened the rear door of the car for her before closing it and going around to the other side to get in himself.

“Morning Terry” he then called.

“Morning Sir, Maam” Terry responded, “Where to today?” he then asked as he started the car.

“The Yard for me thanks” Tracy confirmed.

“The Home Office is my destination I am afraid” The Commander remarked “I have to go and annoy the Home Secretary, again,”

“Sounds like fun Sir” Terry remarked as he drove the car up the access ramp and pulled out into traffic.

“It will be for me” The Commander responded with a wry smile “For the Home Secretary on the other hand...”

Ten minutes later Terry brought the car to a stop outside the main entrance of New Scotland Yard where Tracy got out and stood on the pavement whilst The Commander also got out to move to the front passenger seat.

Coming towards them was Jack with a file under his arm and an expression of confusion on his face.

“Well if it isn’t the Security Service’s latest media celebrity” Tracy called with a smile.

“Don’t remind me...” Jack replied, “I have already had half a dozen people stop me on my way over here to tell me they saw me on the television last night!”

“And what a great performance it was” The Commander remarked from the open passenger side window of his official car.

“I just got handed the preliminary coroner’s report on the two jokers from last night” Jack held up the file he was carrying “Apparently both of them were under the influence of this K200 narcotic when they met their untimely demise, they died effectively with their mind in a state of drug induced euphoria.”

“Oh, lovely” Tracy responded sarcastically.

“It’s one way to go I suppose” The Commander added.

“The Pathologist then rechecked the guy who jumped off the roof the other day” Jack continued “Traces of the same narcotic in his system as well. As we have never really encountered it before, they didn’t initially look for it, but we are looking for it now.”

“More than enough for me to present to the Home Secretary to get this stuff banned ASAP” The Commander confirmed with clear determination.

“Good” Jack responded.

“Oh, Jack” The Commander then called “Your colleague Lieutenant Shelby, there is something you had better know about him.”

“Go on...” Jack prompted, unsure of where this was going but knowing he probably wasn’t going to like it.

“I have taken a look at his personnel jacket” The Commander confirmed, indicating the file he had with him “It has the smell of a pale pastiche about it.”

“A pale what?” Jack responded, still none the wiser.

“It’s been carefully crafted for our consumption” The Commander continued to explain “In other words, if my suspicions are correct that is, I suspect your colleague is in fact one of Sir Richard Crowthorne’s little pet projects.”

“Ah...” Jack remarked “In which case I think it is time Sir Richard and I had a few words over a drink, informally of course.”

“If you don’t mind, I’d prefer to do that” The Commander responded, “I’ll let you know what I find though.”

“Good luck with that one” Tracy remarked.

“In the meantime, I have to go and upset the Home Secretary” The Commander declared, almost smiling with glee and anticipation at the prospect.

“See you later love” Tracy called.

“Give him my regards” Jack remarked.

“Will do” The Commander confirmed before closing the car door whereupon Kinderley drove away.

They both watched until The Commander’s official car was out of sight before proceeding towards the main entrance.

“So how is your investigation going then?” Tracy asked Jack as the automatic sliding doors opened before them and they stepped inside.

“Getting more and more complicated by the minute” Jack admitted “If anything else happens I feel like my head is going to implode.”

“You need to sit down with a few fellow officers and talk it through” Tracy suggested “Throw a few theories and ideas around the room and see if anything clicks together.”

“Sounds like a good idea” Jack admitted “I might try and set something up this afternoon.”

“Give me a shout, I’d like to be in on it” Tracy responded.

“I’d appreciate all the help I can get” Jack confirmed “Meantime I am off to see Simon Fuller and see if he has found anything interesting about our friend Lord Chaos.”

“See you later” Tracy called.

“Will do” Jack confirmed.

“Codswallop, codswallop, codswallop!” Nigel Davis QC, the Home Secretary called out with indignation in his strong Welsh accent in response to the consultancy report which he was reading whilst sat in his office situated on the top floor of the Home Office Ministry building in Marsham Street, just off Horseferry Road in Westminster.

“Rhubarb, rhubarb, rhubarb!” he then called out again before slamming shut the file and tossing it uncaringly into the corner of the large desk that dominated the room.

"Who writes this rubbish?" he then asked himself as he sat back in the leather upholstered swivel armchair, looking up at the ceiling as if in search of inspiration.

Finding none however, he swivelled around in his chair to the window and looked at the view outside where ahead he could see the top of the Houses of Parliament and the London Eye Ferris wheel on the far side of the River Thames.

It was then that he looked down towards the street and his face dropped when he saw a familiar looking car pulling up outside the main entrance to the building whereupon his fears were promptly confirmed when he saw The Commander emerge from the car and begin to stride purposely towards the front door.

Davis let out a deep sigh in response and when the phone on his desk began to ring a few moments later he knew what the message would be.

“Home Secretary” he answered, hoping for a better answer than the one he knew he was about to receive “Err, yes, send him up straight away” he then confirmed as soon as his fears were realised and the receptionist downstairs on the ground floor had told him that The Commander was indeed on his way up to see him.

There was nothing left for the Home Secretary to do now except try to relax, sit back and wait for the inevitable knock on the door which duly came just a minute later.

“Come in!” Davis called with a bit of a lump in his throat.

“Home Secretary, good morning” The Commander called as he entered the office, looking determined and business like.

“Administrator General” the Home Secretary responded, “To what do I owe the pleasure?” he asked.

“I need you to sign an amendment to the Misuse of Drugs Act 2001” The Commander produced an official looking form printed on pale blue paper which he proceeded to place on the desk facing Davis before pushing it across.

“Just like that?” the Home Secretary asked.

“I have a problem on my hands” The Commander explained “There is a gentleman and his dedicated bunch of loony followers who manufacture, peddle and get whacked out of their skulls on a narcotic called K200 among other names listed therein on the document.”

“Not one I have heard of I must say” the Home Secretary admitted as he put on his reading glasses and proceeded to study the form carefully.

“Whether you have heard of it or not, the fact remains it is out there and it’s doing significant damage. The two guys who got shot dead at London Bridge last night had significant amounts of this stuff in their blood stream, so I want this shit banned and I want it banned right now” The Commander demanded.

“Where does it come from?” the Home Secretary then asked.

“It’s creator and chief promoter is a man called Michael Orbison” The Commander continued “he is the self-proclaimed leader of a cult he created called the Ixion Brotherhood, calls himself ‘Lord Chaos’ if you can believe that.”

“I seem to recall a report about them passed through the office a few days ago” the Home Secretary recalled “It was some sort of consultancy report I think, written by one of our obnoxious appointed and overpaid advisors who keep cluttering the place up, spouting nonsense and expecting us to listen.”

“I know the type” The Commander admitted “What did this report say just out of curiosity?” he then asked.

“Hang on a minute Administrator General” the Home Secretary called as he got up and went over to a filing cabinet “I’ve got it here somewhere.”

The Commander watched with mild amusement as the Home Secretary rifled through the filing cabinet drawer, searching for the file until he finally found it.

“Ah, here it is!” he then declared, brandishing the file aloft before passing it to The Commander.

“Integration of Minorities and Specialist Belief Systems in a Multi-Dimensional Cohesive Paradigm” The Commander read from the front cover “Catchy yet utterly meaningless gibberish if ever I have seen it” he then sarcastically commented.

“The premise, I think amid all the jargon was that the guy who wrote it and his associated advisors feel that we should be embracing all these different groups and interests and integrating them into society rather than persecuting them” the Home Secretary summarised as he returned to his seat.

“All very noble I am sure” The Commander admitted “The trouble is Mr Orbison is a very bad man, his minions have been killing people left, right and centre, he has been laundering vast sums of money for the veritable international who’s who of unpleasant bastards, most of his followers are whacked out of their skulls on this K200 shit and he has a long and undistinguished history of leaving a trail of human wreckage in his wake, mostly a long line of abandoned teenage girls in various states of physical and mental distress.”

“I was not aware, I am sorry” the Home Secretary apologised.

“Your signature on that order will be the first step to closing this guy down for good” The Commander explained “He is out of control and must be stopped.”

“In which case, you shall have it” the Home Secretary enthusiastically confirmed as he grabbed a pen and duly signed the order.

“So who was the author of this load of old pony?” The Commander indicated the report in his hand.

“A special advisor to the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice by the name of Henry Bermann” the Home Secretary confirmed “Slimy little toad who should be kept at arm’s length and downwind at all times.”

“I’ll bear that in mind” The Commander confirmed as he got up and turned to leave but then turned back again.

“Oh, I almost forgot” he then called “There is something else I need you to do.”

“Am I going to like it?” the Home Secretary asked.

“Probably not” The Commander confirmed with a wry smile “Probably not.”

“Morning Jack” Fuller called as he entered his office and found Jack already there, waiting for him and working on a laptop “What are you doing?” he then asked.

“Following rule number one of modern police investigations” Jack explained as he furiously tapped away at the keyboard “If all else fails, type something into Google...”

“That’ll work” Fuller admitted as he sat down alongside him “Getting anywhere?” he asked.

“Nope...” Jack admitted as he gave up and sat back in the seat “Everything public on this guy Orbison and his Ixion Brotherhood seems squeaky clean and thoroughly laundered, it’s like he has some sort of press spin team working twenty-four seven making sure that all appears in public is warm and fuzzy.”

“Nobody is that squeaky clean” Fuller remarked “Especially not guys like this particular lump of slime.”

“The thing is” Jack continued with a noticeable tone of frustration in his voice “I know this guy is dirty, you know he is dirty, indeed probably the entire Security Service know he is dirty yet all the evidence says he is squeaky clean.”

“Which would suggest that in addition to a great publicist and spin team, this Orbison guy has sympathisers in prominent places watching his back” Fuller concluded.

“Did you have any luck with them files?” Jack then asked.

“Now you know I am not the one for numbers so I have couriered a copy of the financial stuff over to a reliable contact in the Fraud Squad to see if anything can be traced that is dodgy” Fuller confirmed “Meanwhile I have managed to come up with a list of the properties that Orbison, the Brotherhood and various connected shell companies own either in full or in part” he then passed across a lengthy printout.

“Good grief!” Jack exclaimed as he looked through the pages of information he had just received “That’s a hell of a lot of property.”

“I did a cross reference of some of the residential addresses and it would seem that Orbison also makes a tidy sum as a slum landlord as well” Fuller added.

“Lovely...” Jack responded, “Did you get anywhere tracking our communications breach?” he then asked.

“I have managed to establish that the system was hacked into through a number of terminals randomly picked in various Government offices using the identifications of people who have either died, left or never existed in the first place” Fuller explained “Hopefully now that I know some of the rogue identifications I can shut them off but there is still the possibility that someone is running a dedicated team of hackers somewhere.”

“I take it we are talking something a little more sophisticated than a bored teenager in his bedroom with a laptop then?” Jack asked.

“Indeed” Fuller agreed “Someone has managed to either obtain some key source code or worked out how to bypass it, that takes money, experience and some very sophisticated equipment.”

“The Russians?” Jack then suggested.

“Doesn’t feel right for them” Fuller remarked “When the Russian’s hack into systems they tend to leave a distinctive digital fingerprint, they usually want you to know it was them like a badge of honour.”

“Why do I get the feeling that this whole thing is a lot bigger than it seems?” Jack asked with a sense of foreboding.

“I am getting that feeling too” Fuller agreed “There is definitely a bigger picture here and we are being deliberately led up lots of garden paths to make sure we don’t see it until ‘they’ want us too.”

“My Lord, the news, quickly!” Reaper called as he came rushing into Orbison’s study with a concerned look.

“Calm down Brother, what is all the fretting about?” Orbison asked.

“There is a statement being made by the Home Secretary imminently” Reaper confirmed.

“Ah well, we wouldn’t want to miss that would we?” Orbison sarcastically responded as he got up and using the remote control, switched on the large television mounted on the wall.

The television came on just as the Home Secretary was beginning his statement live on the BBC News Channel from outside the Home Office building in Marsham Street with The Commander stood a little behind and to one side of him.

“Following representations from law enforcement agencies and after consulting with key stakeholders” the Home Secretary confidently announced, “under article twenty three of the Misuse of Drugs Act 2001, as amended, I am announcing an amendment to the list of prohibited substances.”

“Get hold of our man in the Home Office” Orbison called “I want to know who is behind this.”

“Yes, My Lord” Reaper confirmed.

“The narcotic substance known as K200 as well as other popular and slang names listed on the documentation that I am presenting today is with immediate effect classified as a Class ‘A’ drug, illegal to manufacture, distribute, purchase and consume in any form” the Home Secretary confirmed.

“I am going to have someone committed to the wheel for this outrage!” Orbison cried out in anger.

“Furthermore” the Home Secretary continued, now well in his stride “it is with immediate effect illegal to possess any money or materials that may be deemed to be profit from the manufacture and/or sale of said substance, this order giving the Security Services the authority to seize all goods and chattels that they deem to be the proceeds of such activity.”

“Scramble Bermann and his team of legal eagles” Orbison then ordered “I want this order countermanded and overturned before the sun sets tonight.”

Because of the depth below ground that Sir Richard Crowthorne's Section Fourteen offices were located, it was impossible to tell what the weather was like up on ground level until you left the building. This was what resulted in one of the two surprises that awaited Shelby and Sir Richard when they both emerged from the non-descript door and exited into Thorney Street to find that it was now starting to gently snow.

The other surprise for the two men was stood on the pavement waiting for them, beneath a black umbrella.

"Good morning gentlemen" The Commander called "Can I have a word?" he then formally requested.

"Ah..." Sir Richard responded, the look on The Commander's face told him all he needed to know.

"I was in the neighbourhood annoying the Home Secretary as usual so I thought as I was on a roll I would pop around and annoy you as well" The Commander explained, still looking very serious.

"You've met Lieutenant Shelby I believe?" Sir Richard remarked.

"Indeed" The Commander confirmed with a formal acknowledgement exchanged between the two officers "in fact he is the subject of the little chat I want with you, now."

"Message received and understood..." Sir Richard remarked.

"If you are not needing me, I had better get back to the Transport Division office" Shelby remarked.

"By all means" The Commander agreed "Take my car, Terry will drop you off outside the door."

"Thank you Administrator General, Sir Richard" Shelby responded before departing.

"Let me see if I can start this one off" Sir Richard began as he and The Commander proceeded to walk side by side down the street towards Horseferry Road a short distance ahead "You have probably worked out that Lieutenant Shelby is one of my people and naturally you are wondering what I am up to?" he asked.

"That's pretty much it in a nutshell" The Commander confirmed as he briefly looked up to see the snowflakes swirling in the air above them.

"Since evidence came to light of Michael Orbison's extracurricular activities outside of his religious wibblings" Sir Richard began to reluctantly explain "I took the liberty of recruiting a few extra staff to Section Fourteen and placing them in key low level but connected positions in all our law enforcement agencies that may at some point come into contact with Orbison and his ranks of dedicated but quite frankly mad minions."

“I pulled the Lieutenant’s personnel jacket last night” The Commander responded “as he was the only one apart from Jack to know about the safety deposit box yet when my lad got to the bank the Ixion Brotherhood’s brain trust was already there waiting to raid the place, we got suspicious that he had passed on information to Orbison and his boys.”

“He did, on my orders” Sir Richard frankly admitted as they reached the street corner and turned right to head towards the north embankment of the River Thames a short distance ahead and in the shadow of Thames House, the MI5 headquarters building that towered over them.

“I thought as much” The Commander remarked “Whilst Jack is clever, he doesn’t have the experience of your little ways to spot when a personnel file has your familiar artistic brush strokes on it, but I spotted it pretty quick.”

“Have you told Jack yet?” Sir Richard asked as they reached the pedestrian crossing and proceeded across to the river side of Millbank before heading across the end of Lambeth Bridge and towards Victoria Tower Gardens in the shadow of the Houses of Parliament.

“I told him my suspicions earlier” The Commander confirmed “It was originally going to be him who was going to have this little discrete conversation, but he has enough on his plate as it is.”

“So I have heard” Sir Richard admitted “Lieutenant Shelby’s reports have been comprehensive and very interesting.”

“I am going to hazard a guess here that it is no coincidence that your little minion wound up sharing an office with Jack?” The Commander intuitively suggested.

“You know me” Sir Richard admitted.”

“All too well” The Commander confirmed “So what’s the deal?” he then asked.

“I know that between us we have managed to keep media attention away from the fact that Jack is yours and Tracy’s son, all be it adopted of course” Sir Richard explained as they continued to walk past the Houses of Parliament towards Westminster Square in the distance “but I thought it inevitable that either Jack would wind up stumbling into a huge publicity attracting case or that at some point someone would make the connection between him and his adopted parents and could target him.”

“Or indeed both” The Commander added ruefully.

“As it turns out he seems to have wound up running an enormously complex and potentially dangerous media circus generating case even sooner than I was expecting” Sir Richard continued “Lieutenant Shelby is there to keep an eye on him and help him if need be.”

“I never got that kind of discrete protection when I started in the service” The Commander remarked.

“That’s what you meant to think” Sir Richard responded knowingly which caused the Commander to do a brief double take.

“So you instructed Lieutenant Shelby to leak to the Ixion Brotherhood the details and location of Raffety’s safety deposit box” The Commander then remarked “Why?”

“A loyalty test” Sir Richard explained as they passed the main gates of the Palace of Westminster, pausing only briefly to let a ministerial car and its Security Service escort pass “In order for Orbison to be able to completely trust what he sees as his contact inside the Service, it was necessary to provide some sort of genuine information.”

“Whereupon he sent his goon squad to go and wreck the place, nearly getting Jack shot in the process” The Commander concluded.

“I’m very sorry about that, truly I am” Sir Richard apologised profusely “I had no idea that the Ixion Brotherhood were going to act so quickly and so stupidly on the information, I mean come on, who the hell raids a safety deposit box in the middle of a Thursday afternoon for God’s sake?”

“Someone desperate” The Commander responded.

“Which would suggest something had either got Orbison spooked or he is moving his little outfit up a gear or two” Sir Richard suggested.

“Well I got something else for him to get spooked about now” The Commander confirmed as they reached the corner of Parliament Square and turned right towards Big Ben and Westminster Bridge “Following my official request, about twenty minutes ago the Home Secretary formally announced the immediate ban of the manufacture, distribution, sale, purchase, possession and usage of Orbison’s little narcotic K200.”

“That’s going to piss him right off” Sir Richard remarked “That was a nice little earner for him if I recall.”

“My heart bleeds...” The Commander mocked in response.

“So what’s the plan?” Sir Richard then asked as they reached the north end of Westminster Bridge and stopped in the shadow of the tower of Big Ben, currently enclosed in scaffolding as part of a major restoration project that had just got underway.

“I need to give Jack time to work on the Raffety murders” The Commander admitted.

“Murders? Plural?” Sir Richard picked up on a point.

“Jack found Raffety’s wife dead, stuffed in a freezer when he went and searched their house” The Commander explained.

“Oh dear...” Sir Richard mournfully responded.

“I got a message from Tracy just before I got to Thorney Street” The Commander then continued “Jack is going to convene a meeting of all the interested parties in this sorry mess about one o’clock at Holborn. I think you should come along.”

“I can do that” Sir Richard confirmed “The Pyramid Inquiry is suspended today whilst various overpaid lawyers have one of their regular mass arguments over some extremely expensive tax payer funded alcohol in a club somewhere, all on expenses of course so I am available.”

“I’ll see you there then” The Commander confirmed.

“Commander” Sir Richard responded before the two men parted company and walked away.

“A formidable legal team has already been assembled to challenge the Home Secretary’s directive on the banning of the narcotic K200 and is expected to begin appeal proceedings in the High Court as early as this afternoon” the BBC News correspondent reported on the television in The Commander’s office which Tracy was watching just as he walked in.

“Open bag of pigeons, insert cat, close bag...” Tracy remarked ruefully.

“Quite” The Commander agreed as they met and embraced.

“You saw Sir Richard I take it?” Tracy then asked as they both sat down together on the couch situated to one side of the office

“Indeed I did” The Commander confirmed “In fact you will never guess who he was with” he then remarked.

“Elvis Presley?” Tracy jokingly responded.

“Not quite” The Commander responded with an amused smile “No less a mortal than Lieutenant Shelby” he then confirmed.

“So Shelby is one of Sir Richard’s little apprentices then?” Tracy asked.

“Not only is Shelby Sir Richard’s man on the inside of the Transport Division with a brief to watch over Jack should he put his foot in it, he is also his man on the inside of the Ixion Brotherhood” The Commander confirmed.

“Busy fellow” Tracy remarked.

“Sir Richard got Shelby to pass on the safety deposit box information to the Ixion Brotherhood as a loyalty test to ensure he was accepted by them” The Commander explained “What neither of them expected was for them to act on the information quite so quickly.”

“Or so clumsily either” Tracy added “That says to me that Orbison was pretty dam desperate to see what was inside that box.”

“Or destroy its contents before anyone else got their hands on it” The Commander confirmed.

“This, combined with the banning of his narcotic could bring him more out into open, make him panic, make mistakes” Tracy warned.

“Suits me love” The Commander responded, “All I need is for him to stick his head up above the parapet and make one mistake and I shall have him bang to rights.”

“That’s usually when people start taking pot shots at us and it all goes pear shaped” Tracy jokingly warned.

“Yeah...” The Commander responded in admittance.

“Speaking of which, someone shot dead two more of the Ixion Brotherhood’s facilitators or whatever they are called over the road in 55 Broadway last night, trademark professional execution according to Doctor Yardell” Tracy remarked.

“How did he know they were Ixion Brotherhood?” The Commander then asked with a look of concern.

“Same burning wheel tattoo on the upper shoulders on both of them” Tracy confirmed “The building security guard supposedly found them this morning but something smells about it, got the scent of one of Sir Richard’s guys clearing out the trash about it.”

“The two that got shot dead at London Bridge last night followed Jack from here” The Commander remarked “They could have been some sort of observation post I suppose, good view of the whole of this place from up there.”

“Sir Richard’s man Shelby watching Jack’s back by any chance?” Tracy then suggested.

“Makes sense” The Commander admitted “although I still don’t fancy him for the London Bridge hits though, that had all the hallmarks of a far more sophisticated operation.

“You think there are other players out there in this sick little game that we seem to have become embroiled in?” Tracy then asked, her concern obvious.

“I reckon so” The Commander responded “Orbison is known to be a launderer of substantial sums of cash for a wide variety of scumbags and their criminal organisations worldwide which is bound to attract the attention of security agencies pretty much across the globe.”

“This could get messy” Tracy ominously warned.

“Doesn’t it always my love?” The Commander admitted with a wry smile.

“Home Secretary, I must protest in the strongest possible terms!” Henry Bermann, chief policy advisor to both the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice angrily called as he paced up and down in front of two of his associates from the same think tank organisation he was head of whilst the Home Secretary looked on from behind his desk.

So angry was Bermann that his face was redder than it normally was which made the sight of the short, heavily built man in the ill-fitting suit even more comical as he continued to stomp around like a child having a tantrum.

“It’s done and out of my hands” the Home Secretary defiantly responded. He had already faced The Commander that morning and survived so he figured a jumped-up advisor with ideas above his station was going to be no challenge for him now.

“I must inform you Home Secretary that by enacting this emergency directive you are in contravention of the integration guidelines issued by my office to all Government departments six months ago” Bermann continued to protest “You are going against the very principles of our open all embracing approach that we have adopted, essential now more than ever in these troubled times.”

“Take a careful look at this face Mr Bermann” the Home Secretary defiantly replied, “This is the face of a man who doesn’t give a toss!” he firmly declared.

Bermann fumed in response but at least he stopped pacing up and down for a moment much to the Home Secretary’s partial relief.

“May I remind you Mr Bermann of your position” the Home Secretary then continued as he stood up, his determination to state his case now stronger than ever “I am a duly elected and appointed representative of Her Majesty’s Government, the appointed Minister in charge of this country’s laws and regulations” he clearly stated “You are just an advisor, you advise which means all you do is provide advice, nothing more.”

Bermann was about to protest in response but the Home Secretary cut him off as he continued.

“The wonderful thing about advice is that I, as the man in charge around here can choose to either accept it or ignore it” the Home Secretary continued “and in this instance I am choosing to ignore it and ignore you and your overrated opinions Mr Bermann!”

“Overrated?!?” Bermann spluttered in response.

“In the words of a great man” the Home Secretary continued “Opinions are like arseholes; everybody has got one and they usually stink!”

“I must inform you Home Secretary that representatives of some very powerful people are already preparing a legal injunction and challenge to this outrageous directive of yours and I can assure you it will be rendered null and void in a matter of hours” Bermann insisted.

“Give it your best shot” the Home Secretary defiantly responded.

“Good day Sir!!!” Bermann abruptly declared before turning sharply on his heels and with his two associates following closely behind, marched out of the office.

“Don’t slam the....” the Home Secretary began only to grimace when the door banged hard “...door” he then finished.

With Bermann’s footsteps still just about audible stomping off into the distance outside, the Home Secretary swivelled around in his chair and looked out of the office window at the snow that was still falling gently outside and beginning to leave a coating of white on the nearby building rooftops.

“Oh Commander, Commander, Commander” the Home Secretary mused “What fresh hell have you dropped me into this time?” he then asked himself.

Jack had returned to his office in Holborn as the snow continued to fall outside and the normally busy centre of London began to prematurely empty and quieten down.

In the warmth of the general investigation office, Jack was at his desk and staring at the computer screen in search of inspiration when Shelby came in.

“Hello Jack, how’s tricks?” Shelby asked as he came up to Jack’s desk.

“It’s not going well to be honest” Jack admitted “All I seem to have is a load of files, several dead bodies and a lot of leads that don’t really appear to be going anywhere and every time I get close to nicking one of these Ixion cretins they either kill themselves, vanish into thin air or someone bumps them off.”

“Yeah, the Guvnor just got a call from the Coroner’s Office” Shelby remarked “Apparently all the bodies your investigation has rounded up has used up three months’ worth of their budget in just three days.”

“I wonder if that qualifies me for some sort of free lunch or something?” Jack wryly mused before changing the subject “So, how is Sir Richard Crowthorne?” he then asked, looking directly at Shelby with a knowing smile.

“Ah...” Shelby reluctantly responded, “So you know then?”

“The Commander figured it out after he pulled your personnel file last night” Jack explained “Had Sir Richard’s trademark fingerprints proverbially all over it.”

“Well that explains why The Commander wanted a word with Sir Richard earlier” Shelby remarked “Sorry about that.”

“Would I be right in thinking it was you who passed on the number and location of the safety deposit box to the Ixion Brotherhood, on Sir Richard’s orders of course?” Jack then asked.

“Yes” Shelby confirmed with a bowed head “It was necessary in order to establish trust for my cover.”

“So that Orbison thinks you are his trusted source on the Security Service I suppose?” Jack suggested.

“That’s basically the theory, yes” Shelby agreed “So are we still okay?” he then cautiously asked.

“Of course we are” Jack confirmed “You are my man on the inside, so pull up a chair and then you can tell me everything you know about Michael Xavier Orbison” he then instructed.

“Actually, I have never met him” Shelby frankly responded to a disappointed look from Jack “Sorry...” he then humbly apologised.

“So, if you have not met the guy in charge, who have you been dealing with?” Jack inquired.

“Most of the Ixion Brotherhood’s ‘Strategic Operations’ are handled by their ‘Facilitator General’, a man named Adam Reaper” Shelby explained “He’s the guy with the contacts in all the right places, sort of their equivalent of a Head of Intelligence at say MI5 or similar” he confirmed.

“Adam Reaper” Jack repeated as he turned back to the computer and prepared to search for the name.

“I’m not convinced it is his real name though” Shelby added thoughtfully.

“Not a problem” Jack responded as he began to search on the computer “This little search program has the ability to find aliases as well as real names from pretty much any law enforcement agency database I choose” he explained “Except the CIA” he then added “They kind of get angry if you go poking around in their system so I tend to keep clear, I’ve pissed them off enough this week as it is.”

“So Sir Richard was telling me” Shelby confirmed.

“Here we go” Jack then called as some results appeared on the computer screen “Four Adam Reapers on the system” he then turned the screen towards Shelby for him to look at “Any of these mugs look familiar?” he then asked.

“I didn’t get that great a look at him I am afraid” Shelby admitted “but definitely not the first two and I would wager number four is wrong as well.”

“Contestant number three it is then” Jack then declared as he returned the screen to its original position and carried on working on the computer “Charles Richard Adam Reaper, known as Adam” he read from the screen “Forty two, five foot eight, IC1 male, served in the armed forces for eight years and an explosives expert.”

“Explosives?” Shelby asked.

“Yes” Jack confirmed “Doesn’t bode well does it?” he then remarked.

“No, no it doesn’t” Shelby shook his head in agreement.

“Looks like his military records are sealed unfortunately” Jack then remarked as he tried unsuccessfully to access them but found himself blocked “A call to my friend in the Ministry of Defence later should solve that little hurdle.”

“You have a friend on the MOD?” Shelby asked although deep down he wasn’t really that surprised.

“Oh, I have friends everywhere” Jack admitted with a wry smile before turning back to the computer “but this is interesting, his known associates include an infamous gentleman by the name of Gary Hansell. Looks like they were old army buddies if this is anything to go by.”

“Perhaps we should go and talk to this Hansell guy?” Shelby then suggested.

“I’d love to” Jack replied, “Unfortunately that would require the services of a clairvoyant and an Ouija board, he’s dead.”

“Are you sure?” Shelby asked.

“I was there when he dived out of a window on the twenty fifth floor of The Shard and crashed into London Bridge Railway Station below about six months or more ago” Jack confirmed.

“A dead end then” Shelby remarked “Literally...”

“Quite” Jack agreed.

At that point Divisional Commander Appleby arrived in the office with two carrier bags full of shopping.

“Afternoon Guv” Jack called.

“Gentlemen” Appleby responded “I got the shopping, there is enough tea, coffee, biscuits and cake here to feed an entire army for four hours as requested.”

“Are we expecting an army?” Shelby then asked, unaware of the plans for the afternoon that lay ahead.

“No” Jack confirmed, “Only the heads of various security agencies and divisions which believe me from experience I can tell you consumes a lot of tea, coffee and biscuits.”

“Is The Commander coming?” Shelby inquired.

“I think so” Jack confirmed “In which case we may need more biscuits” he then added thoughtfully.

“Did someone say biscuits?” The Commander asked as he entered the room at just the right moment along with Tracy.

“See what I mean?” Jack asked across to Shelby who smiled in response.

“Honestly love, your diet” Tracy remarked aside to her husband.

“We are going to go through to the main conference room” Jack indicated across the office to where Appleby was struggling through the door with the bags of shopping “With a bit of luck the kettle should be on in a minute” he confirmed.

“Sounds like a plan to me” Tracy agreed.

As they made their way through to the conference room, Sir Richard Crowthorne arrived along with Christopher Dent.

“Are we too late?” Sir Richard asked.

“Come through, you are just in time gentlemen” Jack confirmed as he held the conference room door open for them to pass through.

It took a few minutes for everyone to settle in their seats with refreshments provided before Appleby stood up and the room fell silent.

“Good afternoon everyone” he declared “As I have pretty much no idea whatsoever what is going on, I am hereby turning this briefing over to Lieutenant Jack Regent” he then turned to the young officer “Okay young man, you’re up.”

“Ladies and gentlemen, fellow officers, colleagues from other agencies” Jack began eloquently “We have a problem, this man.”

At that point Jack used a remote control to start a digital projector that shone onto the screen ahead of them an image of Orbison.

“Michael Xavier Orbison” Jack then continued “Also known as Lord Chaos, the creator and self-proclaimed god of the Ixion Brotherhood, basically a cult of personality that is also a front for violence, crime and money laundering on an epic international scale.”

“Anyone who has Xavier as a middle name has got to be dodgy in my book” Dent remarked as he dipped his biscuit into his tea before biting it.

“Over the last few days I seem to have accumulated an awful lot of dead people” Jack then continued “What started off as a simple body by the side of the line at Star Lane, north of Redhill has progressed into a murder inquiry with a lot of, ahem, dead ends.”

“Any connection with that guy who threw himself off the roof of New Scotland Yard the other day?” Dent then asked.

“Yes” Jack confirmed “The body at Star Lane was a long time professional cat burglar by the name of Raffety” he went on to explain “His wife was found dead, stuffed in a freezer at their home by Lieutenant Shelby here and myself, one of Raffety’s known associates was shot dead in the street at about the same time, his friend was then executed by an intruder inside Scotland Yard who is the one who promptly threw himself off the roof.”

“To Life Immortal...” Tracy recalled the roof diving man’s final cryptic words.

“One of Orbison’s Ixion Brotherhood’s little tag lines” Jack confirmed “Ironic isn’t it?”

“Quite” Sir Richard agreed.

“It appears that Raffety had connections to the Ixion Brotherhood, his sixteen year old daughter is the current Lady Chaos, the ‘wife’ of Orbison” Jack continued “From what I have seen of the contents of a safety deposit box that Raffety had and which the Brotherhood tried to grab hold of yesterday afternoon, he had appointed a Private Detective to conduct an investigation into Orbison and his organisation.”

“Presumably he must have found out something or else why send around his goons to try and grab the safety deposit box” Tracy remarked.

“There is a lot of information in there, much of which is over my head I have to admit” Jack confirmed.

“Was Raffety trying to get something on Orbison to try and get his daughter back?” The Commander suggested.

“It’s a theory that fits the facts Sir, yes” Jack agreed.

“What about last night?” Tracy then asked, “Were those two goons at London Bridge anything to do with all this?”

“I’m afraid so” Jack admitted “It seems I have attracted the attention of Orbison and his little band of muppets” he continued “the only thing is, when we cornered them last night, someone took the out with single shots to the head.”

“The two Ixion goons at Broadway were taken care of by my own people” Sir Richard added “My sources confirmed that Jack was attracting the attention of Orbison and his minions, so I made sure we had his back.”

“So it was you?” Jack asked.

“Not the London Bridge pair, no” Sir Richard then confirmed “I am still waiting for a report from my friendly ballistics guy but all indications are that shooting was down to someone else I am afraid.”

“Is there another player on the field?” The Commander suggested with a concerned tone.

“It wouldn’t surprise me” Dent remarked “Orbison has been laundering funds for so many unsavoury characters and organisations across the globe, he has got to have pissed off someone along the way or at the very least dealt with someone of considerable interest to other international security agencies.”

“Sir Richard, you are the expert on such things” Tracy then asked “What would you need to assassinate two people in full public view in an enclosed space surrounded by armed security officers and make you escape as if you were never there?”

“With no detectable weapons despite a thorough search of all who left the building?” Sir Richard asked with clear concern “That sort of operation would take specialist equipment, miniaturised yet highly accurate, well beyond my budget that is for certain.”

“Could it be someone like the CIA?” Dent suggested “I am sure they have something suitable in their boxes of tricks, they certainly have the funds to pay for it.”

“Time to start making rude phone calls to Grosvenor Square again” The Commander remarked.

“I’m sure they will love that” Sir Richard mused with a wry smile.

“I was always told to look for the common theme throughout a case if all else failed” The Commander remarked “These days however it seems the first thing to do is stick something into Google and press Enter.”

“Already tried that” Jack admitted.

“A couple of things that occur to me looking through these profiles” Dent commented as he leafed through and compared sheets of paper in front of him “All of the Ixion Brotherhood thugs that we have collectively encountered are in their mid to late twenties and hail from various minority groups, the London Bridge pair were eastern Asian, the guy from the Yard was Korean and the two dead ones from the safety deposit box place were Tunisian.”

“Given how many nationalities and minorities are living in this town these days, that’s not much to go on” Tracy remarked.

“True” Dent agreed “There is something else that connects them all, they are all ex forces, not British armed forces but definitely with military experience.”

“Okay, that bothers me” Jack admitted.

“Especially as Orbison allegedly has access to that X232 type explosive according to reports” The Commander cautiously warned.

“Nothing alleged about it I am afraid” Shelby then responded, “He’s got it all right, where he has securely stored it and what he intends to do with it however is another question entirely.”

“So you’ve met this Orbison character then?” Tracy asked Shelby who regretfully shook his head in response.

“Sadly not” Shelby confirmed “I have only had dealings with his Second Circle ‘Facilitator General’ which is another name for a general fixer, muscle and gopher, a man called Adam Reaper” he explained.”

“What have we got on him?” The Commander asked.

“I have a large file on him” Sir Richard then confirmed “Alas there isn’t much actually in it.”

“I did some discrete searching on the name Adam Reaper a short time ago” Jack remarked “If it is the same man, he is another ex-military guy, one with explosives expertise and for a bonus, the one-time comrade in arms of one Gary Hansell.”

“Well, well, well” Tracy responded, “It is a small world isn’t it?”

“I am willing to bet real money that there is also a military connection between this Reaper and the goons we have encountered so far” The Commander ventured.

“I can have a word with my man at the Ministry of Defence if you like?” Sir Richard suggested “I am sure there must be something somewhere in a dusty forgotten file in there somewhere that can shed more light on this character.”

“Major Ford?” Jack then asked.

“How did you know that?” Sir Richard responded with some surprise.

“Your man at the MOD is also my man at the MOD it would seem” Jack admitted.

“Now that the Home Secretary has signed the order banning this narcotic, err what was it called again?” The Commander asked.

“K200” Tracy responded.

“That’s the stuff” The Commander continued “Now it has been official banned, can we locate where it is made and go and kick a few doors in?” he asked.

“There are a large number of properties in Orbison’s portfolio and accounts mentioned as being either investments or owned outright” Sir Richard confirmed “If I were a betting man, which I am then I would wager the factory for this stuff has to be in one of those locations.”

“If it is of any help I can co-ordinate with Commander Cassini and his guys, get some discrete surveillance going on these locations” Dent suggested “Some sneak and peek operations, that sort of thing.”

“Sounds good to me” Jack agreed “What are the chances of getting a warrant within the next hour?” he then asked.

“The Justice Department will be at lunch until at least half two I would suspect” Tracy warned “Particularly as its Friday.”

“That will be last we see of them until Monday morning then” The Commander remarked “in a sober state at any rate.”

“What were you intending to raid Lieutenant?” Appleby asked with clear concern.

“Orbison’s flat in Basildon” Jack confirmed “Give his drum a spin, shake him up a bit, let him know that I am on to him and no matter how many goons he sends my way, I won’t be intimidated.”

“That’s my boy!” The Commander responded almost with a sense of pride.

“I can grant a Divisional Warrant under command privileges” Appleby then confirmed, all be it reluctantly “but there will be terms and conditions.”

“Yes Sir” Jack agreed.

“Firstly, don’t do anything rash” Appleby then instructed “Secondly, keep it low profile and discrete, just you and Shelby knock on the door but have a van full of back-up parked around the corner in case it goes pear shaped and finally, if it does go pear shaped, try not to make a mess.”

“Understood Sir” Jack agreed.

“All right” Appleby responded “I’ll go and get the appropriate paperwork from my office, if you will excuse me everyone” he then got up and headed out of the room.

“You do know we are going to get political heat on this?” Dent then pointed out “This Orbison fellow has connections in powerful places apparently” he warned.

“I’ll deal with the Westminster no neck brigade and anything else that crawls out of the proverbial woodwork on that front” The Commander confirmed “In the meantime if you could see what lurks at these various locations and if anything flags up let Jack know and he can decide what action to take.”

“No problem” Dent readily agreed.

“I’ll monitor all the domestic daily goings on from the Control Room” Tracy then confirmed her role in this semi-unofficial operation that was now coming together “If anything screams out as likely to be Orbison and his bunch of facilitators I’ll push the panic button and get the cavalry moving.”

“Perhaps a discrete call into the bomb squad may be advisable if this green explosive stuff may be in circulation?” Sir Richard ominously suggested.

“Good idea” The Commander agreed as he made a note of it “That’ll make Alan Harding’s day, probably his weekend too.”

At that point Appleby returned with a small folder containing some official paperwork which he proceeded to hand across to Jack

“There you go Lieutenant” he declared “I’ve just signed my life away, please don’t waste it.”

“Thank you, Sir,” Jack responded.

“When were you planning on knocking on his door?” The Commander then asked.

“As soon as we are finished here” Jack confirmed “I like to hit the ground running and with the announcement of the banning of his K200 drug which means potentially the end of a nice little earner for him, Orbison is going to be unsettled and hopefully off guard.”

“I like your thinking lad” Sir Richard commended.

“I’ll have a word with the Drugs Squad” The Commander then added “Get them to aggressively target anyone dealing or carrying this K200 stuff straight away.”

“You do know that is going to piss Orbison off and then some don’t you?” Tracy warned.

“Absolutely” The Commander confirmed “I want us to be all over him like a cheap suit, in his face and bringing his sick little band down before he does any more damage.”

"If that is all, I had best get going" Dent announced as he pushed his chair back and stood up, helping himself to a couple more biscuits as he did so.

"Leaving us so soon?" Sir Richard asked.

"Ah, you know how it is" Dent confirmed "Always got something on" he responded.

"Anything I should know about?" The Commander then asked, sensing that Dent was being subtly evasive.

"Err no" Dent replied "Just a little domestic housekeeping" he then responded "Until later everybody" he called before taking his leave.

As Dent left, one of the Transport Division Control Room officers came in with a message on a piece of paper that he handed to Sir Richard who duly thanked him.

"He's hiding something..." Tracy commented.

"He is head of operations for MI5" Sir Richard responded as he read the message he had just received with great interest "Of course he is hiding something, it's in the job description."

"Anything interesting?" The Commander asked, sensing Sir Richard's demeanour ever since he had received the message a few moments earlier.

"Probably his Club finally caught up with him about his bar bill I expect" Tracy mused.

"I wish it were" Sir Richard confirmed as he finished re-reading the message before passing it across to Jack "There you go young man, one provisional ballistics report for you."

"Thank you" Jack responded as he took the report and then proceeded to look at it for himself.

"Anything interesting?" The Commander then asked.

"All of the shootings involving and most likely attributable to Ixion Brotherhood goons have used the same manufacturer and specification of weaponry and ammunition" Sir Richard explained "Mostly South African manufactured weapons, very high-quality stuff not easily obtainable but not overly rare either."

"The fly in the ointment here appears to be the two guys shot dead at London Bridge" Jack then added having read the report for himself now "completely different ballistics altogether" he then passed the report to Tracy and The Commander to read for themselves.

"Point two eight calibre, high velocity specialist rifle equipment suspected" Tracy read out loud from the report "A bit unusual isn't it?" she then remarked.

"Very unusual" Sir Richard confirmed "Definitely nothing that would be in the Ixion goons armoury that is for certain" he went on to explain "This is more likely some sort of custom made bespoke weapon, that suggests an International Secret Service agency of some kind."

"MI5?" The Commander asked "Dent was being rather shady just now" he pointed out.

"On their budget?" Sir Richard scoffed at the suggestion "They can barely afford night scopes for their catapults and pop guns let alone anything that can actually fire something these days."

"Is there the possibility that an overseas Secret Service is running a hit team on my manor?" Tracy asked.

"Oh, there is always that possibility" Sir Richard confirmed "Most of the major national Secret Service organisations maintain a team of sharp shooters on twenty four hour call out located in most major capital cities including this one, the lesser countries use freelance contractors where they don't have their own people or borrow specialists from a friendly neighbour."

"How positively charming" Shelby commented.

"I'll have a word with my colleagues at MI6" Sir Richard then responded, "Get a more indepth ballistics report done, that calibre of weapon has got to be nigh on unique and if it has been used before there is bound to be a record of it somewhere."

"Keep me informed" The Commander requested.

"Always" Sir Richard confirmed to a look of suspicion from both Tracy and The Commander.

"Meantime I think it is time I went and knocked on some doors" Jack confirmed "Shelby, you're driving" he then declared.

"Zebra Three to Zebra Six, you got your ears on? Over" came the call over the radio in the back of the Ford Transit van parked around the back of the Park Lane Hotel as Dent got in having rushed straight over from Holborn.

"We read you" one of the Surveillance Officers in the van responded.

"The Target just called down for Room Service, some drinks and two glasses" Claire in the Reception Area, call sign Zebra Three confirmed.

"Two glasses, that suggests he is about to have company" Pointer remarked.

"Zebra Three" the first Surveillance Officer then called "Has anyone other than guests checking in arrived in the last fifteen minutes?" he asked.

"No one that I am aware of Zebra Six" Claire confirmed.

"Could it be someone already in the hotel, a guest already here that he is meeting?" the other Surveillance officer suggested.

"Get Central to run the guest list through the computer again, see if we missed anything" Dent then requested.

"There is nobody with the Target in the room at the moment" the first Surveillance Officer confirmed as he checked the live camera feeds on the screens in front of him "Whoever it is he is meeting must still be on the way."

"Zebra Seven" Pointer quickly called to another officer positioned in a room just down the corridor from where the Target was staying "Take a walk and see who is about" he ordered.

“Roger that Sir” came the response from Zebra Seven whereupon everyone in the van looked across at the CCTV feeds and saw the agent emerge from a room and walk down the corridor towards the lifts at the far end, glancing discreetly at the room of the target as he passed.

“The lift is on the way up” the first Surveillance Officer then called “Someone is coming.”

“Zebra Seven, did you get that?” Pointer then relayed.

“Understood” came the discrete response.

Everyone looked at the screens as the agent approached the lifts just as the digital number indicator showed that the lift was about to arrive on that floor.

“Here we go” Dent remarked “Let’s see who our mystery guest is.”

On the screens they saw the lift doors begin to open and the agent stepping forward when suddenly all the screens went blank.

“What the hell...?” Dent called as he and the Surveillance Officer quickly tried anything they could to try and re-establish the picture feeds.

“Zebra Seven” Pointer then called “We’ve just lost all our visuals” he warned.

“Zebra Six from Zebra Three” came a call from Claire down in Reception “The whole building just lost power” she confirmed.

“What an amazing coincidence” Dent remarked with a tone that clearly demonstrated that he felt it was anything but.

“Zebra Seven, respond please” Pointer then called again.

“I’m going up there” Dent then called as he checked his weapon before concealing it inside the shoulder holster beneath his jacket “Keep trying to raise him and find out what the hell happened to the power” he then instructed before getting out of the van.

Moments later he was entering the building by way of the fire exit stairs door and heading up as fast as he could towards the top floor.

Approximately halfway up, Dent paused as all the lights came back on and there was a message for him,

“Oscar One from Zebra Six” came the call “Power is back on throughout the building, but the CCTV is still down at the moment.”

“Roger that” Dent responded as he headed through the fire door and went around to the lifts on the seventh floor which he decided to make use of now they were active again “I’m still on my way up” he then confirmed.

Moments later the lift car arrived on the top floor and with a ping, the doors opened where there was a shocking sight in store for Dent as he stepped out into the landing.

“Oscar One to Zebra Three, urgent message!” Dent called as he knelt beside his officer who was lying on the ground, two bullet wounds to the chest, bleeding heavily but still just about alive “Get a paramedic team up to the top floor ASAP!” he ordered.

Moments later a couple of Dent’s officers arrived on the floor whereupon he indicated towards their fallen colleague.

“Neil, look after him until the medical guys get here” Dent instructed one of the officers “Tim, you come with me” he then called to the other officer whereupon they proceeded urgently with weapons drawn, down the corridor towards the target’s room a short distance away.

Upon reaching the door, Dent instructed his officer to remain to one side ready to act if necessary, before discreetly reaching across and knocking.

“Room Service...” Dent called but there was no response.

“Shall I Sir?” the officer asked.

“By all means” Dent duly stood aside whereupon the officer unsubtly kicked the door in before they quickly moved inside.

The two men quickly searched the suite, but it became quickly apparent that the target was gone, not a trace of his presence remained.

“Bugger!” Dent exclaimed as he lowered his gun before deciding what to do next “Oscar One to all units” he then called “I want this building sealed as of ninety seconds ago. Nobody leaves or enters unless they have been all but strip searched!”

Tracy and The Commander were taking the opportunity to enjoy the mid-afternoon sunshine and walk through Central London, arm in arm back to New Scotland Yard.

On the way from Holborn towards Covent Garden they had picked up ice creams and were enjoying them together when they became aware of a car approaching them, weaving its way carefully through the parked cars and narrow back roads but most certainly heading towards them.

“Are we supposed to be meeting your sister today?” The Commander asked Tracy as they stopped and turned around having reached the junction of Great Queen Street and Wild Street.

“Not that I know of” Tracy confirmed, as equally surprised as her husband. The reason for this event soon became clear however when the black ministerial escort car came to a halt alongside them and the side windows lowered to reveal Jennifer in the driver’s seat and an anxious looking Home Secretary sat in the back.

“You are a hard man to find Commander” the Home Secretary responded with a worried frown.

“Oh, I don’t know” Jennifer joked at that point “I tend to just drive around and listen for explosions and gunfire, you will find he usually isn’t far away.”

“Nice...” The Commander responded, “If you were hoping for me to buy you an ice cream Home Secretary then I am afraid you a few minutes too late.”

“My day gets worse by the minute” the Home Secretary mockingly responded, “I wanted to catch up with you as soon as possible before you did anything rash against that Orbison character.”

“Ah...” Tracy replied, “Wheels are well and truly in motion on that front I am afraid.”

“That was what I was afraid of” the Home Secretary responded as he got out of the car “Well in that case I bring good news and I also bring bad news” he then informed them.

“Okay then, I’ve had ice cream, I’m feeling positive, let’s hear the good news first” The Commander prompted.

“The good news Commander is that, no matter what, you have my full and unequivocal support” the Home Secretary declared.

“That is both good to know and at the same time, ominous in equal measure” The Commander remarked, “So what’s the bad news?” he then asked, his years of experience meaning that he had already sensed where this was going.

“The full force of self-opinionated and self-interested legal bureaucracy along with their very well-paid lawyers, are stampeding in this direction right behind me” the Home Secretary then confirmed.

“Let me guess, you had a visit?” The Commander ventured.

“Bermann and a couple of his little butt buddies showed up not long after the announcement” the Home Secretary confirmed, still clearly angry about the encounter “In among all the bluff, bluster and bullshit I think the gist was that it is seen that we are suppressing freedom of speech and harassing a minority interest or some such crap.”

“As my old grandmother used to say, diddum’s” The Commander responded unsympathetically.

“Or as my old grandmother used to say...” Tracy added by then blowing a raspberry.

“I might have lost my temper with him though which may have escalated things a bit” the Home Secretary then confirmed “Basically I told him in the best diplomatic terms I could to go forth and multiply.”

“Good for you” The Commander congratulated him which brought a smile to the Home Secretary’s face, probably for the first time that day.

“However I felt it prudent to warn you that if you do take any action, especially with the legal challenges that are already being launched to counter this morning’s announcement, there is a danger that it could all go pear shaped rather quickly” the Home Secretary ominously warned “At the very least you stand to piss off a lot of very powerfully connected people.”

“Normal operating procedure around here surely?” Tracy remarked with a wry smile.

“You know they have invented this thing called the telephone” The Commander suggested to the Home Secretary.

“I know” he admitted “however, call me paranoid...”

“You’re paranoid” Jennifer was heard to interject at that moment with a smirk.

“...but I get the distinct feeling my office may be bugged, my calls monitored, people following me around” the Home Secretary continued to explain, a slight hint of fear in his tone of voice and his mannerisms which he did his best to hide.

“You’re the Home Secretary, of course your office is bugged” The Commander confirmed “although admittedly not by me, well, not this time anyway.”

“You’ve bugged the Home Secretary’s office?” Tracy looked across to her husband although deep down she was not really that surprised.

“Once or twice...” The Commander evasively responded.

“That makes me feel so much better!” the Home Secretary sarcastically replied.

“Glad to be of help” The Commander responded.

“I just wanted to make sure you knew before you did anything err rash shall we say?” the Home Secretary then stated.

“Me? Rash? Surely not!” The Commander replied with a wry smile.

“Hmmm...” the Home Secretary looked on decidedly unconvinced.

"We need a code name for this guy" Jack remarked as he looked out of the window, deep in thought "How about Upton Park?" he then suggested.

"Err..." Shelby thought about it for a moment but had to give up. "Why?" he then asked.

"Only a couple of stops short of Barking" Jack explained with a wry smile.

“Oh, very good” Shelby remarked with a chuckle.

The two officers looked on from the car at the small block of typically run down looking 1960’s constructed concrete and brick council flats situated in a seemingly forgotten side street on the outskirts of Basildon, located just outside the eastern fringes of Greater London in the county of Essex.

“You know for a major Internet celebrity with hundreds of thousands of dedicated followers and millions of pounds squirreled away” Jack commented across to Shelby “He doesn’t exact live in the most salubrious surroundings, does he?”

“Bog standard council flat complete with rusty Vauxhall Cavalier with only two wheels on it in the front garden” Shelby agreed “Positively smells of money, not...”

“I guess he likes to keep a low public profile” Jack remarked.

“Sir Richard gave me a report he had managed to obtain from a drug addiction study group” Shelby then continued “Apparently that K200 stuff that Orbison peddles is way more dangerous and addictive than the publicity surrounding it says it is.”

“Sounds like someone well placed has been keeping bad publicity about it away from the media and probably the authorities too” Jack responded, “Why am I not surprised?”

“According to the report” Shelby continued “There is a specialist rehabilitation clinic in Cambridgeshire which has over forty patients who have been taking this stuff. One female patient, a previous Lady Chaos apparently had such a bad reaction to long-term high-level exposure to the stuff that it drove her insane.”

“Nasty” Jack remarked.

“She has spent the last five years in a padded room constantly screaming at the sight of the terrifying images that the drugs have put into her mind” Shelby explained “She screamed so much that her vocal chords effectively gave out and to this day she still screams in complete silence.”

“One of those rare cases where maybe it would be kinder to just put her out of her misery” Jack suggested.

“Not allowed under the law though” Shelby confirmed with sadness “no matter how desperate the situation is.”

“That’s it, this guy is going down” Jack then declared “Lima Tango Nine Nine Three to Zulu One, Bob are you there?” he called over the radio.

“Zulu One receiving you loud and clear” Bob confirmed from the front passenger seat of his vehicle parked a short distance away out of sight, his deputy in the driving seat alongside and six of his best specialist firearms team officers in the back all tooled up and ready to go if needed.

“We’re going in” Jack then confirmed “I’ll call you if we need you.”

“We’ll be here” Bob then confirmed "Try not to make a mess though, that's our job."

“Let’s do this then” Jack then declared, releasing the seat belt before he and Shelby simultaneously opened the doors and got out of the car.

The two officers strode purposefully towards the ground floor flat with its red door, the paint peeling and the general condition of the whole exterior giving a very much down at heel impression that regrettably fitted in well with the surroundings which looked similarly run down and neglected.

“Love what he’s done with the place” Shelby jokingly commented as they made their way through the rusty garden gate and up the crumbling remains of the concrete path that led up to the front door, passing the weed strewn wreckage of the old abandoned car and the remains of a disused refrigerator on the way.

“Still probably worth a couple of hundred grand on the property market as its ‘a unique fixer upper opportunity within commuting distance of London' though” Jack cynically responded as they reach the door.

“You can’t sell a council flat though” Shelby then pointed out.

“Oh, I think you will find it has been done though” Jack then responded before with a little hesitation, he proceeded to knock on the door, eschewing the battered doorbell button as it was highly likely, given the condition of the property to which it was attached, that it was not working.

As Jack waited patiently by the door, Shelby took the opportunity to peer through the front window immediately adjacent but could see nothing.

“No lights on that I can see” Shelby commented.

Jack tried knocking again before kneeling down and opening the letterbox whereupon he looked through into the hallway beyond.

“Mr Orbison!” Jack then called through the letterbox “This is the National Police and Security Service; I have a warrant to enter and search these premises” he then announced.

“I get the distinct impression that nobody is home” Shelby commented.

“I think you may be right” Jack agreed as he got back up and dusted off his knees.

“Low profile and discrete?” Shelby asked, reflecting the words of Divisional Commander Appleby earlier.

“Absolutely” Jack confirmed before unceremoniously kicking the door in where, thanks to its poor condition it effectively disintegrated and collapsed into a heap on the floor, taking half the frame with it.

“Very discrete...” Shelby then sarcastically remarked as they stepped inside.

“Did Orbison’s elderly grandmother live here or something?” Jack then asked as they proceeded through the dingy flat “only the décor is very 1960’s and it smells like there is a dead cat in here somewhere.”

“Just the one?” Shelby responded as he and Jack were forced to cover their noses to protect them from the awful stench that only got worse the further into the flat they proceeded.

“Looks like the electric is off as well” Jack remarked as he tried the light switches to no avail.

It quickly became clear that the flat had not been lived in for quite some time, dust everywhere, litter strewn about, cobwebs festooning the interior and evidence of rodent infestation with droppings and gnawed furniture.

“I think we can safely say no one had been here for months, possibly even years” Jack concluded as Shelby managed to force a window open to let in some urgently needed fresh air.

“There was no post on the doorstep when we came in” Shelby pointed out.

“Very good” Jack complimented his colleague “so despite the err vintage nature of the interior décor of these delightful premises, someone is still coming here, probably using it as a postal address for some reason or other, almost certainly dodgy.”

“I think I have found the dead cat” Shelby then called as he went through to the kitchen area where the pungent stench was at its highest.

“Oh Christ...” Jack exclaimed as he joined his colleague in the kitchen “get that window open for God’s sake.”

“It’s stuck” Shelby called back as he tried unsuccessfully to shift the catch which had rusted shut with age and neglect.

“Stand back” Jack then called as he retrieved his side handle baton from his utility belt “It’s time for some more of that low profile and discreet stuff” he declared before turning away to shield his eyes as he struck the glass with the baton and smashed the window.

“The landlord is going to have kittens when he sees that” Shelby remarked.

“Judging by the state of the place I think a broken window is going to be the least of his problems” Jack remarked as he cleared the last of the broken shards of glass from the window frame.

“Oh hell...” Shelby then remarked as he opened the already ajar refrigerator “I don’t think that is a dead cat after all.”

“What?” Jack responded as he came over even though deep down he knew he was not going to like what he was about to see before he had even seen it.

“Is that what I think it is?” Shelby motioned to the interior of the fridge where something wrapped in a clear plastic bag could be seen on the only remaining shelf inside.

“Well it’s definitely not a cat” Jack agreed “Looks like some sort of human head, mummified possibly, certainly been here for a very long time that is for certain” he agreed.

“Yuck...” Shelby responded before he respectfully closed the refrigerator door again “Another job for the forensics lads, they won’t like it.”

“I’m not exactly thrilled about it myself” Jack added.

“I’ll call it in” Shelby declared as he reached for his radio.

“Good idea” Jack agreed “I’ll go and check upstairs, hopefully there won’t be any other nasty surprises.”

As Shelby stepped outside to get a clear signal on the radio, Jack headed upstairs, the stair treads with their heavily worn and moth chewed carpet creaking under his weight as he proceeded up to the first-floor landing.

“A unique fixer upper opportunity...” Jack remarked to himself, trying to keep himself in a jolly mood as he proceeded to check the old bathroom with its very dated 1970’s style avocado coloured suite and what appeared to be an extraordinary large amount of beauty and makeup products both in the cabinet and on the back of the basin.

“Hmmm...” Jack remarked, deep in thought before moving onto the three bedrooms, they all had an abandoned air about them but still retained a fully made up double bed but accompanied by garish décor in vivid colours, each room being a different shade of green.

“Jack?” Shelby called from a distance away.

“Up here!” Jack responded as he opened a bedside drawer and looked at the contents with some surprise.

“Ah, there you are” Shelby remarked as he came into the room “I’ve called it in even though I not entirely sure what to call it in as.”

“Tell me what you are thinking” Jack then asked.

“I’m thinking at least some sort of drug den if not an illegal squat” Shelby admitted.

“I’m thinking knocking shop” Jack responded as then showed Shelby the contents of the bedside table, a pair of fluffy lined handcuffs, assorted pornographic magazines and several packs of condoms.

"Reminds me of my student bed-sit" Shelby jokingly admitted "Maybe minus the handcuffs though and probably the condoms as well if I am honest."

Jack looked at Shelby with an amused smirk.

"I err didn't get out much..." Shelby then sheepishly admitted.

"Zulu One from Lima Tango Nine Nine Three" Jack then called into his radio "Bob, you and your guys can head back to the barn, whatever happened here, we well and truly missed it so there is nothing here for you I am afraid."

"Roger that" Bob responded over the radio "Zulu One to all Units, let's head for home."

"If this was a knocking shop, I wonder if the Vice Squad know anything?" Shelby suggested.

"Could be worth giving them a call" Jack agreed "Meanwhile I think we need to get this place looked over with a fine tooth comb" he then remarked as he looked around once more "I get the distinct impression our friend Mr Orbison has a few other little side lines that we don't yet know about."

"Well this is a circus" Tracy remarked as she approached the main entrance of the Park Lane hotel which was now sealed off with official cordon tape whilst emergency service vehicles were parked all around, causing traffic chaos in Park Lane itself at the height of the evening rush hour.

Entering the main foyer of the Hotel, which was full of Security Service and MI5 personnel, Tracy immediately laid eyes on a frustrated looking Dent who was over by the Reception Desk.

"So, this would be your 'little domestic housekeeping' then?" Tracy sarcastically remarked as she approached him.

"It was a surveillance operation we were trying to keep low profile and off the books" Dent sheepishly admitted.

"Good job..." Tracy remarked as they both looked around at the hectic activity that was going on all around them which included the appearance from the nearby lifts of a couple of Paramedics with an unconscious patient on a stretcher.

"And him?" Tracy then asked.

"Workplace accident" Dent responded "Sort of..."

"All right" Tracy then demanded to know "What happened?"

"We were following a person of interest who was staying here" Dent went on to explain "He ordered room service with two glasses indicating his contact was on the way up, we watched and the next thing we know, the entire hotel is plunged into a power cut, one of my agents on the scene is shot outside the targets room and the target plus whoever it was he was meeting vanish into thin air."

"Why is it always thin air?" Tracy responded to a look of slight confusion from Dent "Never fat air, slightly chubby air, always thin?" she asked.

"You know, I've never thought of that" Dent admitted.

"Who was he?" Tracy then asked.

"Who?" Dent responded.

"The target you are being overly evasive about" Tracy confirmed.

"Just a person of interest is all I can say at the moment" Dent replied.

"The problem is there has been a shooting in a public place on my manor and that means I need to know exactly what happened, what is going on and who is involved" Tracy reminded him "It is a little thing called due process you know."

"Err right" Dent thought for a moment "Erm I am going to have to check with them upstairs as this has rather tossed a bag of cats in amongst the pigeons."

"You do that" Tracy sincerely responded "But don't take all day, I need a report on this shambles on my desk by the morning otherwise I might feel the need to start poking around and asking some awkward questions" she warned.

"You got it" Dent confirmed with a nod of the head before Tracy turned smartly on her heels and departed whereupon he reached for his secure radio link.

"All right everyone" Dent then called to his people "I want this entire building searched from the roof down to the sewers underneath the basement car park, every air duct, cupboard, closet, wardrobe, everywhere, right now" he then ordered.

"Here you go" Appleby put a large folder on Jack's desk "a little bedtime reading for you."

"What is this Sir?" Jack asked as he reached over and picked up the file.

"Did you know that nationally the Transport Division responded to over seven thousand reports of trespass on railway property in the last year alone?" Appleby asked.

"That's a hell of a lot of trespassers" Jack agreed "but if you will excuse me Sir, what has that got to do with this investigation?"

"Maybe nothing" Appleby agreed "but take a look at the distribution of the trespass reports, page thirty-two" he then suggested.

Jack duly opened the file and flicked through to the suggested page where reading down the list of statistics compiled therein, he raised an eyebrow.

"Interesting isn't it?" Appleby then remarked.

"I'll say Sir" Jack agreed "According to this one of the highest concentrations of reported trespass incidents on the National Rail network in the last eight months has been on the fast lines between Earlswood and Coulsdon."

"Exactly the same place you recovered that body and the hooky jewellery from the other day" Appleby confirmed.

"Since when did Star Lane become the centre of the universe?" Jack then asked, "I mean there is nothing there to trespass for, at least not that I am aware of."

"I read that this afternoon and thought it might be worth a look" Appleby suggested "seeing as your investigation seems to have stalled."

"Not stalled Sir" Jack reassured his superior "just a lot of leads that aren't actually leading anywhere."

"I just got off the phone with one of our contacts in Network Rail" Appleby then informed "Apparently the fast lines are closed from ten o'clock tonight through to about four tomorrow morning so if you wanted to go and take a closer look without the risk of getting run down by a train, now is your chance."

"A good idea Sir" Jack agreed as he pushed his chair back from his desk and stood up "The good lady might not like it though."

"I'm sure she will understand" Appleby reassured him "Or at the very least have the washing up waiting for you when you get back, that's what mine does!"

"Okay, I have just had a very unpleasant conversation with my superiors" Dent called as he stormed into the office back at the MI5 Operations Control Centre in Thames House, "Please tell me something glorious and uplifting."

"Lewis is stable in intensive care" Pointer confirmed, referring to the agent who was shot in the Park Lane Hotel earlier "The bullets missed anything vital and he should be okay."

"At least that is something" Dent responded as he sat down behind his desk "Any word on the shooter?" he then asked.

"Early days but indications are the weapon used was similar to the sort of stuff that those Ixion Facilitators have been packing lately" Pointer confirmed.

"Well that fits" Dent confirmed "The question is how did Adebesei get away without us seeing it?" he asked.

"The entire building has been searched from top to bottom and we have found absolutely nothing" Pointer confirmed "The only lead we have, and it is pretty thin, is a laundry truck that left a couple of minutes after it all kicked off but before we were able to finish locking the building down."

"Great..." Dent responded as he casually chucked his pen onto the desk in resigned frustration "So he could be anywhere in the country by now."

"Or possibly even left the country" Pointer suggested.

"No" Dent replied "He is still here; he came here for something specific and I am willing to bet this whole disappearing act operation was planned long before we were tipped off that he was coming."

"Where did the original tip off come from?" Pointer asked, "I get the impression it just floated in through the window one afternoon as if by magic."

"My opposite number in German Intelligence in Hamburg passed me a message via the diplomatic bag a few days ago" Dent explained "He got it from an old friend who does some freelance work for the Israelis from time to time."

"How do the Israelis fit into this mess?" Pointer asked.

"Apparently our target has in the past amongst his various other activities targeted and killed a couple of their deep undercover agents working in central Africa and they would dearly like to get their hands on him, to thank him personally" Dent confirmed.

"Why do I get the impression this is a lot more complicated than I at first believed Sir?" Pointer wondered.

"It's about to get a hell of a lot more complicated still I am afraid" Dent added with a rueful look "Divisional Commander Caverner came around to the Hotel basically demanding to know what was going on and at some point we, or to be more precise, I am going to have to tell her."

"Oh dear..." Pointer remarked.

"Exactly!" Dent responded with a resigned look.

It was ten o'clock in the evening precisely when Jack, wearing an orange high visibility safety vest over his standard uniform, emerged from the subway onto platform four at Purley station in South London, a fact confirmed by the digital clock on the next train display board above him ticking over into the new hour as he reached the platform level.

As Jack stood there, the display board changed and with a warning klaxon played, showed that the next train was not for public use, but he still intended to board it.

Approaching from the north was a trio of high intensity white lights, the front headlamps of a large diesel locomotive hauling a heavy engineer's train which, with much noise and squealing along with the hiss of its air brakes, slowed to a stop with the front cab immediately adjacent to where Jack was standing.

"Evening officer" the Driver called from the side cab window "Control tells me you would like a lift?"

"Yes, please mate" Jack confirmed.

"You had best hop in then" the Driver then nodded back behind him to the cab door.

"Much obliged" Jack responded as he opened the side door and clambered into the Drivers cab of the large green and yellow painted Class 66 heavy freight locomotive and, at the Drivers invitation, took the vacant second man's seat on the other side of the cab interior.

Once Jack had taken his seat, the Driver released the train brakes with a distinctive hiss of released air and began to move off, clanking over the point work at the south end of Purley Station and continuing on along the Down Slow tracks of the Brighton Main Line.

"So what brings you out on a cold dark night like this?" the Driver asked as he slowed for the approach to Stoats Nest Junction where ahead a man dressed all in high visibility orange and with a white hard hat was holding a red lamp by the side of the track.

"I'm trying to solve a mystery that has been bugging me for a few days" Jack admitted as the man by the side of the track waved the train through and it snaked across the point work to access the Down Fast Line which was now closed to general traffic for the overnight engineering works.

"Down here?" the Driver responded with surprise "I know the old Quarry Line has a few ghost stories attached to it but nothing the Old Bill would have been interested in surely?"

"You would have thought so" Jack agreed "But something has to be south of Star Lane that is out of the ordinary, something."

"Well it is a mandatory fifteen miles per hour for this bit as we are in the possession area now so you may as well sit back and enjoy the ride" the Driver suggested "This is going to take a while."

Jack watched intently through the front and side cab windows as the scene outside passed slowly by, only a few bridge parapets, signal posts and embankments barely visible in the gloom whilst the headlights shone off the shiny surface of the rails ahead and reflected off any line side signs that they passed at what seemed little more than walking pace.

Stifling a yawn, Jack was beginning to think that he would never get to where he wanted to go when he noticed ahead the tracks slued to the left for the approach to the Star Lane over bridge, the still open to traffic slow lines that run via Redhill passing below as confirmed by a passing diverted southbound Gatwick Express train that went through, its few passengers oblivious to the one thousand ton plus engineers train that was up above and alongside them travelling in the same direction.

"Well, there's the bridge" the Driver confirmed as he slowed up a little "Where do you want to get out?" he then asked.

"Past the old signal box" Jack confirmed pointing ahead.

"No problem" the Driver confirmed as he continued to drive on, slowly passing the electrical sub-station and the old concrete line side huts where Raffety's body had been discovered a few days earlier before reaching the derelict remains of the old signal box, barely visible except for what was lit by the train's headlamps.

"Here will do just fine, thanks" Jack then indicated whereupon the Driver brought the train to a stand.

"Hey" the Driver then called as Jack prepared to get out "You got a hard hat?" he asked.

"Err, no" Jack admitted whereupon the Driver reached down and found a spare white hard hat and tossed it over to him.

"Better to be safe than sorry" the Driver advised as Jack fitted the bump cap type hard hat to his head and ensured it was snugly on "This will be the last train through here until about four a.m. but they can change their minds sometimes so be careful."

"I will" Jack agreed as he opened the cab side door and carefully, using the steps, made his way to the ballast surface track side.

"All right then, stand back until I am out of the way" the Driver then called before releasing the brakes.

"Thanks!" Jack called before the train moved off once again, it's trailing load of flat wagons loaded with track and other engineer's materials following with much clanking and squealing before the tail passed him and he watched as the red tail lamp flashing on the rear end of the train gradually disappeared from sight into the night leaving him all alone.

"What the hell am I doing here?" Jack asked himself as with the aid of the powerful battery torch in his hand he looked around before stepping up onto the track bed and heading south, being careful to tread on the ballast between the sleepers rather than the potentially slippery sleepers themselves.

Sweeping his light continuously back and forth, checking the line side either side, Jack continued on through the darkness finding nothing other than gradually encroaching embankments either side that were getting taller and taller as he went on whilst a bit further on, a signal displaying a bright red aspect, shone like a laser out into the darkness.

The signal bore a square black identification plate on the post supporting the large signal head which in basic white lettering bore the number T183, this matching the rough hand drawn map that Jack had brought with him.

Then ahead of him he saw it, the huge brick built portal that marked the northern end of Quarry Tunnel, a black on white reflective sign mounted at the entrance confirming the name and its ominous length of one mile and three hundred and fifty three yards.

"Jack, Jack, Jack..." he then muttered to himself as he stood at the tunnel entrance and peered inside "What the hell are you doing?"

With some understandable trepidation Jack proceeded inside the tunnel which along its one point two mile length curved so that it was impossible to see the other end in daylight let alone the middle of the night.

As he proceeded through the tunnel Jack noticed on each side at roughly fifty yard intervals were small arched indentations in the brickwork marked by white reflective paint around their edges that had long since lost their luminosity thanks to years of dust and dirt deposits, these being refuges for track workers to recess if they were to find themselves to be trapped in a tunnel with a train approaching, there being probably enough space in each recess for two or maybe even three people at a squeeze which would certainly be better than the potentially deadly alternative.

After what seemed like ages walking but in reality was probably only about twenty minutes Jack noticed another signal ahead actually inside the tunnel approximately half way along its length.

It was as Jack approached the signal showing a red aspect and mounted on the ground that he noticed it's number, T185.

"Well I'll be dammed..." Jack remarked as he recalled the seemingly meaningless code he had found in Raffety's documents a couple of days earlier "So you were here, but why?" he then looked all around again.

Directly above in the brick lined roof was a large round hole, one of several to be found in the tunnel although many had long since been blocked off, these designed to aid the escape of smoke from the days when steam locomotives formed the majority of trains that ran through there long ago.

"No way anyone is going to get in or out through that" Jack remarked to himself but then realised something else was unusual at this point and turned to shine the bright torch light on the tunnel wall adjacent to the northbound running line.

"What the...?" he exclaimed as he realised that here was a much larger recess in the tunnel wall, arched like the workman's safety recesses but deeper, wider and higher as if there was at one time some sort of engineer's depot here for the tunnel builders now long since departed centuries earlier.

Suddenly Jack heard something to the south of him, voices echoing in the distance and a light approaching from the other end of the tunnel.

Thinking quickly, Jack turned off his torch, ditched his reflective hard hat and high visibility vest and ducked down behind the signal, his gun drawn and pointing down the line towards the direction that the voices and their accompanying light were coming from.

"Track inspection team?" Jack asked himself, hoping for the best but also preparing for the worst "There is nothing scheduled" he then confirmed to himself.

Despite the light having become visible and the voices heard a few minutes ago, it still took some time for the source to come close to where Jack was hiding which revealed it to be a procession of people walking in single file, the leading man wearing green robes of some kind and carrying an electric torch mounted on the top of a staff that he held ahead of him, lighting the way for those following in his footsteps.

"Okay..." Jack remarked quietly to himself almost in disbelief as he watched the green robed leader stop and turn towards the large recess in the tunnel wall opposite whilst those following him formed a semi-circle behind him facing the same way.

"Grant us access to your masterful world" the leader then called "Your Brothers and disciples await to be called unto your Citadel, gaze upon your temple and hear your wisdom."

To Jack's surprise the signal he was hiding behind changed from showing a red light to a flashing green one as there was a loud clunk that echoed all around the tunnel interior and a bright flash of light as a hidden doorway in the large wall recess opened.

"Nothing down here my arse...." Jack commented to himself as he thought back to what had been said to him earlier that day.

With much chanting the green robed leader proceeded through the brightly lit doorway and disappeared, followed in single file amid much chanting, whooping and cheering by the others numbering approximately a dozen in total.

As soon as the last individual had passed through the doorway it quickly closed and the tunnel interior turned to darkness once again whilst the signal reverted back to its previous steady red aspect being displayed.

Jack stood back up, emerging from his hiding place and looked on with much confusion and bewilderment at what he had just witnessed.

"I always knew Surrey was a bit strange but, wow..." he remarked to himself as he turned his torch back on and shone it all around the tunnel interior before carefully crossing over the lines towards the large wall recess and examining closely the point where the doorway had appeared a couple of minutes earlier.

Other than some slightly disturbed dust in the brickwork, there was little if anything to tell the casual observer that there was even a door there.

Jack took out a Swiss Army knife and pulled out the largest blade before trying it in the cracks between the ancient bricks in an attempt to try and prise the doorway open but to no avail.

Just as he was about to give up, he then accidentally dropped the knife on the ground and in response stooped to pick it up.

It was as he was bending down and retrieving the knife that something made Jack act on instinct and instead of returning it to his pocket, he snuck it inside his left boot before standing up again where he suddenly found two individuals, dressed all in black had silently emerged from the shadows behind him and were now standing right behind him, guns pointed at either side of his head.

"Good evening" Jack calmly remarked as he slowly raised his hands whereupon he felt a hand carefully take away his gun from the waist holster "I guess now would not be a good time to inform you that you are both under arrest for trespassing on the railway?"

"Probably not" one of the individuals responded.

The next thing Jack knew was being struck across the back of the head by something before collapsing unconscious onto the ballast in a heap.

"Oh, I do love a bit of technology" Orbison remarked as he opened an armoured case and admired its contents before slowly closing it again "Don't you think?" he then turned to Reaper stood in the doorway behind him.

"I am here to obey My Lord, not think" Reaper confirmed reverently.

"Excellent" Orbison congratulated his Chief Facilitator General with a smile "You have been an excellent student of the Brotherhood and its Faith and now you are the best of us as shown through your skills and achievements in its name."

"Thank you My Lord" Reaper confirmed.

"Was there anything else?" Orbison then asked.

"Our special guest has arrived My Lord" Reaper confirmed "He practically walked up to our front door and knocked so a couple of my lads picked him up."

"Oh, this is excellent news" Orbison responded clapping his hands gently together in delight at the news "Where is he?"

"My lads are just showing him to the guest quarters as we speak My Lord" Reaper confirmed with a smirk.

"Well let's not delay then Brother" Orbison hurriedly prompted as he ushered Reaper out of the study door and followed him into the corridor "I am dying to meet him."

Jack began to come to slowly, the darkness of the room in which he found himself not really helping his co-ordination as his consciousness returned.

"What the heck is this?" Jack asked himself as he regained his eyesight and sat up on the couch on which he had been placed almost an hour earlier by his abductors and then left alone.

The couch was the only piece of furniture in that small dark room, there were no windows, a single solid door with some sort of closed off viewing port set in it and what seemed to be some sort of rudimentary altar, the Ixion Brotherhood symbol cast in a facsimile of gold metal illuminated either side by two large candles, the only source of light in the room.

Immediately below the altar on the floor was a leather embossed book with gold markings which Jack saw and bent down to pick it up.

Opening the front cover he was disappointed to see the title page 'The Further Revelational Thoughts of Our Mighty Brother, Lord Chaos - Third Edition' to which Jack flicked disdainfully through the pages before casually chucking it on the floor again with little respect.

Jack then looked down at his gun holster and confirmed his worst fears that it was indeed empty and that his abductors had searched him and removed anything of potential use, but he could still feel the Swiss Army knife in his boot as they had not bothered to search there so at least he knew he had that handy if needed.

Examining the door revealed no method of opening it from the inside, no lock or handle of any kind, in effect a cell door and he was the now the unwilling detainee within.

It was as he had his ear to the door that he realised that there were footsteps approaching, the jangling of keys evident which meant someone was coming.

He looked on with some apprehension as the sound of a key being inserted into and then turning in the lock was heard before with a clunk and a creaking noise, the door opened.

"Lieutenant Jack Regent" Orbison called warmly, an arm outstretched towards him "So pleased you could join us, I have been so looking forward to meeting you."

"Evening" Jack responded, not entirely sure how to take Orbison's warm and welcoming tone which was not what he had been expecting at all.

"Morning actually" Orbison confirmed which caused Jack to check the old pocket watch The Commander had given him to confirm the time.

"Oh, you're right" Jack remarked as he saw the time was now gone one in the morning.

"Nice watch by the way" Orbison observed "Your Father's I presume?"

"Why the interest in my watch?" Jack asked more out of curiosity than anything else.

"I collect memorabilia, trinkets, little mementoes of battles past" Orbison explained "and future..."

"You're not having it" Jack warned.

"Of course not" Orbison agreed "It's yours after all although I do regret that we had to confiscate your firearm when you arrived but don't worry it is in a safe place."

"I should hope so" Jack responded.

"Ah..." Orbison then looked down and saw the casually discarded book on the floor before bending down to replace it back where it should be with some silently uttered reverential words and then standing up again "Disrespect the Book and you disrespect the Brotherhood, that is not a wise thing to do around here" he advised.

"Not really my thing" Jack sarcastically admitted "Do you have anything available by Douglas Adams?" Orbison looked on stony faced and unimpressed "The Reverend W Awdry?" he then asked.

"Come now" Orbison returned to his previous slightly creepy welcoming demeanour as Reaper looked on "Let me take you on a tour of our Palace of Worship, the Citadel of Ixion."

"Is there a gift shop to pass through at the end of the tour?" Jack wryly asked.

"I like you, you're a funny young man" Orbison commented as he led the way with Jack behind him and the towering edifice of Reaper bringing up the rear "A little crazy and cynical but otherwise highly witty and amusing."

"Hmmm..." Jack responded as they reached an ornate door with green velvet curtains draped either side.

"Do come in" Orbison opened the door and showed Jack inside before joining him, motioning silently to Reaper to remain on guard outside for the time being.

"Interesting..." Jack remarked as he looked ahead to a large display area where numerous different items were on display, each of them with a little yellow details card next to them almost like an old-style museum artefacts case.

"Welcome to my collection of treasures" Orbison declared proudly "Recognise anything?" he then asked.

"Well that looks like a Security Service ceremonial sword" Jack immediately recognised one item among the many "and that's my gun there" he then indicated the six-shot revolver now neatly displayed on a small green velvet cushion.

"Ah yes, no less a weapon than the gun that once belonged to your adopted father" Orbison remarked with a sense of wonderment as he picked it up and admired it.

"It's mine now" Jack responded "Family heirloom you might say."

"It's amazing isn't it?" Orbison then continued "To think that this is The Commander's gun. Oh the stories it could tell are beyond imagination, this is the actual weapon that halted the Hainault Tragedy, single handed stopped the Priory Park massacre and even executed the Lord of Leytonstone, err to which good riddance by the way, hated that guy."

Jack watched as Orbison carefully replaced the revolver back on its display space.

"What's that?" Jack then indicated an old blood-stained knife that looked like it came from an era long ago.

"Ah, you do have taste in history young man" Orbison proudly complimented him "That is the very scalpel used by Jack the Ripper to dissect his victims during his bloody campaign of murder in 1888."

"Even the Metropolitan Police archives don't have any weapons referenced" Jack recalled "How did you get it?" he then asked.

"Like most of my collection" Orbison explained "a combination of patience, reliable sources and contributions from devoted members and followers of the Ixion Brotherhood."

"You've got a lot of very nice historic items here" Jack remarked "If you are not careful you could get a visit from an American professor in a Fedora hat looking for a lost ark."

"The Ixion Brotherhood has over the years devoted itself to celebrating the pinnacles of achievement in the human race in its various forms" Orbison explained "Here I collect the symbolic items that represent good versus evil, from Jack the Ripper's instruments of death to by contrast the Security Service's instruments of peace and justice."

"You do know we may want those back at some point don't you?" Jack warned.

"It would be a pity to break up such a comprehensive collection though" Orbison countered "So many years of hard work, research and dedication all encapsulated in this one room. Where else will you find such treasures as the very first King's Police Medal as presented by Edward the Seventh himself alongside the kidney stones that brought down the Crawley Acid Bath Murderer or the original handle, letterbox and knocker from the front door of Number 10 Rillington Place?"

"You know my grandfather used to collect old stamps" Jack responded "He used to say philately will get you nowhere..."

"Eh?" Orbison initially remarked "Oh, very good" he then got the joking reference.

"Just trying to lighten the mood..." Jack added.

"Oh but we are bathed in light here" Orbison proudly declared as he led the way back out of the room and returned to the corridor with Jack following where Reaper re-joined them, standing at the back on guard as always "The light of realisation and revelation, the light of love and embracement..."

"Must be pretty heavy on your electricity bill, all that light" Jack then remarked.

Orbison choose to ignore Jack's continued dismissive wit and carried on towards the large set of double doors at the end of the corridor.

"Welcome to the Brotherhood Citadel!" he then loudly declared, throwing open the doors and stepping into the enormous chamber, dominated across the front by a large brightly lit stage with its altar and huge Ixion Brotherhood symbol suspended above, floodlit and sparkling.

"Love what you have done with the place" Jack sarcastically remarked but whilst Reaper glared, Orbison just ignored it and carried on.

"This is the heart of the Brotherhood, where its very soul comes together from the souls of its many followers and devoted brethren" Orbison then continued, his enthusiasm obvious.

"Is this where you toasted that poor sod to death the other night?" Jack then asked to which Orbison turned around to face him with a smile.

"So, you have been watching my broadcasts I see?" Orbison asked almost with a sense of pride.

"I got our resident Technomage to hack through your security so that we didn't have to fork out any money" Jack admitted.

"All smoke and mirrors" Orbison responded "computer generated special effects, you will find that the gentleman in question is alive and well, reborn you might say into a new spirit of light under the guidance of the Brotherhood."

"And the mummified head I found in the fridge in your flat stroke knocking shop in Basildon?" Jack then enquired.

"Oh, that's where I left it" Orbison remarked "It's a genuine antiquity from ancient Egypt, about a hundred and fifty years B.C. if I recall correctly. I was wondering where I had left it."

"If you want it back you will have to contact the Basildon Coroners Office, it's in their freezer now" Jack confirmed.

"Not a problem young man" Orbison responded with a knowing smile "The Brotherhood is a bit like Interflora, we have people everywhere."

"Yeah..." Jack commented "I keep running into them."

"Keeping you on your toes are we?" Orbison asked to which Jack merely nodded "Good..." he then concluded.

"So, what are the rent and rates like on this place then?" Jack then asked as, still under the watchful eye of Reaper, he was allowed to walk around the Citadel Chamber a bit

"Like all of our facilities across the country and beyond, they availability is generously donated by our Brothers, the costs being taken care of" Orbison explained.

"You mean there is more than one place like this?" Jack gestured around the huge interior space all around them.

"Three massive Citadel complexes and a whole host of other premises which serve our needs and that of our brethren both here in the UK and overseas" Orbison proudly confirmed.

"So why are you showing me all this?" Jack then asked, "Not that I don't appreciate the tour of course."

"Because you have been working very hard and I thought you deserved to see the fruits of our labours, and of yours" Orbison explained "I want you to know that we are serious about our work and our beliefs, leave in you in no doubt that we are not some random bunch of nutters but a serious force to be reckoned with."

"In a big hole in the ground a hundred feet underneath rural Surrey?" Jack responded.

"Come with me" Orbison then gestured whereupon he led the way with Jack being escorted along by Reaper "I have something else I want to show you."

Orbison took Jack and Reaper over to a small door in the far corner of the main Citadel Chamber and opened it, allowing the others to pass through before he followed himself, closing the door behind him which shut with a deep and loud metallic clunk.

"This way please" Orbison then indicated the way ahead along a roughhewn corridor lined every so often with candles which twisted around to the left before coming to what looked like a door that had come from some old fashioned Victorian era vault.

Alongside the vault door was a contrastingly modern looking metal panel which Orbison opened to reveal a keypad into which he proceeded to enter a six digit number whereupon there was a clunk and a red light on the panel changed to green.

The door also had a big wrought iron wheel set into the front of it which Orbison proceeded to turn and amid much clunking and metallic groaning, unlock it before swinging it open and gesturing Jack to step inside.

"Holy sh....." Jack tailed off in shock as he saw the large cavern that lay beyond the vault door, filled almost from floor to ceiling with wooden crates and steel boxes, many of them clearly identifiable as containers for military grade hardware and weaponry.

"Behold my young friend, the Instruments of Armageddon" Orbison proudly announced "Chaos will reign and we will see the downfall of the unbelievers and their Governments."

"Well that explains the fancy South African weaponry your goons have been packing" Jack remarked "This lot must have cost you a few quid I would wager."

"When it comes to achieving our goals of chaos and calamity, money is no object" Orbison explained "All my life has been building up to this, the day when I create so much chaos in the world that the very foundations on which its Governments and Kingdom's are built will crumble into dust and we, the Brotherhood of the Hand, the True Light and our mighty God Ixion will emerge from the ashes and create a new world."

"You know, before they closed them down, this country used to have lots of loony bins filled with people like you who thought they were Napoleon, Julius Caesar, Bugs Bunny..." Jack remarked.

"Visionaries, not loonies" Orbison responded "Well, maybe not Bugs Bunny" he then admitted.

"If you will forgive me for observing" Jack then continued "In your gene pool of minions, do you have anyone who actually knows how to use all this stuff" he gestured all around the boxes and crates that surrounded them "as so far those of your Facilitators or whatever you call them that I have encountered so far have not exactly been the most adept bunch of lads."

"I admit the Brotherhood lacks some expertise" Orbison admitted as he and Reaper watched Jack take a closer look at some of the details printed on the exterior of the various containers "That is why we are joining forces with another group who share our goals and bring experience and know-how to our little Union of Chaos."

"Hang about..." Jack indicated one stack of boxes in particular that had got his attention and was causing him even more cause for concern that he already had "Isn't this that R232 green explosive?" he asked.

"Indeed it is" Orbison proudly confirmed "Acquired at not inconsiderable expense from an old friend of yours, a Mr Hansell."

"Ah, him..." Jack responded.

"Just a shame about his untimely demise" Orbison then remarked with a note of sadness "We could have used his expertise in our group, instead he died after falling out of a window I believe."

"I remember" Jack confirmed "Couldn't have happened to a more deserving scumbag."

"Our long journey to the Supremacy of The Brotherhood has finally begun" Orbison continued.

At that point Reaper was seen to receive a message via an earpiece he was wearing before discreetly coughing to attract Orbison's attention.

"My Lord, they are here" he announced.

"Oh, excellent Brother" Orbison responded "Have Brother Emmanuel settled into my guest quarters and see he is well looked after, I will join him when I have finished with our young friend here."

"And the other?" Reaper then asked.

"Have him brought to me in ten minutes" Orbison then confirmed "I think it is about time these two were properly introduced."

Reaper then departed leaving Orbison and Jack alone, standing in the doorway of the vault.

"Why are you showing me this?" Jack then asked "You must know that as soon as I get out of here I am going to call it in and bring the entire Security Service and their dogs down here and shut you down."

"Who said anything about you leaving?" Orbison responded with an almost evil smirk "and besides when the time comes for my united Army of Chaos to be unleashed, I will need someone who can verify for your superiors and those in Government who doubt me that I have the tools, the motivation and the personnel to carry out our aims."

"I think you are mad" Jack concluded in all seriousness.

"Why thank you" Orbison responded "Such a compliment..."

"So what are your plans for all this, admittedly impressive collection of hardware?" Jack then asked "I presume you are not going to just sit back and simply admire it all sitting here?"

"All in good time my young friend, all in good time" Orbison confirmed as he proceeded to escort Jack out of the vault before securing the door shut once more.

A few minutes later, Orbison and Jack had returned to the cell where having shown him inside, he was about to close the cell door when footsteps were heard approaching and he turned to look down the corridor as Jack watched on from inside.

“Ah, welcome my Brother” Orbison called as he greeted the person approaching warmly.

Jack looked on in horror as Shelby appeared in the doorway, Orbison putting a warm welcoming arm around him.

“Hello mate” Shelby called, looking towards Jack with an apologetic shrug.

“Well, well, well” Jack responded almost in “Fancy seeing you here?”

“Sorry” Shelby admitted.

“Don’t you just hate traitors in your midst?” Orbison jokingly remarked.

“It does tend to annoy me a bit, yes” Jack agreed.

“So how would you deal with a traitor?” Orbison then asked.

“I would take them to the correct authorities for appropriate processing” Jack responded.

“Spoken like the true son of The Commander” Orbison complimented with a knowing smirk “I, on the other hand have a very different method” he turned to look at Reaper standing immediately behind Shelby and discreetly nodded.

Jack jumped with shock when a gunshot suddenly rang out, its sound accentuated by the enclosed nature of where they were and Shelby shrieked before collapsing to the floor, claspng his knee where Reaper had shot it from behind.

With no care or consideration whatsoever, Reaper then hauled Shelby up and threw him into the cell where he crashed into Jack who only just about managed to catch him and break his fall.

“Double agents huh?” Orbison remarked “It’s a crazy, crazy world” he added before slamming shut the cell door whereupon he and Reaper could be heard laughing manically as they walked away.

“Did they ever mention that you don’t get hazard pay in this job when you joined?” Shelby asked, gritting his teeth amid excruciating pain as Jack tore some strips of cloth from the sofa cushion covers and attempted to apply makeshift bandages over the heavily bleeding wound.

“Oddly enough, no” Jack admitted “Although I kind of guessed judging by the fact that if there was hazard pay every time one of us was shot or injured then my parents would be multi-millionaires by now.”

“Arrgghh!!” Shelby called out as Jack tightened the makeshift bandage around his knee.

“It’s all right” Jack then confirmed “It looks like the bullet passed right through, left a big hole in your knee though.”

“Lucky me...” Shelby sarcastically responded clearly still in a state of shock.

“How’s that?” Jack then asked as he finished off.

“Thanks, it’ll have to do” Shelby confirmed “I don’t think we are going to be allowed to see the resident first aider somehow.”

“We need to get out of here and fast” Jack remarked as he stood up and looked around the room “Do you know of any other ways in and out of this place other than the concealed entrance in Quarry Tunnel?”

“Quite a few I think” Shelby confirmed “For one thing there is an access shaft that leads up to the top of the hill that this lot is sitting beneath, all part of the old tunnel ventilation network which is like a rabbit warren, there are so many old excavations beneath the hill that it is amazing the whole lot hasn’t collapsed.”

“Of course all of that is completely academic until we can get through this door” Jack then placed his hand on it and felt all around its edges for some sort of catch or other feature that could be of help.

“What about the frame?” Shelby suggested.

“Good thinking” Jack responded as he reached into his boot and extracted the Swiss Army knife “Don’t worry, I’ll MacGyver our way out of here before you know it.”

Commander Appleby looked up from his desk towards the general office visible through slats of the partially open Venetian blinds that covered the internal windows of his own office.

Something was missing, at that exact point he wasn’t entirely sure what, but something was definitely not right. This curiosity eventually forced him to get up and walk out of his office before looking all around at the various desks, some occupied by Transport Division officers at work, others vacant.

It was one of these vacant desks in particular that caught his attention as he went over to it and saw it was still in exactly the same state as it was when he saw its usual occupant leave the building the previous evening.

“Has anyone seen Lieutenant Regent?” Appleby asked around the office to which he got a universally negative response from the other officers present “What about Lieutenant Shelby then?” he then asked which again elicited another negative reply all around.

Appleby checked his watch that confirmed it was now gone ten o'clock in the morning and both Jack and Shelby should have been in hours ago even if they had then gone on elsewhere but there was no evidence that either of them had returned since leaving last night.

At that moment the telephone on Jack's desk began to ring and purely out of curiosity Appleby went over and answered it.

"Transport Division, Divisional Commander Appleby" he formally answered.

"Oh, erm, Sir?" Megan called on her mobile from outside Chancery Lane Underground Station not far from where she worked having got five minutes off to make the call "You haven't seen my boyfriend have you Sir? He never came home last night and his mobile number seems to be dead."

"Megan isn't it?" Appleby responded to which she confirmed "He hasn't reported in this morning" he then confirmed "I was in fact about to call you to ask if you had seen him."

"Oh dear" Megan responded, clearly concerned "He called me last night to say he was heading to Purley for some reason and that he would call me when he was on his way back but I haven't heard anything."

"Don't worry my dear" Appleby reassured her "I am sure he is absolutely fine, he's probably just got caught up in work I expect. I'll find him and keep you posted."

"Thanks Sir" Megan replied "Goodbye."

"Right!" Appleby then loudly called out as he hung up the telephone "I want everyone tracing Lieutenant's Regent and Shelby's last known movements as I want them back here and in my office within the hour."

"Sir?" one of the other officers in the room responded.

"As my old Grandmother used to say, find him, find out what he is doing and then tell him to stop it" Appleby confirmed with a smirk before picking up the telephone again and pressing a single button.

"Get me New Scotland Yard, the Administrator General, Ultraviolet Priority please" Appleby then formally requested.

"That was the Network Rail Control Centre at Three Bridges" Tracy confirmed as she put the telephone down "They just checked and confirmed that the driver of an engineering train picked up Jack at Purley late last night and dropped him off at Star Lane since when there have been no reports whatsoever of anyone in the area since."

"He has been missing almost fourteen hours now" The Commander responded as he checked his watch with an understandably concerned look "Time to push the panic button I think."

“Already in hand” Tracy confirmed “The Transport Division is going to walk the track and I have purloined the Network Rail helicopter, it’s picking me up in ten minutes.”

“Excellent” The Commander responded.

“I don’t suppose you want to join me on the chopper do you?” Tracy then suggested.

“I’ll stick to keeping my feet firmly on the ground thanks love” The Commander admitted, still afraid of flying, even after all these years.

“Any luck Jack?” Shelby asked as he watched Jack working on the door.

"Ah, I think I can lever this bit off" Jack remarked as he probed the wall with his Swiss Army knife blade "I just need something a little beefier."

"Left hand pocket on my utility belt" Shelby responded, still grimacing with pain "Try that."

"Bloody hell" Jack commented as he looked inside the pocket and extracted a large flick knife that with a slide of the switch exposed the huge blade "What the hell do you carry this thing around for?" he then asked.

"I was taught by Sir Richard that you can never carry too much hardware" Shelby admitted.

"Right then, let's see what this will do" Jack determinedly declared as he returned to the door frame "Ah, that's more like it" he then declared.

"Well done" Shelby remarked as he saw that Jack had managed to lever part of the door frame away and expose the lock mechanism.

"It never ceases to amaze me how many times secure doors are installed yet no one thinks to check that they have equally secured the surround it is fitted in" Jack commented as he kneeled down and looked at the lock carefully "Luckily for us that is" he then added.

Using the tools in his Swiss Army knife, Jack managed the gently ease the locking bar out of the socket in the frame and with a little force, the door opened ever so slightly.

"Gotcha!" Jack declared with a certain sense of satisfaction before carefully opening the door wide enough to be able to discreetly look out into the dimly lit corridor outside to make sure nobody was around.

"How's it looking?" Shelby asked.

"Looks pretty clear out there to me" Jack confirmed before looking down at Shelby's heavily blood-stained leg "This isn't going to be easy though" he then remarked.

"Leave me here, get out and then call the cavalry" Shelby called.

"Oh no you don't" Jack responded as he proceeded to help Shelby to his feet, supporting him on his shoulder "I'm not leaving you behind, we are both getting out of here right now."

With Shelby still obviously in great pain, Jack helped him over to the door before he checked again that all was clear and then together, they stepped out into the corridor.

"Come on" Jack then urged "Let's get the hell out of here."

"I'll second that" Shelby readily agreed.

The corridor twisted and turned with a mixture of sections where it had been cut through the rock or built up with brick and stone walls and as Jack continued to help Shelby down it, they became aware of a noise coming from behind a door just up ahead.

"Hang about" Shelby prompted as they both paused and listened "Can you hear that?"

"Sounds like someone sobbing their eyes out" Jack remarked as they both looked around the dimly lit corridor in search of the source of the sobbing that seemed to echo eerily all around.

"Down there I think" Shelby indicated a side corridor that led off away to their right.

"Come on then" Jack responded as he turned and headed off towards the apparent source of the sobbing, still supporting the badly hobbling Shelby as he went.

A short distance ahead was an ornate carved wooden door set into the rough-hewn stone wall and it was clear to both of them as they approached that this was indeed the source of the sounds.

"What do you reckon?" Shelby asked as Jack let him go, allowing him to recline against the wall alongside the door.

"Time for some more subtle and discreet investigation" Jack admitted before barging against the door and forcing it open.

Entering the room, Jack was immediately met by the screams of a clearly terrified young woman which caused him to stop in his tracks for a moment almost in shock.

The room was not dissimilar to the cell that Jack had been detained in earlier except slightly better appointed. The most dominant feature being the large number of flickering candles of various sizes and states of usage that were bathing the room in a reverential and warm glow which was almost medieval in atmosphere.

Curled up in the corner of the sofa was a young woman, her face filled with terror and her wrist shackled to the bed frame by means of a long chain.

"What the hell...?" Shelby remarked as he looked in through the doorway, a sentiment that Jack shared at that point.

"Get away! Get away! GET AWAY!" the young woman screamed, clearly in some sort of state of delusional terror and retreating as much as she could into the corner.

"It's all right" Jack reassured her, approaching very slowly with his left hand outstretched "It's Jenna isn't it?" he then asked "Jenna Lotte?" to which she managed to nod briefly in confirmation.

"Lady Chaos?" Shelby asked.

"The same" Jack grimly confirmed.

"Christ, what the hell has happened to her?" Shelby then asked, "It looks like she has been to hell and back."

"I think that is about as accurate a description as any" Jack sadly agreed as he approached her once more.

"It's all right" Jack tried to reassure Jenna who was now merely sobbing "My name is Jack, I am a National Security Service officer and everything is going to be all right."

"Jack!" Shelby then called urgently in a low whisper "I think we may have company."

"Get in here and close the door" Jack quickly called back whereupon Shelby managed to limp around to the inside of the doorframe before gently closing it.

Moments later, all three of them listened intently and with bated breath as they heard the footsteps and low voices of two men passing by in the corridor outside.

"Phew, that was a close one" Shelby then remarked as the footsteps disappeared off into the distance.

"Too close for my tastes" Jack agreed before returning to Jenna "Okay, can I see your wrist please?" he gently asked "I'm not going to hurt you" he then reassured her.

With a little reluctance, Jenna lifted her right arm and allowed Jack to look at the wrist where the chain shackles were attached.

"You are going to need bolt croppers to get that off mate" Shelby remarked as he took the opportunity to check his wound and its blood-soaked makeshift bandage.

"There is more than one way to break a chain" Jack responded as he took out his Swiss Army knife once more and having found the tool he required, got to work on one link of the chain where he had managed to find a manufacturing fault, a tiny crack in the loop where the two ends of the piece of metal forming it had not been fully attached to each other.

Using the screwdriver blade, Jack managed to gently prise apart the two ends of the loop just enough to allow the next link in the chain to be pulled through it and thus severing it.

"Come on" Jack then urged "We are getting the hell out of here, all of us."

"I'll second that" Shelby agreed, now running on pretty much adrenalin and determination to get him through this despite the incredible pain he was in.

"Are you ready?" Jack asked Jenna who merely nodded in agreement "All right then, let's go" he then declared.

Cautiously Jack opened the cell door ever so slightly and peered out into the murky corridor outside to ensure the coast was clear before looking back to see Jenna was helping Shelby back to his feet and supporting him.

"We must remember to say goodbye to the dolphins" Jenna then quietly declared to bemused looks from the other two.

"She is whacked right out of her skull on something" Shelby then remarked "Probably that K200 shit I would wager."

"This should be interesting" Jack responded "Come on" he then urged "Let's go."

Jack slowly led the way out into the corridor with Jenna and Shelby following closely behind. They proceeded a short distance until Jack recognised something he had seen earlier and ducked inside the door to the chamber where Orbison kept his priceless collection of relics on display.

"I'll take that back thank you" Jack remarked to himself as he reclaimed his revolver, checked it and then brandishing it, left the chamber whereupon the little party resumed their journey.

"I think if we head up and left" Shelby tried to indicate ahead "There is a passageway that goes over the Citadel Chamber and on towards one of the old construction shafts."

"Sounds like a plan" Jack agreed as he proceeded to lead them up the left hand of three possible routes ahead which ascended via some very old cut stone steps and through some very dusty passageways which had clearly not seen anyone pass through for some considerable time.

"I can't see a damn thing" Jack called back as he stopped.

"Here, try this" Shelby passed a cigarette lighter to Jenna who in turn passed it on to Jack.

Striking the lighter provided a flame which dimly illuminated the passageway that twisted and turned through the roughly hewn rock ahead, occasionally passing a hole in the right-hand side that looked down on the massive Citadel Chamber directly below them.

“How are you holding up back there?” Jack then called back.

“Leg is well and truly bugged” Shelby confirmed, still in severe pain but clearly determined to make it come what may.

“The pretty butterflies tickle my nose...” Jenna then added.

“Okay...” Jack responded with a bemused look before resuming their journey, pausing only to look down through another hole in the wall at the Citadel Chamber below where something caught his attention.

Down near the altar Jack could see that Orbison, Reaper and several Facilitators were gathering and there appeared to be some sort of commotion amongst them.

“What’s occurring?” Shelby asked as he knelt down alongside and also looked through the hole at the scene unfolding below, a scene that Jack was becoming increasingly concerned about.

“I think our little secret may be out” Jack admitted as it became clear that Orbison was getting angry about something and began to gesticulate a lot, unfortunately because they were so high above the chamber, the sound failed to carry up to them so they just had to rely on what they were seeing to gauge what was going on.

“In which case may I suggest we hasten our departure from the premises?” Shelby prompted.

“No argument here” Jack readily agreed as they scabbled back to their feet.

Unfortunately, as they moved off, it disturbed a small piece of loose stone that crashed to the floor of the Citadel Chamber a short distance from where Orbison and the others were standing.

“What in the name of Ixion...?” Orbison remarked as he looked up in a realising sense of horror at what may be unfolding before turning to Reaper “Brothers, check the cells, do it now” he then urged whereupon Reaper and the group of Facilitators around him quickly dashed off.

Up above them, Jack had encountered a problem, the passageway ahead was blocked off with an old wooden door but a quick examination of it by the light of the lighter revealed it to be extensively rotten and with a firm shove of his shoulder and a subsequent cloud of disturbed dust, he managed to barge through it.

“When do we come across the Lost Ark of the Covenant?” Shelby asked with a bemused look despite the pain he was still in.

“Probably just before we arrive at the gift shop I would wager” Jack replied as he turned back to help Shelby and Jenna through the hole he had just made.

“Ah...” Shelby then remarked as he looked upwards to a shaft of dappled light that was shining in from some distance above them “Daylight at last.”

“One small problem though” Jack indicated the wall adjacent to them where a ladder consisting of rusty loop rungs set into it leading all the way up to the top of the shaft seemed to be their only available method of escape.

“Don’t worry” Shelby confirmed, already second-guessing what Jack’s immediate concern was “I’ve had my two weeks survival training with the SAS courtesy of being one of Sir Richard’s overworked and underpaid minions, I can handle this.”

“All right then” Jack reluctantly agreed “Jenna, you are up first” he then indicated.

“Butterflies must pay the rent” Jenna responded with a weird smirk before enthusiastically grabbing the ladder rungs and quickly starting her ascent.

“That girl is definitely running a few bulbs shy of Blackpool Illuminations” Shelby remarked with concern.

“You’re next” Jack then prompted whereupon Shelby slightly reluctantly took grasp of the first rung at head height and then lifted himself up to rest his good leg on the first rung below him.

“Oh Christ!!” Shelby exclaimed as he then brought up his bad leg and for a moment his weight went down through it until he could rest on his good leg again “Maybe this isn’t such a good idea after all” he then admitted.

“You can do it” Jack reassured him as he looked back at the way they had come with a little apprehension “Besides I think we may be about to have company” he then worriedly added.

Indeed Jack was right for at that exact moment Reaper and his team of Facilitators had reached the cells to find not only had the door been forced open from the inside and the two captives were now missing but also that the door to Lady Chaos’ personal chamber was also open and she too had disappeared.

“Seal all the exits, turn the entire complex upside down, nobody leaves!” Reaper quickly ordered whereupon the other Facilitators quickly dispersed to carry out their orders.

“What is the news Brother?” Orbison asked as he arrived on the scene and looked on with concern.

“All three are gone My Lord” Reaper grimly confirmed.

“Issue the termination order on the two plod” Orbison quickly instructed “and bring me back the girl, I want her alive.”

“Come on guys, let’s get a wiggle on” Jack prompted as he reached the halfway point up the rusty ladder with Shelby struggling but still managing to keep going just ahead of him whilst Jenna was now almost at the top.

“I’m going as fast as I can mate” Shelby responded with an irritated tone as he continued to cope with the pain.

“I know you are” Jack confirmed “I am just getting a little worried we are about to be found by the nasty people with the guns.”

“Occupational hazard in this business mate” Shelby confirmed with a wry smile through gritted teeth.

“Come on fairies, time to fly” Jenna then called as she had reached the top rung and looked down.

“Who is she calling fairies?” Shelby asked.

“Could have been worse” Jack responded, “Anyway I think we can excuse her as it is probably Lord Chaos’ drugs that are doing the talking.”

“Nearly there” Shelby then called out, a renewed surge of adrenalin seeing him to the top where Jenna helped him onto a stone ledge just below the circular brick-built rim of the ventilation shaft opening before Jack then joined them.

“Last bit” Jack then declared as he scrambled out of the shaft and onto the ground above where the ventilation shaft was situated amongst scrubby undergrowth and wind damaged trees.

At that point all three of them were forced to duck for cover as gunshots suddenly rang out from below, ricocheting off the walls of the shaft.

“Ever get the feeling someone doesn’t like you?” Shelby wryly asked as Jack and Jenna helped him out of the shaft onto the surface between volleys of gunshots.

“More often than you might think” Jack admitted “Come on, we need to find some transport” he then urged as he and Jenna between them helped Shelby back up onto his feet and they headed off through the undergrowth, only able to make an educated guess at what would be the most likely direction to proceed in.

After fighting through dense undergrowth for more than ten minutes they managed to break through into a clearing.

“Hello gorgeous!” Jack then exclaimed as they saw an elderly battered white Ford Transit pickup truck parked there.

“You are of course assuming there are keys in it and that it works” Shelby pointed out as they went over to it “and who is going to drive it?” he then pointed out “She is off her head, I have a well and truly buggered leg and you are too young to hold a driving licence.”

“Don’t worry” Jack reassured them as he helped Shelby and Jenna into the two front passenger seats before going around to the driver’s side and getting in himself where after a cursory search he quickly found the keys under his seat “I know how to drive.”

“Who taught you?” Shelby then asked.

“The Commander himself” Jack proudly confirmed as he started the rather rough sounding engine and prepared to drive off.

“Shit!!” Shelby then shouted out as he, Jack and Jenna all simultaneously ducked when shots rang out which shot out the passenger side window but fortunately missed them.

“Hold on to your hats!” Jack called as he quickly put the vehicle in gear and gunned the engine, accelerating away across the rough ground towards a wooden gate that was closed but quickly gave way as he drove straight through it.

“These guys really don’t like us do they?” Jack then remarked as further bullet shots rang out from behind them and struck the rear of the vehicle, shattering the back window and covering them in granules of shattered glass.

“I think we may have pissed them off a bit” Shelby agreed as they bumped along the rough track, their pursuers disappearing into the distance in the rear-view mirror as they got away.

“Let’s just hope this track leads somewhere” Jack responded as they continued on, passing encroaching vegetation that brushed against the side of the vehicle as they made their rapid escape.

A few miles away from their location Tracy was flying due south in the front passenger seat of the Network Rail helicopter when a report came over the radio.

“Angel One receiving, pass your message” Tracy responded.

“Got a phone call on the 999 system from a resident in the Coulsdon area, reports hearing gunshots in woodland around about where your Transport Division officer disappeared last night” came the report from the Dispatch Officer at the New Scotland Yard central control room.

“Sounds promising” Tracy responded, “We’ll go and take a peek, Angel One out.”

“Course Ma’am?” the pilot asked.

“Head over that way” Tracy pointed off to their left as she consulted a folded map in her hand.

“Roger” the pilot confirmed and duly changed course.

For a couple of minutes, the helicopter circled the heavily wooded area above the main line railway tunnels and surrounding area looking for anything out of the ordinary when Tracy spotted a vehicle being driven at high speed through the countryside.

“Down there” she indicated ahead “White Transit pick-up truck, looks like it's in a hurry.”

“I see it” the pilot confirmed as he prepared to reduce altitude and approach the vehicle “Here we go.”

“Oh look, flying pigs!” Jenna cried out with a drug induced crazy giggle.

“That looks like the Network Rail chopper to me” Shelby confirmed as he looked out of the rear window opening and up towards the sky.

“Let’s not take any chances” Jack warned as he continued to concentrate intently on his driving “Remember what Orbison said, he has people everywhere.”

At that point another wooden gate appeared on the track ahead and Jack drove straight through it before exiting out onto a tarmac surfaced road and screeching to a halt.

“Okay, which way?” he then asked.

“Head that way I reckon” Shelby pointed southwards “With any luck we should hit Redhill.”

“Hello pretty pigs!” Jenna was then heard to call as Jack resumed their journey at high speed down the road.

“That chopper is definitely following us” Shelby then confirmed.

“Good call on the direction” Jack called “It looks like we are approaching the outskirts of Redhill, we should be able to reach the hospital in a few minutes.”

“Thank God for that” Shelby responded in relief before looking back behind them and then noticing another potential problem.

“Err I don’t want to add to our little problems, but I think we have a car following us as well” Shelby then called.

“Dark coloured Mitsubishi four-wheel drive by any chance?” Jack answered to which Shelby nodded in confirmation “It’s been following us for the last mile or so.”

“Keep your foot down!” Shelby then responded.

“Not easy in this old crate” Jack admitted as he swerved around a corner at way more speed than it should have been taken at, sending opposing traffic scattering out of the way in response.

“Hospital one mile!” Shelby then pointed at a sign as they skidded past it.

“Dam it I wish we had a siren” Jack remarked.

“Waaaaahhhhh!” Jenna began to call loudly, imitating an emergency service siren.

“Not quite what I had in mind” Jack admitted “But it will have to do.”

A few moments later they were approaching the hospital main entrance where Jack swerved to avoid colliding with an oncoming ambulance before screeching to a halt outside the Accident & Emergency Department.

“Security Service!” Jack called as he got out of the cab and proffered his warrant card “Need some help here please” he then called.

Medical staff quickly appeared from the main entrance and helped Shelby from the vehicle and onto a stretcher before taking him inside whilst further medical staff saw to Jenna who was clearly still in a mixed state of drug induced delirium and shock.

At that moment the air was filled by the sound of a helicopter landing nearby which distracted Jack from noticing the Mitsubishi four wheel drive vehicle had also arrived just a short distance away.

Suddenly the sound of automatic gunfire filled the air and everyone instinctively ducked for cover amid screams and sheer panic.

“Oh give me a break!” Jack called out in frustration as he quickly drew his revolver and brandished it whilst the medical staff quickly bundled their two patients inside and away from the line of fire.

“Nobody moves or we neutralise them!” a strong eastern Asian accent called, one of the Facilitators who had appeared along with three others from the Mitsubishi and were now moving towards the hospital main entrance with purposeful strides and brandishing automatic weapons and the intents to use them.

“Stay right there gentlemen” Jack warned as he stood up and confronted them, his revolver pointed directly ahead.

“We don’t want to hurt anyone” the Asian Facilitator responded “but we will if we don’t get what we want.”

“What do you want?” Jack called back, well aware that at that moment, he was the only armed officer on the scene and outnumbered both in numbers and weaponry.

“The girl” the Asian Facilitator confirmed “Return her to us alive and unharmed and we will simply be on our way.”

“Sorry pal, no deal” Jack responded.

“Shame” the Asian Facilitator replied, lowering his head briefly and shaking it in bitter disappointment “To Life Immortal” he then declared before he and his three associates suddenly opened fire causing Jack to duck for cover just as the first shots began to strike the pick-up truck.

Suddenly there was the sound of a different weapon firing, four specific individual shots fired in quick succession and then silence whereupon Jack cautiously looked around the corner to see all four Facilitators on the ground in various states of disablement as, standing behind them and becoming visible amid the clearing smoke was Tracy who calmly looked around at the men on the ground before holstering her weapon again.

“Amateurs...” she scolded with a dismissive tone before picking her way through the wounded Facilitators, casually kicking away their weapons where they were still potentially within reach.

“Well that dealt with them then” Jack remarked as he stood up.

“Busy morning?” Tracy jokingly asked.

“You could say that” Jack admitted as he holstered his weapon just as reinforcements arrived “I want these four comedians patched up and in high security detention within the hour” he went on to instruct before going over the leader of the Facilitators, the Asian man.

“You have made a very big mistake young man” the Asian Facilitator warned, grimacing from the bullet wound to his upper right thigh “The Brotherhood knows who you are...”

“Don’t worry” Jack mockingly reassured him in response “You can spout as much codswallop as you want later when you and I have a nice little chat back at the Nick” he confirmed before looking up at the two armed officers who were about to pick him up “All right, take him away lads” he then instructed.

"Glad you could drop in" Jack then remarked as he stood back up and looked around at the other three Facilitators all still lying on the ground clasping their injuries as further officers arrived on the scene and quickly searched, disarmed and restrained them.

"These guys have some serious bees in their bonnets" Tracy remarked as she looked around "Did you upset someone by any chance?"

"I think Lord Chaos might just be wanting his wife back" Jack explained as they proceeded inside the hospital building "Lieutenant Shelby and I managed to rescue her although he got a bullet in his leg for his troubles though."

"How are they?" Tracy then asked.

"Shelby will be all right, he is a strong lad" Jack confirmed "Jenna Lotte on the other hand I am not so certain about. She is so far off the planet on whatever green shit her 'loving husband' gave her that she barely registers as being in this solar system."

"The sooner that stuff is banned the better" a familiar voice called to which they both turned to see The Commander arrive.

"I thought it already was?" Tracy responded.

"There is a legal challenge being heard in the High Court in about an hour" The Commander grimly confirmed "Some big name lawyers with big chequebooks to pay for them are apparently going to be present."

"Can I just check, this is still my case isn't it?" Jack then asked with clear concern.

"The Drugs Squad can handle the narcotics side" The Commander confirmed "but as far as I am concerned anything connected with your original murder inquiry is still your domain and I would say your victim's daughter neatly fits into that category."

"Good" Jack responded "In which case I want her secured with an armed guard, no make that two as of twenty seconds ago."

"I'll get Bob and his guys down here" Tracy confirmed as she reached for her mobile to make the call.

"Ah, err Lieutenant Regent?" one of the medical staff called as she emerged from the double doors that led to the treatment area.

"Over here" Jack responded.

"Your colleague is being taken up to surgery" the member of staff confirmed.

"Excellent" Jack replied "What about the girl?" he then asked.

"She is stable for the moment" the member of medical staff explained "There is a specialist Registrar with her now but she has asked specifically to speak to you, alone."

"Lead on" Jack then prompted.

"You've got to admit it" Tracy remarked as she, arm in arm with The Commander watched Jack head off into the treatment area "He certainly exudes a lot of confidence for one so young."

"Indeed he does" The Commander agreed.

In Fleet Street, located in the centre of London there was a commotion beginning to bubble up as, with the imminent start of the K200 ban injunction hearing, supporters and protestors from both sides of the argument were gathering outside the Royal Courts of Justice along with a significant number of journalists, photographers and interested onlookers.

A small line of Security Service officers were attempting to keep back the crowds to allow various officials who were arriving, entry into the ornate gothic style building that houses the primary law courts for the country.

Looking down on the scene from a window on the first floor with a good view of the chaos that was beginning to unfurl outside the main entrance was Lord Chief Justice Sir Godfrey Bundy Q.C. who as the Duty Magistrate that morning had drawn what he saw as the short straw and would be chairing the hearing due to start in a few minutes time as soon as the legal representatives from both sides of the argument had arrived.

"I bet this is all The Commander's fault" Sir Godfrey remarked with a wry smile to the Home Secretary as he joined him in watching the scene out of the window where with each passing moment more and more protestors were arriving outside the main entrance.

Davis smirked knowingly "Funny you should say that" he confirmed.

"So who will be representing the Government in this bun fight?" Sir Godfrey asked as they stepped away from the window and walked down the corridor towards the Lord Chief Justice's office.

"I will be" Davis confirmed although from his tone of voice it was clear he was none too enthusiastic about the prospect, something which Sir Godfrey quickly picked up on.

"Are you sure?" Sir Godfrey asked.

"I can't trust anyone else" Davis admitted "I know it is probably political suicide but that's life on the old rollercoaster that is politics."

"I'll try and be gentle with you then" Sir Godfrey tried to reassure him.

"Who is heading the case for the injunction?" Davis then asked as they reached the Lord Chief Justice's office and proceeded inside.

"Some private legal consultancy team headed by a chap I haven't come across before" Sir Godfrey consulted the notes on his desk "Bermann and Associates according to this."

"Henry Bermann?" Davis responded with a look of incredulous shock.

"I think so" Sir Godfrey confirmed "Why, do you know him?"

"He is one of a seemingly growing army of slimy little shysters who have been poking their noses in under the guise of 'Official Advisor' in both the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice" Davis confirmed "I should have guessed he had something to do with this."

"Whoever is behind the injunction request is throwing an awful lot of money at it" Sir Godfrey confirmed "I've never seen anything quite like it in the fifteen odd years I have been in this job."

Their conversation was interrupted by a polite knock on the door before it opened and one of the Court Ushers appeared.

"Apologies for the interruption Lord Chief Justice" the Usher called from the doorway "the Injunction legal team have arrived and are waiting to see you."

"Thank you" Sir Godfrey confirmed whereupon the Usher left, closing the door quietly behind him.

"Showtime then" Davis remarked.

"Do you know sometimes it feels like I am a boxing referee" Sir Godfrey remarked "I want a good clean fight, no punches below the belt and all to stay in neutral corners when I give the order."

"Let's hope we don't come to blows then" Davis responded "I get a bit queasy at the sight of blood."

"I know that feeling" Sir Godfrey agreed as they headed out of the office and immediately saw ahead a gathering of legal representatives in sharp suits with at the centre of them the grinning face of Henry Bermann clearly visible.

"Home Secretary, Lord Chief Justice" Bermann called in greeting.

"Gentlemen" Sir Godfrey responded in a very business like manner "I will shortly be calling to order the Injunction Hearing in Court Number Three. I expect nothing less than professionalism from both sides, I will not have any arguing, shouting down or speaking over one another and do not be under any illusion that I won't fine anyone for contempt of court because I will in a heart beat."

Both Hermann's group and Davis who was now joined by his own legal team nodded and agreed to Sir Godfrey's explicit instructions.

"All right then ladies and gentlemen" Sir Godfrey then declared "If you would all like to take your seats, we will get started."

Walking down the corridor it was obvious to Jack which room Jenna was being treated in as there was a uniformed Security Service patrol officer standing guard on the door with whom he exchanged respectful acknowledgements as he passed him and entered the room.

"Jesus..." Jack responded as soon as he saw Jenna lying on the bed, breathing through a mask and hooked up to various items of monitoring equipment which beeped and buzzed in a rhythmic pattern that was almost hypnotic.

"She's a mess" the Doctor admitted "I understand she has been taking some sort of narcotic?" he then asked.

"K200" Jack sadly confirmed "Sort of green stuff that seems to becoming an ever increasing problem lately. It's associated with this cult called the Ixion Brotherhood" he explained.

"Well whatever it is, it has made a hell of a mess of her head I can tell you that much and that is before we even begin to address the physical injuries, internal and external she seems to have" the Doctor grimly remarked.

"Just how bad is it?" Jack tentatively asked.

"Whatever she has been taking, willingly or otherwise has effectively split her mind into several pieces" the Doctor explained "There is evidence of neurological trauma, multiple personality like defects, hallucinations and Christ knows what else."

"We have encountered a few K200 users before but none of them have shown symptoms as severe or as complex as this" Jack remarked.

"My gut feeling says this poor girl was someone's guinea pig for testing new stronger variants of it, something with a lot more kick to it and in consequence, far nastier side effects" the Doctor concluded "Of course I am merely speculating, without a lot more tests and weeks if not months of specialist treatment we will not know for certain."

"Can I talk to her?" Jack then asked.

"If you can get through the malaise and reach one of her more communicative personalities then yes" the Doctor confirmed "Good luck with that one though" he grimly added.

Jack approached the bed with some trepidation as the monitoring equipment continued to beep all around.

"Jenna" Jack softly called "It's Jack Regent."

Jenna stirred a little and her head moved to one side so that she was now looking towards him with a confused expression as it was clear she did not really know what was going on, where she was or why she was there.

"How are you doing?" Jack then sensitively asked.

"I can see stars" Jenna announced with a spaced out look "Pretty stars everywhere."

"She is so over the hill on whatever psychotropic drugs she has been given I am amazed she can see that" the Doctor discreetly advised to which Jack nodded in understanding.

"Jenna" Jack then addressed her again "I need to ask you a couple of questions if you feel up to it, okay?"

"As long as the dolphins keep the noise down I think that will be okay" Jenna responded with a gleeful smile.

"Do you know what has happened to you?" Jack asked.

"My Master commands" Jenna replied "I obey, sample the new elixir of the Ixion God, K300, the future" she announced.

"Sounds like you were right Doctor" Jack remarked "It seems Lord Chaos uses his 'wives' as guinea pigs for new versions of his drugs."

"Bad trip though" Jenna continued "Very glowing and sparkly but underneath, dark, evil, death."

"We want to help you" Jack then told her "The Doctor here can help you overcome the side effects of the drugs you have been given and I can bring in people to counsel you over whatever other things that little shit of a husband of yours has done to you."

"Yours is a kind face" Jenna then reached up to Jack.

"My girl says that to me just before she utters the immortal words 'would you mind doing the washing up dear' I tend to find" Jack wryly admitted.

"You deserve a present" Jenna then added "for being so kind."

"Err thank you" Jack responded, not entirely sure where this was going.

"You should go to the dogs, they don't run there anymore though but I am sure that their ghosts will greet you with welcome arms and show you the secrets of our Lord" Jenna then cryptically announced.

"Okay..." Jack understandably looked with some sense of confusion "I think I will."

"They will be waiting for you, you should be careful" Jenna then added with a slightly ominous tone "The future is there, and the past."

With that Jenna yawned and in a matter of seconds passed out into a deep state of unconsciousness.

"Take care of her Doctor" Jack then instructed "She deserves the best treatment we can give her."

"She's got it" the Doctor readily agreed.

The gavel was slammed down with a loud thud on the Lord Chief Justice's desk at the head of Court Room Three so hard that had any more force been used it could conceivably have split the desk in two.

"I WILL HAVE ORDER HERE!" Sir Godfrey loudly demanded whereupon the bickering parties in front of him ceded and fell respectfully silent whilst he glowered at them in order to make sure his point was well and truly understood.

"Thank you" he then continued in a far calmer tone "Right, from what I understand from your various arguments is that, Mr Hermann your clients have developed this substance to be safe for anyone to use with no ill effects whatsoever?"

"That is correct Your Honour" Hermann resolutely confirmed "as with any substance anyone is free to consume, it is safe as long as they follow the supplied instructions."

"I see" Sir Godfrey made some notes "However there is one further matter I am unclear on at this point" he continued "the original order initiating the banning of this substance, K200 and any variants thereof was issued by the Home Office, a Government Department you yourself advise on a regular basis?"

Hermann responded simply by nodding.

"So, does this not constitute a conflict of interest?" Sir Godfrey then asked, "You and your group representing the organisation who are affected by a banning order issued by the Government department that you are a senior advisor of?"

"I and my associates are strictly independent" Hermann explained almost with a sense of pride "We advise, support and liaise with everyone irrespective of their colour, creed, political persuasion or whatever differentiation is trendy this week."

"Yeah, right..." the Home Secretary muttered under his breath but loud enough for Sir Godfrey to pick up as he momentarily looked across at him and glowered.

"If I understand you correctly, are saying that if circumstances were different, you would be representing the other side in this debate?" Sir Godfrey sought clarification.

"In my experience anything is possible" Hermann proudly declared "As long as justice is served and the interests of the greater good are observed than I will continue to be its champion and white knight."

"I see..." Sir Godfrey responded although he was thinking of something far less complimentary at that point so decided to move on "So, what is the basis for your appeal against the banning order?" he then asked "and please try to keep it brief if you would."

Jack emerged through the double doors from the Treatment Area with a look of sheer determination.

"Now there is a look of thunder if ever I have seen one" Tracy remarked aside to The Commander as Jack approached.

"If I ever catch that man I am personally going to chuck him in a cell and throw away the key" Jack determinedly "and I am not going to be exactly subtle about it either."

"I take it that Lady Chaos is not too good?" The Commander asked with an obvious sense of concern.

"That bastard has drugged her up on some new version of his green shit and it has basically screwed her mind right up" Jack confirmed, still clearly angry "and that is before we even touch on the physical and emotional damage he and his band of little cretins have inflicted on her."

"Did you get anything useful out of her?" Tracy asked.

"Not much" Jack admitted "She did say I should visit some place where the dogs don't run anymore which made no sense whatsoever."

"Dogs don't run anymore?" The Commander responded "Walthamstow?" he then suggested.

"Huh?" Tracy called.

"Walthamstow Dog Track" Jack replied "Of course, why didn't I think of that?"

"Could one of you please explain to me what it is you are talking about?" Tracy asked.

"The old dog racing track in Walthamstow" The Commander explained "It's been derelict for years now, bought by some investment company who have never done anything with it."

"What's the betting that the investment company is one part of Orbison's little financial money laundering empire?" Jack ventured.

"Evens money favourite" The Commander concluded "Somehow that man has accumulated a huge financial and property empire all but unseen by everyone, especially the Taxman."

"I'll go and check the place out later, but first I need to return to Orbison's little Citadel and raid his toy cupboard" Jack confirmed at which point they were joined through the entrance doors by Bob and two members of his specialist firearms team.

"Morning Bob" Tracy called "Glad you could join the party."

"What's the job?" Bob then asked.

"There is a young lady in a very bad way in Treatment Room Number Three who I want guarded around the clock" Jack instructed "No one goes into that room bar the nominated medical staff without my specific say so."

"You got it" Bob confirmed before silently indicating to his two officers to deploy as instructed.

"Thanks' Bob" Jack responded.

"Whilst I am here I have a urgent message for you" Bob then addressed Tracy and The Commander "Control got a message a few minutes ago from the Home Secretary, advising you to get back to London as soon as possible as apparently all hell is breaking loose."

"Political, legal or physical?" Tracy asked, sensing trouble ahead.

"From what was understood from the tone of the Home Secretary's message, all three" Bob ominously warned.

"Call Terry and have him meet us outside the front door in two minutes" The Commander then instructed.

"Terry, you there?" Tracy called into her radio to which she quickly received an acknowledgement "Best get the motor around to the front door ASAP, we have to haul ass back to London" she duly announced.

"BAN THE CULT! BAN THE CULT! BAN THE CULT!" came the shouts of the several hundred protestors who were being generally corralled by lines of Security Service officers over towards one side of the Royal Courts of Justice, waving placards and screaming, their numbers thanks to live streaming broadcasts over social media increasing by the minute.

A short distance away, also being held back by Security Service officers was an almost equal number of Ixion Brotherhood followers whose demeanour was by contrast far calmer, more confident and almost reverential.

In between the two opposing groups on the opposite pavement and being held back by temporary metal railings were the gathered members of the press, some broadcasting live as they reported on the ongoing inquest still taking place inside the Royal Courts of Justice whilst others were busy photographing the unfolding drama outside with the crowds on both sides of the argument continuing to increase in number with every passing moment.

"This is starting to get a little too lively for my liking" one of the Security Officers on site remarked to her colleague as they looked around at the ever-increasing numbers.

"Agreed" the other officer agreed "the tension is mounting, this has the potential to turn really ugly, really fast."

"Lima Alpha Eight Nine Three to Control" the first officer called into her radio "Any chance of some reinforcements down here in Fleet Street, the natives are getting restless."

"Roger" came the response from the Control Room at New Scotland Yard "We are rustling up the cavalry now and The Guvnor's are on the way as well."

"Thanks, appreciate it" the first officer responded.

"By the way" the Control Room officer informed her "word from the Court Room is that there has been some sort of legal clanger dropped by the Home Office and the ruling is due through any minute."

"One thing is for certain, one side here is going to be bitterly disappointed" the other officer remarked with a sense of apprehension.

Inside the Court room the arguments had broken out again, this time with Hermann's group presenting legal precedence evidence.

"It is quite clear" Hermann practically had to shout in order to make himself heard above the noise of arguing in the court room "that the origin of this ridiculous banning order was not the legal channels of the Ministry of Justice whom I can tell this Court had nothing whatsoever to do with this, indeed on my advice are opposing it's imposition, but with the outdated, overbearing and seemingly out of control so called law enforcement agencies of this country."

"That is a very strongly worded accusation Mr Hermann" Sir Godfrey warned "I hope you can back it up."

"The facts are everywhere you care to look" Hermann gesticulated around "One only needs to open one's eyes."

"All right Mr Hermann" Sir Godfrey intervened "Home Secretary, do you have anything to add in response."

The Home Secretary quietly consulted with his legal team sat either side of him for a few moments as Sir Godfrey looked on from his position at the front of the court room with a sense of inevitable resignation whilst Hermann, still standing nearby looked across with a big grin.

"Err at this time" the Home Secretary began to respond, clearly uncertain of what his next move was to be "we are unable to respond to the claims made by Mr Hermann and his associates, therefore we have no option at this time other than to withdraw from these proceedings."

"Right..." Sir Godfrey reluctantly concluded as he made a written note of this development "In which case I have to formally rule that the enforcement order at the centre of the case must be suspended with immediate effect" he officially announced.

There were cheers and hearty handshakes exchanged between Hermann's group for a few moments before calm resumed.

"I do however set the provision that this verdict can be subject to an appeal hearing within seven days and I strongly advise that the defence in this hearing get their proverbial act together and do so with all haste" Sir Godfrey clearly instructed.

On the Government's side of the Court there were despondent looking faces whilst by complete contrast on the other side, Hermann and his legal team could barely contain their delight.

"This hearing is adjourned" Sir Godfrey then declared, raising his gavel but the sound of it striking his desk was drowned out by the cheers and applause both in the Court and from the public gallery immediately above.

"I don't give a..." Orbison began to angrily protest before pausing, taking a deep breath and calming down a little.

"I am not interested in problems, only solutions" he then began again "We move immediately to our alternative location and when that is done, we find my wife and bring her home, is that understood?"

Reaper reverentially nodded in understanding.

"Good" Orbison then responded, "Err good...".

"I have already taken the liberty My Lord of moving all the merchandise away to a new secure location" Reaper then informed Orbison as he continued to pace up and down "Unfortunately Lady Chaos is currently under heavy guard and not accessible at the moment."

"Do we have any of our followers working in that hospital?" Orbison then asked.

"I have my group checking now but it doesn't seem so" Reaper confirmed "We may have to wait until she is moved to another location and pick her up on route."

"She must not be allowed to talk to the authorities" Orbison insisted "Once she comes out of her current induced state she could clearly tell them all about our little Alliance with the Hand and he would not be best pleased."

"That's an understatement" Reaper muttered to himself.

"I want her back alive if possible but if not then she must be terminated" Orbison regretfully informed Reaper "Am I fully understood Brother?"

"Yes, My Lord" Reaper confirmed whereupon they were joined by one of Reapers aides who whispered something in his ear before leaving again.

"Excellent news My Lord" Reaper then announced, "The Court has ruled in our favour, the ban is officially lifted until further notice."

"At last, some good news" Orbison remarked "Let's make sure it stays that way, get Hermann on it right away" he instructed.

Outside the Royal Courts of Justice, the crowds of protestors, supporters, media and neutral bystanders had grown to immense proportions and although some rumours were starting to circulate through the crowd about the result there was still no official confirmation as of yet.

"Here we go" one of the now strengthened numbers of Security Service officers trying to hold back the various groups remarked to her colleague as the main doors opened and a jubilant looking group led by Hermann appeared.

As they approached the ornate wrought iron gates that separated the Courts from the street Hermann spoke aside to one of his associates.

"Where's Orbison?" he asked "I thought your Lord Chaos would want to be here sharing in the jubilation."

"He is dealing with a little domestic crisis that seems to have arisen Sir" the associate confirmed "Something wrong with his wife apparently."

"Ah well, can't be helped" Hermann responded "Meanwhile you should alert our followers inside the Home Office, I am going to press for the Home Secretary's resignation within the week and I want to ensure that he is replaced by someone more sympathetic to our cause" he instructed.

"By your command Sir" the associate confirmed.

As they reached the pavement outside the Royal Courts of Justice, the press was allowed to come forward to a barrier erected on the pavement in front of the main gates so that both sides of the argument could address the world.

Amid the shouting from the gathered crowds, Hermann was the first to address the press.

"Today's verdict is a victory for common sense, freedom of speech and the right to enjoy life" Hermann loudly declared as the Ixion Brotherhood supporters cheered even louder whilst the protestors jeered and shouted in response.

"Furthermore..." Hermann continued amid the noise which was growing with each and every passing moment "This is a victory for those of us who continually battle day in and day out against ridiculous, ill-advised and dangerous knee jerk legislation."

The look of thunder that the Home Secretary gave Hermann at that point could have shattered glass.

"This travesty of justice must not go unanswered or unaccounted for" Hermann then continued, revelling in the media spotlight and his moment of triumph "I call for the immediate resignation of the Home Secretary in the wake of this scandalous mess and a full root and branch investigation of the legislative system of this country."

"I take it we lost then?" The Commander asked as he and Tracy arrived nearby.

"Some tin pot lawyer is grinning like a Cheshire cat whilst the Home Secretary looks like his cat has been run over" Tracy remarked "I think we can very safely say we have lost."

"That's Hermann, the Government advisor guy who I suspect is probably in the pocket of a certain Mr Orbison" The Commander called as they approached.

"Hmm, looks sufficiently obnoxious enough" Tracy admitted.

By this point the surging of the crowd was becoming sufficiently dangerous that the impromptu press conference was cut short and Security Service officers began to escort the various people away to waiting vehicles, Jennifer Caverner being on standby with a Ministerial Escort car for the Home Secretary.

"I don't like the looks of this" The Commander remarked as he and Tracy approached the increasingly chaotic scene where the Home Secretary and his aides were being swiftly bundled across the Zebra pedestrian crossing in the direction of their car.

"Oh, look out, here comes the 'Dempsey and Makepeace' of the National Security Service" Jennifer wryly remarked as Tracy and The Commander joined her just as the Home Secretary was about to be put in the back of the car.

At that exact moment however, it all started to go horribly wrong as the cordons broke down under the sheer force of people pushing up against them and all of a sudden, the two opposing sides were confronting each other which was when the fighting started.

"Oh hell!" Tracy exclaimed as she and The Commander reacted quickly by grabbing the Home Secretary and practically throwing him in the back of the car as Jennifer scrambled into the driver's seat.

"Go! Go! Go!" The Commander called, banging on the car roof whereupon Jennifer with four motorcycle escorts quickly drove off.

"Lima Alpha One to Control" Tracy urgently called into her radio "Get everyone we have got to Fleet Street ASAP, all hell is breaking loose down here!"

There was a massive uncontrollable fight now in progress, screaming and shouting, placards and anything else that was lying around being used as weapons and missiles as the protestors attacked the Ixion supporters with clear unbridled anger and their opponents retaliated in equal measure.

The Security Service officers present were hopelessly overwhelmed and as Tracy tried to rally the personnel on the ground, The Commander took charge of pushing back anyone not directly involved in the fighting so that hopefully no one else got hurt.

"Eagle One to Control, urgent message!" The Commander called into his radio as he continued to wave people past him and away from the centre of the scene "I need Fleet Street and the surrounding area sealed off completely and anyone not directly involved in beating the crap out of each other evacuated from the area immediately!"

As the fighting and brawling continued, some people were pulled out clearly injured whilst the rest carried on exchanging blows and throwing missiles fashioned from whatever came to hand.

"Whoa!!" Tracy called out as a badly thrown orange traffic cone came flying across the road, missing its intended target by a wide margin but only narrowly missing her.

"You all right Love?" The Commander called as he came running over amidst the shouts, screams, sounds of glass breaking and an ever-increasing number of emergency service sirens filling the air.

"Yeah, just surprised that's all" Tracy thankfully confirmed.

At that point a black taxi cab that had been caught up in the chaos was set alight and began to catch with small explosions sending more people scattering all over the place.

"The cavalry is arriving so hopefully things should calm down soon" The Commander admitted "then I am going to round up every last one of them and throw the book at them" he determinedly added.

"It's going to have to be an awfully big book to hit all this lot" Tracy remarked.

The Commander's optimism proved to be ill founded however when a few moments later, as a trio of Security Service minibus vans with Riot equipped officers arrived, from somewhere a lit petrol bomb was thrown which struck the bonnet of the leading vehicle and exploded.

"Jesus Christ, this is getting way out of hand!" Tracy exclaimed.

"I'll say" The Commander readily agreed as they both shielded themselves from the heat of the fire as the van's occupants quickly got out just in time as the flames took hold of it.

They both stood back as the riot control officers deployed, quickly subduing much of the crowd although there were still odd smaller groups who scattered and continued the disorder a short distance further away.

"Who the hell uses petrol bombs anymore?" The Commander wryly asked, "No one can afford the stuff, it's so dam expensive and you can never find glass bottles anymore as they keep getting taken away for recycling!"

"Watch out!" came a cry which heralded another petrol bomb flying through the air and crashing into the ground only a matter of feet away from Tracy and The Commander forcing them to step further back.

"Looks like someone around here doesn't care too much for their environmental credentials" Tracy remarked as they both looked across at the burning Security Service vehicle in the middle of Fleet Street, now well alight and with popping noises going off as various flammable parts ignited in the blaze.

"Gold Commander to Eagle One" came a call over The Commander's radio "We have got the main part of the protest surrounded and they are standing down."

"Eagle One to all units" The Commander responded "go carefully as there is someone here fond of the pyrotechnics" he warned.

A few moments later the rioting was subsiding considerably with many either surrounded by the Security Service, too tired and injured to carry on or else making a swift run for it into the surrounding streets and away.

With the main part of the crowd now restrained behind a wall of riot shields, pinned up against the railings of the Royal Courts of Justice, Tracy and The Commander approached with purpose in their step, a loudhailer being passed to The Commander at his silent instruction as he reached them.

"Well that was fun wasn't it?" The Commander sarcastically announced over the loudhailer as everyone including the media now standing behind him listened and watched intently.

"In the modern spirit of inclusion and equality for all" The Commander then announced, "I am not going to take sides, you are all going to be treated equally with no discrimination."

The crowd looked on, some hopeful that this meant that they were about to be sent on their way with just a telling off.

"So therefore, irrespective of which side of this farcical punch up you were on, I am putting the whole lot of you under arrest" The Commander then announced as further Security Service vehicles and personnel arrived in large numbers along with the Fire Brigade to put out the flames.

"This is how it is going to work" The Commander then continued "You will be extracted from the cordon one at a time, you will be subjected to a full search, you will then have your names and other details taken before you are taken away to Marylebone nick to be processed, interviewed and if, I stress if I am feeling generous, and it's not looking too good at the moment, I might allow some of the lesser involved combatants the opportunity to arrange for bail."

At that point one of the rioters who had not been confined appeared to Tracy's right holding a large piece of wood up high with the intention to use it to attack them.

Tracy quickly reacted and before the attacker knew what had happened, she had tripped him up, struck him firmly in the stomach and then thrown him face down to the ground before putting her right foot on his back and pulling her gun on him.

"Anyone who resists get the same treatment" The Commander then resumed which thanks to Tracy's practical demonstration seemed to have the desired effect.

Tracy quickly handcuffed the man in situ before unceremoniously hauling him up off the ground and handing him over to two heavily armed officers who duly took him away to a waiting prisoner transport van.

"Do we have an understanding ladies and gentlemen?" The Commander then asked to which he got an almost universal series of nods and resigned murmurs in agreement.

As the extraction and processing of the restrained rioters began, there was a further commotion from somewhere nearby.

"Eagle One from Zulu Three" came a call over The Commander's radio "I think we got our petrol bomb guy."

"Wait there, we will be right over" The Commander confirmed before he and Tracy duly made their way over to where four specialist firearms officers had surrounded a tall thin man of African appearance, his hands on his head and four guns pointed directly at him, at his feet a bag containing a couple of unused petrol bombs.

"Who's this comedian?" Tracy asked as they arrived on the scene.

"Won't give us his name or indeed anything other than he is 'The Hand' apparently" one of the specialist firearms officers confirmed.

"Well 'The Hand' is lucky he is not feeling a welcoming committee from my good close personal friend 'The Boot'" The Commander indicated his feet.

"I am The Hand of the God of Ixion" the man then suddenly announced raising his hands off his head and pointing them up to the sky "and I bring you the new Jihad!"

"Has anyone searched this guy?" Tracy asked with growing concern that was becoming equally apparently among all the others present.

"You possess our God's Queen and vengeance will be ours!" the man then declared "Today we see the unification of the mighty Ixion Brotherhood with that of The Hand and strike at the heart of the betrayers, the non-believers and the unrighteous."

"I think we need to get out of here right now" The Commander urgently called, taking Tracy's hand whereupon she had the same horrific realisation.

"RUN!" The Commander called as he, Tracy and the four firearms officers quickly turned and made a run for it whilst the man simply remained where he was.

"To Life Immortal!!" the man then called out, looking up at the sky with his hands held high.

A split second later there was a loud explosion, a green flash and debris as a very small but powerful explosive device hidden somewhere about the man's body was detonated.

The explosion instantly vaporised the man in a huge green fireball and the shockwave sent Tracy, The Commander and the firearms officers tumbling to the ground.

As the thud of the explosion continued to echo all around and small pieces of ash and smouldering debris rained down, the whole area fell silent as if jolted into a sense of shock by this sudden dramatic turn of events.

The Commander got back to his feet and quickly helped Tracy up.

"Are you all right Love?" The Commander asked, understandably concerned.

"A bit dusty" Tracy admitted as she brushed first herself down and then her husband "but I think I am all right. How about you?"

"Another ruined uniform I suspect" The Commander wryly admitted before they turned back towards the centre of the explosion.

"What the hell was that all about?" Tracy then asked, at a loss for any explanation.

"I have absolutely no idea" The Commander admitted as the echo of sirens heralded the arrival of more emergency service vehicles and personnel on the scene which was already extremely busy "but I am dam sure going to find out."

Jack had to hold on tightly as Appleby drove the patrol car down the rough track and they lurched from side to side, the other Security Service vehicles following them having similar difficulties navigating their way.

"Lima Tango Nine Nine Three to Lima Tango Four Six Seven" Jack called into his radio "How are we doing?" he then asked.

"The main line is closed and we have sealed off the Quarry Tunnel at both ends" came the response from the officer leading the team that was now guarding the tunnel entrance to the Ixion Brotherhood's underground citadel complex.

"All right" Jack confirmed "Stay on guard and make sure nobody tries to sneak out" he then ordered "We are going to be knocking on their front door in a minute or two."

"This looks like the place, I guess" Appleby nodded ahead to a clearing amongst the trees and bushes where a large metal door could be seen set into the rock face of the old Victorian era mine workings that once dominated the whole of the local area but that had, in theory at least, been abandoned for over half a century now.

Appleby brought the car to a halt and the two vans full of Bob's Specialist Firearms Squad officers pulled in immediately behind them whereupon they duly deployed.

"All right Lieutenant" Appleby then declared as they all gathered around the bonnet of the car "It's your party, you call it."

"Okay" Jack responded "Ladies and Gentlemen" he then announced "What we have here is the main entrance into an extensive network of underground caves and passages that probably stretch for miles that has been converted for use as a 'religious citadel' by a sinister group known as the Ixion Brotherhood."

"Any maps, plans, guide dog with a Ouija board to show us the way around this place?" Bob asked, already sensing the complicated nature of the job he and his team were facing.

"Not so much as a trail of bread crumbs or a carrier pigeon with extra sensory perception" Jack admitted "Now the guys I saw inside this place last night were not armed but the four goons that showed up outside the hospital asking not very politely for the girl back most definitely were and they were also pretty efficient in the usage of said weaponry, in addition there is a vault packed with military grade hardware down there so be prepared for anything."

"As always" Bob confirmed with a knowing smile.

"What I want from each and every one of you is a complete search from top to bottom of the entire place" Jack then continued "Arrest and search anyone you find and once the place is confirmed as secure then I am going scour the place for evidence."

"I think we can handle that" Bob confirmed.

"There are three entrances that we know about" Jack then confirmed indicating on a map of the local area "The big metal door over there seems to be the main entrance, there is a secret back door that opens out into Quarry Tunnel on the main railway line that we have already got covered plus there is a vent shaft of some kind over there" he indicated over in the distance "That was where we managed to crawl out of earlier this morning."

"All right then" Bob took over "Gary and Steve, I want you to cover this shaft entrance, try not to get stung by the nettles and do not do anything unless either anyone pops out or I tell you to move, now go."

The two armed officers duly departed and headed off into the undergrowth towards the shaft entrance some distance away where they quickly disappeared amongst the shrubbery.

"So, what's the plan Lieutenant?" Appleby then asked as Jack led him, Bob and the rest of the officers towards the large metal door before stopping right in front of the huge rust coloured edifice before them.

"I guess we could just knock?" Jack suggested.

"Leave this to us" Bob then called as he stepped forward and examined the rusty looking old lock that secured the doors "I need a firearm here with some grunt" he then declared.

"This do?" Jack pulled his old six shot revolver from its holster and proffered it.

"That antique looks vaguely familiar" Bob remarked "but it will do nicely" he then confirmed.

Everyone else stood back as Bob aimed Jack's gun directly at the heart of the lock at point blank range and then pulled the trigger which in a flash, shredded the lock.

"Let's go everyone" Jack then called as he took back his gun whilst Bob and one of his officers hauled open the heavy metal door and they duly proceeded inside.

"Armed Security Service officers!" came the loud calls that echoed all throughout the labyrinth of tunnels, rooms and caves as they moved quickly through the complex.

The group of officers quickly split up into smaller and smaller teams as they headed off in numerous different directions making a meticulous search of every room, cavern and corridor they could find before Jack, Bob and Appleby reached the main Citadel Chamber and paused, looking around almost in a sense of bewilderment.

"Is it my imagination or is nobody home?" Appleby remarked.

"All teams report in please" Bob called over his radio.

The confined nature of the network of caverns and passageways meant that the radio signals were pretty patchy but the responses did come through.

"We are at the top of this main cavern bit" one team reported "I think whoever was here has left in a hurry."

"Anyone else got anything?" Bob then asked.

"What appears to be some cells, living accommodation and offices are vacant" another one of Bob's officers then added "I think if anything was happening here then we have missed it."

"Dam..." Jack remarked with clear frustration "Let's see if Orbison took all his toys with him, come on" he then led the way across the Citadel chamber over towards the small door that led to the vault.

"This had better be good Lieutenant" Appleby warned as he and Bob followed Jack "because so far all we seem to have is an empty cave."

"There is no way that Orbison and his minions could have shifted thirty tons of weapons and explosives in just a couple of hours" Jack confirmed as they reached the vault whereupon he opened the small cover and exposed the number keypad.

"Do you know the code?" Appleby asked with concern.

"Whilst Lord Chaos was in his full ego led guided tour mode" Jack confirmed as he started slowly pressing numbers "which by the way did not go via the gift shop on the way out sadly, he made the crucial mistake of letting me see him put the code in."

With a couple of beeps and then a loud clunk, the vault door was unlocked and Jack turned the wheel set into the door before swinging it open and allowing the three men to enter.

Inside was completely dark, no lights on at all and so it was with understandable trepidation that they proceeded inside until suddenly spotlights inside the vault cavern automatically illuminated revealing an almost completely empty space.

"Bugger..." Jack murmured under his breath as he kicked some loose empty discarded packing materials that was on the floor in frustration.

"Dam" Appleby remarked "I really must hire these guys to do my next house move if they can shift that much stuff that quick!"

"What's that?" Bob motioned ahead towards the far wall where there seemed to be something on a kind of pedestal, a single spotlight somewhere high above shining directly onto it.

As they cautiously approached the pedestal the three men could see that there was an old fashioned black Bakelite telephone sitting on it which as they reached it, began to ring, it's traditional sounding trilling bell echoing all around the interior of the vault cavern and beyond throughout the complex.

"I had better answer it I suppose" Jack remarked as he duly stepped forward, picked up the handset which cancelled the ringing and then put it to his ear.

"Hello?" he cautiously answered.

"Good afternoon Lieutenant Regent, or may I call you Jack?" the voice of Orbison called.

"Lieutenant Regent to you Mr Orbison" Jack formally responded, maintaining a hold on his anger towards him "What can I do for you?"

"I'm terribly sorry I could not greet you and your associates in person" Orbison apologised "Unfortunately I had other business to attend to and your recent intervention in our organisation meant we had to relocate with some indecent haste."

"A shame, I was so looking forward to seeing you again" Jack sarcastically responded.

"To business then" Orbison decided to get right to the point having sensed Jack's negative feelings towards him "By now I am sure you are aware that we have moved on, we have so many places of worship and gathering under the control of the Brotherhood that you could be kicking in doors for weeks and still not find us."

"One thing you will find about me is that I am a very persistent person Mr Orbison" Jack responded.

"We do have some unfinished business though you and I" Orbison continued "You have something of mine, something very precious and I would like it back please."

"Could you be more specific Mr Orbison" Jack replied as he looked around at Bob and Appleby standing nearby "I am pretty sure I didn't borrow so much as a pen when I was your 'guest' earlier."

"Let's not mix words Lieutenant Regent" Orbison was starting to sound frustrated now "You have my wife, the good Lady Chaos and I want her back, unharmed, right now."

"Unharmed?" Jack angrily responded "That is a bit rich from someone who, presumably as part of his made up stupid so called 'faith' has drugged her up to the eyeballs almost to the point of psychosis and raped what few fragments of life were left after your drugs had done their work?"

"A shame that you should be so unco-operative" Orbison regretfully acknowledged "I was hoping we could solve this little misunderstanding peacefully, like gentlemen but instead I see you are just as obstinate and obstructive as your interfering parents."

"Let me make one thing absolutely clear Mr Orbison, I don't do deals with drug pedalling, misogynistic, lying, cheating, weapons dealing, self-delusional shysters such as yourself" Jack defiantly confirmed.

"Remind me to put Jack on the diplomatic negotiation course at some point" Appleby remarked aside to Bob as they both looked on with some slight apprehension at the way the conversation was unfolding.

"Hmmm" Bob nodded in agreement "You can tell who has been tutoring him though, can't you?"

"Yeah..." Appleby confirmed.

"I'll make it simple for you Lieutenant" Orbison then continued "You return Lady Chaos to me unharmed at a place and time of your choosing and we can avoid any unpleasantness that I would otherwise be required to unleash upon you and your associates for this abominable violation of the Brotherhood."

"No deal Mr Orbison" Jack defiantly responded, firmly standing his ground "Your 'wife' stays under our protection until any threat from your organisation, its followers and any other associated hangers on, loonies and minions is neutralised."

"Very well then" Orbison reluctantly concluded "You leave me no choice but to formally declare you an enemy of the Brotherhood. It's a sad state of affairs I am sure you agree but as ever with anything these days, there must be, indeed there will be consequences."

"Oh... I am shaking in my boots" Jack mockingly responded.

"Give my regards to your parents when you see them" Orbison then formally called "Farewell Lieutenant, Be Seeing You..." whereupon the line went dead.

"Well, that went well..." Appleby sarcastically remarked.

"Right..." Jack hung up the telephone handset before pausing for a moment's thought "Let's get the Scenes of Crime boys down here and turn this place upside down, if there is evidence that will find and nail this bastard then I want it, if there isn't any I want it found anyway."

"What about the girl?" Bob then asked.

"Get hold of your team at the hospital and inquire of the medical staff how soon we can move her to a new more secure location" Jack then requested "and treble the guard you have got on her now in the meantime."

"You got it" Bob confirmed before hurrying away to find somewhere he could get a decent radio signal through.

"So, Lieutenant, what's your next move?" Appleby asked.

"First I am going to borrow the Drugs Squad's finest van load of best door kickers and pay a visit to sunny Walthamstow" Jack declared "and when I am finished there I am going to lay a nice cosy little trap for our friend Mr Orbison" he determinedly announced.

With the whole of Fleet Street now sealed off and evacuated, the on-site investigations had already commenced with a large white forensics tent now erected over the point where the explosion had occurred, a small crater in the pavement and the distorted railings alongside indicating the central point.

"Well, what can I say" Doctor Yardell declared as he looked down at a few tiny scraps of material sealed in small plastic evidence bags and laid out on a table in front of him "Not much to go on other than a few fragments scraped up off the pavement which tells us that he was vaporised instantaneously by an explosive device implanted in his abdomen I suspect, which killed him instantly."

"Nasty way to go" Tracy remarked.

"Quite" The Commander agreed "so how much explosive did he have in him?"

"When he went bang, did you say there was like a green flash of some kind?" Yardell then asked.

"Yes, I think there was" Tracy confirmed whilst The Commander merely nodded in agreement.

"In which case, assuming it was that R232 stuff that went missing a while back then I would say probably no more than a few grams, maybe not even that" Yardell confirmed "The detonator and receiver probably took up more space than the actual explosive."

"Ah, good afternoon" Christopher Dent called as he popped his head around the curtain door of the tent "I heard you were having a bit of a busy morning and thought I would drop by."

"Oh just the usual humdrum every day stuff" Tracy remarked with more than a hint of wry sarcasm "Riots, petrol bombs, explosions, just your typical day really."

"So who is the dead guy with the nasty case of indigestion?" Dent then asked.

"Not a clue" The Commander admitted "and unless he shows up on CCTV anywhere clearly enough prior to his explosive demise for a facial recognition, I doubt we ever will."

"He did say something odd before he blew up though" Tracy recalled "Said something about the Ixion Brotherhood and The Hand."

"The Hand?" Dent asked with sudden concern "Are you absolutely sure he said 'The Hand' specifically?"

"Pretty sure" Tracy confirmed "Apparently they are joining up with the Ixion Brotherhood and that they want Lady Chaos back."

"Oh..." Dent responded.

"What?" The Commander quickly replied "I know that look, your old Guvnor Collins had just the same expression whenever we trod on something that we weren't supposed to know about."

"I think we had better have a drink" Dent then suggested "A stiff one, and there are a couple of others who need to join us as well."

"My office in say, an hour?" The Commander suggested.

"I'll raid the Director General's personal drinks cabinet and bring a bottle or two of his finest Whisky" Dent confirmed "You are going to need it."

"Sir" came a call from a Security Officer standing guard immediately outside the tent "The Mayor wants to see you straight away."

"Oh God..." The Commander responded, rolling his eyes upwards with disgust.

"No, the Mayor" Tracy quickly retorted with a wry smile.

"No, he just thinks he's God" The Commander added "All right Lieutenant, where is he?" he then asked.

"Just outside Sir" the officer confirmed "He has just been speaking to the press" he then informed him.

"Oh, now there is a surprise" Tracy sarcastically remarked as they headed outside where they could see the Mayor, accompanied by a couple of his aides wandering around inside the security cordon getting in everyone's way.

"You know him" The Commander remarked aside as they approached "He'd turn up to the opening of an envelope if it meant it got his mug in the press."

"Who is a mug Administrator General?" the Mayor called, clearly angry and indignant.

"We were just discussing tea or coffee and whether it should be a cup or a mug Mr Mayor" The Commander confirmed with a smile.

Tracy and Dent were stood a short distance away watching the exchange between the two men with interest.

"Ah, sarcasm" Dent remarked "The ability to insult idiots without them realising."

"So, what can I do for you Mr Mayor?" The Commander then asked "only it will have to be quick though, as you can see we are a trifle busy at the moment."

"I'll say" the Mayor responded "In the last two hours I have fielded no less than a dozen calls from various well respected members of the community voicing serious complaints about your officers and representatives of the Government."

"Anything specific?" The Commander inquired "We do have an official complaints and appeals procedure, I could probably find you a leaflet about it if you would like?"

"Administrator General!" the Mayor's patience was being sorely tested as evidenced by his anger laden response "I am not talking about appealing against a parking ticket..."

"Shame about that because your car is being looked over by a traffic warden right now" The Commander motioned towards the official looking car parked just outside the cordon to which forced the Mayor to quickly dispatch one of his aides to deal with it.

"In the last four or five hours, officers of your so called Service have entered private premises without official warrants, harassed legitimate businessmen and members of religious organisations, kidnapped a man's wife and held her against her will and brought down a fire fight outside a hospital for Christ's sake!" the Mayor complained.

"By 'Religious Organisation' I presume you mean that bunch of violent drug fuelled narcotic peddling fruit loops led by that nutcase Orbison?" The Commander asked.

"Michael Orbison is a legitimate businessman, a significant contributor to the economy of my City and a man of faith, peace and strongly held beliefs" the Mayor confirmed "He has a lot of support throughout my City and beyond and you would do well to remember that."

"Take a look around you Mr Mayor" The Commander gestured all around the scene "Earlier this afternoon a man blew himself up right here, probably using an explosive that Orbison himself supplied in a botched attempt to take out protestors against his so called faith, religion, whatever you want to call it."

"Circumstantial and flimsy evidence that would never stand up in court and you know it" the Mayor quickly dismissed The Commander's concerns.

"Unfortunately there isn't enough left of the bomber to identify, he was vaporised" The Commander then informed the Mayor "Indeed you are probably treading on molecules of him right now."

"Eww..." the Mayor responded in disgust, lifting up his shoes and looking at them for a moment.

"Whilst you and your friends may not have a problem with Mr Orbison, I most definitely do" The Commander continued "I don't like his attitude, I don't like the way he treats his wives, note the plural, I don't like the people he employs, inspires or associates with and quite frankly any organisation that manages to bring down a riot and an explosion in the City is well and truly off my Christmas List with a vengeance."

"And what of this poor man's wife that one of your Transport Division plod has kidnapped and is now detaining against her will?" the Mayor demanded to know.

"She is currently undergoing medical treatment for the effects of the various narcotics that your new friend Mr Orbison has been giving her" The Commander informed him "Along with a few other things from what I understand."

"Be aware Administrator General that after today's fiasco I shall be calling for a full public inquiry, the resignation of the Home Secretary and an investigation into the Security Service's roll in this shambles" the Mayor defiantly announced.

"Do what you want" The Commander responded dismissively "For now however perhaps you would vacate the crime scene please as you have no authority to be here and quite frankly you are starting to get up my nose" he then calmly informed him.

"You haven't heard the last of this Administrator General" the Mayor confirmed with a look of determination before sternly swivelling around on his heel, gesturing to his aide and marching off back towards his car.

"Oh look, his car just got clamped" Tracy remarked with a wry smile as The Commander rejoined her and Dent.

"Shame..." The Commander unsympathetically responded "He'll just have to slum it out on the bus now."

"I best be going" Dent then announced "I was sticking around to watch your little clash of the Alpha Males" he remarked with a smile.

"Who won?" Tracy asked.

"I think the jury is still out on that one my love" The Commander confirmed with a worried look.

The streets surrounding the old Walthamstow Dog Racing Stadium were fairly quiet and almost eerily deserted, just a few birds tweeting and the distant sound of aircraft passing high overhead.

That calm and quiet atmosphere was to be soon interrupted however with the approach of a number of vehicles converging from opposite directions at high speed that then screeched to a halt whereupon Jack and Bob along with a couple of his Specialist Firearms Officers emerged from one vehicle whilst a number of plain clothes officers emerged from the other before converging together.

"Bob, you know Commander Melissa Jenkins from the Drugs Squad?" Jack did the introductions.

"A pleasure as always" Bob confirmed.

"Good to see you Bob, it's been a while" Jenkins confirmed "So" she then turned to Jack "Junior version of The Commander, what's the job?" she then asked.

"We are going to kick some doors in and hopefully find a drugs factory" Jack confirmed "I have good information from a reliable source that those doors over there" he indicated towards some large green wooden doors nearby "are the front door of a factory and distribution warehouse for the drug known as K200."

"That green stuff that got banned yesterday?" Jenkins asked.

"The same" Jack confirmed.

"Lima Delta One Zero One, Guv, are you there?" came a call over Jenkins radio at that moment.

"Yeah, go ahead Frank" Jenkins responded.

"Message just came through from the Ministry of Justice" Frank, her deputy who was back at the Drugs Squad offices in Cardinal Place announced "Apparently the ban on that green shit K200 or whatever they call it has just been suspended by the High Court."

"This just isn't my day..." Jack remarked to himself.

"Confirm that please" Jenkins sought clarification.

"K200 isn't illegal anymore" Frank confirmed "There has been an absolute riot, literally outside the Royal Courts of Justice, reports of petrol bombs, mass punch ups, even rumours of a suicide bomber."

"This town is going to hell in a handcart lately" Bob remarked.

"Okay, all received, thanks Frank" Jenkins confirmed "Lima Delta One Zero One out."

"Does that make your warrant invalid?" Bob then asked Jack.

"No" Jack confirmed "It has been worded very carefully, just says suspicion of illegal activity which covers everything from tax evasion to cattle rustling."

"Nice" Jenkins responded.

"So as far as I am concerned we didn't hear that" Jack then declared "We go in, we go in hard, arrest everyone we find and lock the place down. Then we can see what we have got."

"All right then" Bob agreed.

"After you" Jenkins added as she gestured to her people to follow her as they headed towards the door.

"Bob, you get the honour of knocking on the door" Jack then declared as he drew his revolver from it's holster to a look of surprise from Jenkins "Family heirloom" he then explained.

"Oh..." Jenkins responded before nodding to Bob that she and her team were ready.

"Knock, knock..." Bob remarked before unceremoniously kicking in the door whereupon they all rushed inside.

"ARMED SECURITY SERVICE OFFICERS!" Jack called loudly as they entered and immediately came across a drug factory with numerous people in white coats busy working with complicated scientific equipment who were taken aback by the sudden intrusion.

"Everybody remain calm" Jack then called as some of the women present were screaming at the sight of guns being pointed directly at them "Put your hands up where we can see them and take two steps back" he then instructed.

Bob and his team immediately proceeded to take the occupants and search them for weapons before restraining them in cuffs whereupon they were led away.

It took a few minutes before everyone who was in the building had been taken away but soon Jack and Jenkins along with her Drugs Squad team were alone.

"No resistance whatsoever" Jack commented "I am surprised."

"Generally you tend to find that the workers in these places are illegal immigrants smuggled into the country from the far east or north Africa purely to provide a low pay workforce for illegal narcotics manufacturing operations such as this" Jenkins explained "They are just terrified people looking for a new start in life who wind up in debt to people smugglers and those unscrupulous enough to take advantage of them."

"So what have we got?" Jack then asked as he started to walk through the factory area, the desks in the room covered in sophisticated scientific laboratory equipment and bags of green powder stacked in boxes nearby.

"This looks like quite a sophisticated manufacturing operation" Jenkins confirmed "There is some expensive equipment here, presumably purchased specifically for the manufacturer of this K200 stuff" she remarked as she picked up one of the clear plastic bags of green powder and held it up to the light, shaking it gently.

"Guvnor!" came the shout from one of the Drugs Squad officers who was undertaking a detailed initial search of the premises "Something here you two should see" he called.

"Okay Gary, what have you got?" Jenkins asked as she and Jack approached whereupon Gary showed them into a side room.

"Oh, very nice" Jack remarked as they entered a very sophisticated looking room, all set up as some sort of video editing suite.

"Looks like whoever's business empire owns this place has a few other sidelines by the looks of it" Jenkins remarked.

"VHS cassettes?" Jack looked at the shelves along the back wall, packed with video tapes "Who the hell uses these anymore?" he asked.

"Looks like someone is converting an old video archive into digital format for online streaming sales" Jenkins explained.

"Please tell it is just a pirate video operation of everyday family classics" Jack remarked although he already knew that was not going to be the case.

"No" Jenkins confirmed as she opened one of the videotape boxes and examined the label inside "It's hard core pornography I am afraid" she then showed Jack the tape whereupon he expressed a look of dismay.

"Whatever happened to leaving things to the imagination?" Jack remarked.

"I think that went out of fashion back when Betamax was still around" Gary remarked.

"Beta... what?" Jack responded.

"Either way" Jenkins concluded "It looks like your friend Mr Orbison has a few other business interests besides dubious narcotics."

"Dirty videos and mucky mags, charming" Jack responded "Should have seen it coming really after the suspected knocking shop I stumbled into the other day."

"If I were you I would give the Vice Squad a call" Jenkins suggested "This sort of filth is their speciality."

Orbison was sat at his desk, penning his thoughts in a leather-bound notebook, the old style fountain pen making scratching noises on the paper as he wrote vigorously.

When there was a knock at the door a few moments later, Orbison let out a slight sigh at the interruption, carefully put his pen down and reached for a sip from a glass of fine red wine before sitting back.

"Come in Brother" he then called.

Reaper entered and bowed reverentially before handing over a dark red file which he had brought in with him.

"My Lord" Reaper then called "Our sources have reported in and these are their findings on Lieutenant Jack Regent, I think you may find it interesting."

Orbison took the file, carefully put his notebook and pen to one side and then placed it centrally on the desk in front of him before opening it to reveal a collection of photographs, copies of official documents and notes contained therein.

"Jack, David, William Regent" Orbison read from the summary details sheet "Was born with the surname Thornton but changed it when he was adopted by no less a mortal than The Commander and his wife."

"His file certainly makes for interesting reading My Lord" Reaper agreed.

"There is no doubt about it, this young man is trouble and we need to deal with that" Orbison then responded, "What we need is some sort of weakness that we can exploit."

"He has a girlfriend" Reaper drew Orbison's attention to a second set of records towards the back of the file with a few surveillance photographs of Megan attached.

"Oooh" Orbison responded with enthusiasm "Now she is very pretty, young, just my type" he declared.

"She is an intern at a law firm in Chancery Lane, that is according to our reliable sources My Lord" Reaper confirmed "I could have her picked up within the hour" he then suggested.

"An excellent idea" Orbison agreed "I want this young lady brought to me straight away please Brother."

"By your command My Lord" Reaper confirmed with a reverential bow before leaving the room.

"Oh yes" Orbison then remarked to himself as he lusciously looked over the photographs of Megan "I most definitely want to meet you my dear."

As Jack exited the lift on the top floor of New Scotland Yard it became quickly apparent that there was some sort of argument in progress judging from the angry raised voices that could be heard coming from down the corridor.

Walking down the corridor with understandable caution, Jack recognised a couple of the Mayor's aides waiting outside The Commander's office looking a little sheepish at what was could be heard coming from the other side of the door.

"Afternoon fellas" Jack remarked with a small mocking salute as he passed them and entered the outer office where The Commander's Personal Assistant was waiting with a pensive look.

"I take it the boss is in?" Jack asked as the sounds of arguing voices continued from the other side of the inner office door.

"Along with Divisional Commander Caverner, the Mayor, the Attorney General, some guy from the Ministry of Justice and Melissa Jenkins from the drugs squad" the Personal Assistant confirmed.

"Sounds like I had better get in there" Jack then reluctantly declared as he reached for the door handle.

"Good luck!" the P.A. responded.

"...which is nothing more than harassment of an innocent man of faith by a Security Service hell bent on pursuing their own personal vendettas!!" the Mayor was shouting as Jack came in whereupon the entire room turned to look at him.

"Did I miss something?" Jack lightly asked, sensing the tension in the room and hoping to lift it somehow.

"Just the Mayor expressing his opinions on life, the universe and everything" The Commander, sitting behind his desk with Tracy stood alongside admitted.

"Yes, I heard" Jack responded as he walked into the centre of the room "from halfway down the corridor" he then quietly muttered under his breath.

"Well if it isn't pain in the ass number three" the Mayor loudly called.

"Who are numbers one and two?" Jenkins asked the Attorney General who responded by discreetly pointing towards Tracy and The Commander "Oh..." she then nodded in understanding.

"Something I did?" Jack asked with understandable concern.

"Harassing a member of the public, abduction and false imprisonment of his wife" the Mayor continued with unwavering fury "illegal searches, need I go on?"

"And that is before we even begin to discuss jurisdictional conflict, blatant disregard for procedure and generally causing major trouble all around" Bermann added, clearly in full agreement with the Mayor.

"I'm sorry, you are?" Jack asked.

"Jack, allow me to introduce Henry Bermann" The Commander indicated with a certain hint of disdain "He is an official advisor to the Ministry of Justice and the Home Office."

"Mr Bermann" Jack reverentially greeted him to which he merely got a nod in return.

"This is the young man at the centre of this complete and utter cock up I presume?" Bermann then asked.

"Hmm, let me take a wild guess" Jack surmised thoughtfully "This member of the public that you are so concerned about, would that happen to be that drug peddling wacko Orbison by any chance?"

"Before you arrived young man, we were debating the legal arguments relating to a Mr Michael Orbison" the Attorney General explained in a far calmer manner than either the Mayor or Bermann had managed to achieve. They were now both merely pacing up and down, clearly seething much to The Commander's visible annoyance.

"He is a nut job who has millions of brain washed drug fuelled zombie followers and violent minions who deal in assault and murder" Jack sharply responded "There you go, end of legal argument" he confirmed.

"Much as I agree with you Jack" The Commander responded, "unfortunately we seem to have run into some legal bumps in the road."

"It turns out our search of the Walthamstow manufacturing facility was illegal" Jenkins regrettably admitted.

"Ah..." Jack responded.

"Because the raid and search of the location was carried out just after the judgement that overturned the ban on the manufacture, distribution and sale of this K200 narcotic was made" the Attorney General interpreted the implications "it renders the search illegal and any evidence found therein inadmissible in court."

"So, Orbison and his fellow nutters get away with it yet again?" Jack then asked.

"Mr Orbison is a legitimate man of faith and one of this country's foremost businessmen with investments in many areas of legitimate trade and commerce" Bermann responded "and as such a valuable asset to this country's economy in the current somewhat perilous financial climate, we are eager to ensure that nothing untoward happens to him, physically or legally."

"Nothing like having a bit of Government sanctioned legal protection is there?" Tracy sarcastically remarked.

"So presumably as far as the K200 manufacturing, distribution, etcetera is concerned we have a legal dead end?" Jack asked.

"Unfortunately, yes" the Attorney General confirmed with obvious regret.

"And the production and suspected distribution of possibly illegal hardcore pornography?" Jack then asked.

"Do what?" The Commander responded in surprise.

"Also found on site was a video editing suite that looks like it was set up for the digitalisation of old VHS based pornographic videos, almost certainly for onward sale by online streaming or some other form of digital media" Jenkins explained.

"Your friend Mr Orbison is into dirty videos and mucky mags" Jack remarked towards the Mayor "and I shall be bringing these findings to the attention of our friends in the Vice Squad very shortly."

"Pornography in itself, whilst distasteful and undesirable, is not in itself illegal" Boorman pointed out.

"That depends on what the subject is which, until the Vice Squad have had a chance to officially examine the material seized, we won't know" Jack explained "but if any of that material turns out to contain anything that even so much as slightly infringes the Obscene Publications Act then he is going to have some awkward questions to answer, I will make sure of it."

"Erm..." the Attorney General raised his hand with a concerned look "Am I right in thinking this pornographic material and associated equipment was discovered during your drugs raid in Walthamstow?" he asked Jack and Jenkins.

"Yes..." Jack cautiously responded as Jenkins lowered her head and held her hand in front of it in realisation.

"Then I am afraid it is also inadmissible as evidence, sorry" the Attorney General confirmed, once again with obvious regret.

"You have got to be joking?" Jack responded with a look of disbelief whilst Bermann looked on with an incredibly smug impression.

"I am afraid he is right" The Commander confirmed "Anything you found on those premises during a search that has been deemed illegal is worthless in a court of law."

"You could have caught him red handed with the loot from the Great Train Robbery and he would still have walked" Tracy added.

"Well I think that settles that then doesn't it?" Bermann declared "Nice try young man, better luck next time."

"So that's it?" Jack then asked.

"Absolutely" the Mayor confirmed "and if either my office or my learned colleague Mr Bermann and his legal team hear of any more harassment of Mr Orbison by yourself or any other representative of the Security Services and associated organisations then I will ensure the Home Office bury you all in so many cease and desist orders you will need a periscope to see above them."

"Good day" Bermann then smugly called as he and the Mayor departed.

"What the hell is going on?" Tracy demanded to know as soon as the door was closed.

"The Mayor is definitely hiding something" the Attorney General remarked "I know he is a creep who would sell his own grandmother for a photo opportunity, but this is something else."

"So, what do I do now?" Jack then asked.

"Keep plugging away" The Commander advised "Orbison strikes me as a very clever individual but he has weaknesses like everyone else and sooner or later he will make a mistake that even his friends in high places cannot protect him from."

"You still have an ace up your sleeve too" Tracy reminded Jack "You have his 'wife' in protective custody."

"Whoa..." the Attorney General exclaimed.

"I think it would be a good idea to think about moving her to somewhere more secure at some point when things quieten down" Tracy then suggested.

"A good idea" Jack agreed.

"If it will help, I can probably fast track the paperwork for any witness protection deals and any other legal niceties you need taking care of" the Attorney General remarked.

"I'd appreciate it, thanks" Jack responded.

"You got it" the Attorney General confirmed "I know that I can't change or break the rules but in this instance I am happy to semi-unofficially allow you to bend them as far as you can because even I can tell from what little I know so far that this Orbison guy is dirty and Bermann is nothing more than a legal bully who needs his wings clipped ASAP."

"Meantime" The Commander suggested as he pushed his chair back and stood up alongside Tracy "I suggest we all take a break and get some lunch, Christopher Dent and Sir Richard are popping by this afternoon to dump another headache on my doorstep I suspect."

"Sounds like a good idea" Jack agreed "but first I have to check on something with Fuller."

Sir Richard was surprised when he emerged from the doorway into Thorney Street to see Dent stood there waiting for him.

"Is there anyone who doesn't know about this supposedly secret door?" Sir Richard wryly asked.

"Err, probably not" Dent admitted "but then again if you will insist on setting up shop in the basement of a building in the street that runs across the back of Thames House, you shouldn't really be all that surprised if we haven't noticed."

"Good point" Sir Richard agreed "I must be getting rusty in my old age" he admitted "So, what can I do for you?" he then asked.

"I heard you were on your way to Scotland Yard so I thought you might appreciate a travelling companion" Dent explained "Plus I need some advice from the Master."

"Ah, here we go..." Sir Richard responded as the two men proceeded to walk down Thorney Street in the direction of Horseferry Road.

"I think I may have cocked up an operation and at some point, I am going to have to tell the DG what has happened" Dent began to explain.

"Uh huh..." Sir Richard remarked with a sense of realisation as they rounded the corner and began to head away from the Thames towards central Westminster.

"I was acting on a tip off that I got from an old friend in German Intelligence" Dent continued "A man by the name of Adebesei..."

"Sebastian St. John Adebesei?" Sir Richard interjected.

"Yeah..." Dent confirmed with some sense of surprise.

"What has that violence loving death worshipping fascist little shit done now?" Sir Richard then asked with obvious concern.

"Come to London, checked himself into the Park Lane Hotel then vanished into thin air right in front of our eyes, hospitalising one of my best field agents in the process" Dent admitted "I take it from your colourful description that you know this guy then?"

"He has come to my attention in the past" Sir Richard admitted "I presume that little fracas at the Park Lane Hotel was your little off the books operation going pear shaped?" he then asked.

"With interest..." Dent confirmed.

"So Adebesei is loose somewhere in this country?" Sir Richard then asked, his concern becoming increasingly more obvious.

"Yes" Dent admitted "and now I have to explain to Tracy and The Commander what that little fracas as you call it in the Park Lane Hotel was all about."

"After which will follow a very uncomfortable conversation with the DG" Sir Richard ominously added "Good luck with that one!"

"Oh" Jack remarked with a sense of surprise as he entered Fuller's office and saw what was on his screens "You've managed to hack Orbison's little TV channel again I see."

"Can't claim all the credit for this one I am afraid" Fuller admitted as the broadcast began "The encryption last time was very difficult to crack, this was so easy that a seven year old in his bedroom with a Sinclair ZX Spectrum could have broken it."

"Which means they want us all to see this" Jack concluded "All right then" he remarked as he took a seat and grabbed his coffee "Let's see what Lord Ego has to say for himself then."

"Today marks the dawn of a new era of co-operation and unity amongst the Brotherhood and our friends" Orbison, dressed in garish ceremonial like robes loudly declared to his cheering audience.

"Oh look, he has found new digs to broadcast his nonsense from, how wonderful" Jack remarked as he saw that whilst the setting for the broadcast was similar to the Citadel location, there were some differences in the overall background indicating that Orbison had indeed successfully moved his operations to a new location seemingly unseen.

"It is with great pleasure today that I gloriously announce our new union with The Mighty Hand with whom we have been working with behind the scenes for some time now to create a new army of chaos" Orbison then continued "committed to our united goals of chaos and worldwide domination."

"Yadda, yadda, yadda..." Jack dismissively commented.

"My Brothers, friends and fellow believers" Orbison gloriously announced "It gives me great pleasure to present to you High Exalted Brother Sebastian, the leader of The Mighty Hand and our new Brother in Arms."

At that point Adebesei appeared on the stage amid much cheering, rapturous applause and music before proceeding to the front where Orbison greeted him with a warm handshake and a hug before they stood before the audience, hand in hand with arms held aloft in triumph.

"Who's this character?" Jack asked.

"Search me, I have no idea" Fuller responded "but I am willing to bet someone does."

"Our friends from MI5 by any chance?" Jack suggested "Only I thought I saw a rather worried looking Christopher Dent pass through the corridor just before I came in."

"I wouldn't be surprised" Fuller responded in agreement.

"Together..." Orbison was then heard to continue as the cheering began to die down "Together, we are the new force in the Universe for chaos and disorder, bringing our combined forces forth to fight the battle against order and justice to establish a new order, our order and so let me also proudly introduce to you something of which I am especially proud, our brave Brothers, the Facilitators along with their opposite numbers in The Hand now join forces as the Soldiers of Ixion!" he proudly announced which was the cue for more loud music, cheering and wild applause

"Now that looks like a bunch of lads who know how to handle themselves" Fuller ominously remarked as they watched the parade of a dozen of the so called 'Soldiers of Ixion' appear, marching on to the stage in military fashion amid more ecstatic cheering and fancy light and smoke effects.

The dozen men were all similar in build and appearance, all dressed in uniforms with various emblems and most worryingly of all, heavily armed with automatic weapons in their hands as well as handguns and fighting knives neatly mounted in belt mounted holsters.

"Take a good look my friends and Brothers" Orbison then proudly declared "Witness the future!"

"He if hasn't already then he has finally flipped" Jack concluded.

"And now that you have gazed upon what the future holds" Orbison then announced "It is time to say goodbye to our extra special viewing guests" he called before stepping up close to the camera so that his face filled the screen "Bye, bye little minions of justice" he then declared whereupon the screen went blank.

"He's changed the encryption back to fully secure" Fuller then confirmed "Now that we have seen what he wants us to see, we are no longer invited to his little party."

"Why do I have a very bad feeling about this?" Jack asked.

"You are not the only one" Fuller agreed.

"I had better go" Jack remarked "My head is spinning from all this."

"I'll wash this character Adebesei if that is his real name through the computer and see if I get a match" Fuller confirmed "If anything comes up, I will give you a call."

"Thanks, I would appreciate it..." Jack responded "I'll see you later" he then called before leaving.

Now alone, Fuller began to run through the footage he had recorded from the broadcast with a sense of foreboding. He could not help but think that what he had just witnessed was something far more worrying than just a religious zealot punching above his weight.

At that point his thoughts were interrupted when there was a polite knock on the door.

"Commander Fuller?" came a polite sounding voice.

"Yes" Fuller confirmed as he swivelled around in his chair away from his computer workstation to face his visitor.

"Lieutenant Commander Eloise Chandler" the young officer introduced herself as she came in and was shown a seat which she gratefully accepted "I am the new acting Commanding Officer Operations over at SO7, Vice Squad."

"Congratulations" Fuller responded "I take it Commander Rogerson finally decided his knees were knackered after all and went off to do something about them?"

"He is going on the operating table for two new knees and a new hip next week" Chandler confirmed "In the meantime I get to sit in his office for a while, drink his coffee and eat his biscuits."

"Nice" Fuller smiled in response "So what brings you to the Yard from that nice air-conditioned office on the South Bank?" he then asked.

"We got your memo yesterday about this guy named err..." Chandler paused as she looked in the file that she had brought with her "Michael Orbison?" she then confirmed.

"He is a person of great interest on a number of fronts" Fuller confirmed, his interest suitably piqued.

"Whilst his name meant nothing to us, I took the liberty of washing the various company names you found on those files through our records and we got a hit" Chandler confirmed "Quite a few hits in fact."

"Sounds promising" Fuller responded with a renewed enthusiasm "What have you got?" he then asked.

"Ever since the Lord of Leytonstone bought it a couple of years ago there was a bit of a vacuum in the organised crime business in the East End" Chandler explained "We knew of a particularly nasty piece of work who ran pretty much every racket you can think of across much of London and the Home Counties but once the Lord of Leytonstone was off the scene he made a grab for what was in effect vacant territory which was when we started to encounter his businesses and enterprises in much greater detail."

"Do go on" Fuller encouraged to which Chandler reached in her file and extracted a few photographs and laid them out on the desk in front of them.

"Is this your guy?" she then asked.

Fuller picked up the photographs and proceeded to study them carefully before turning to his computer and calling up a shot of Orbison which he then put on one of the screens before holding the photos up alongside to compare.

"He is a bit younger in these photos but I am ninety nine percent certain that is the same guy" Fuller confirmed "Where did you get these?"

"These are stills from a video, one of several thousand we have seized in the last few years where again and again this guy turns up in it but up until now we never managed to put a name to him other than his stage name 'Big Johnny Faversham' would you believe" Chandler confirmed.

"And dare I ask what he is doing in this video?" Fuller asked, already sensing that he probably didn't want to know.

"Having sex with a young lady" Chandler confirmed "although I think from the screaming that was on the soundtrack, it is doubtful as to whether she was a willing participant in this production."

"We know from what we have found out about him so far that he is fond of his young ladies but as far as we could tell they were all legal if only by the slimmest of margins" Fuller explained.

"Some of the ones in these videos most definitely were not" Chandler remarked "We haven't been able to identify or trace any of the individuals who appear in this filth despite a three year long investigation."

"So, it would appear that the infamous Lord Chaos is also a nonce" Fuller concluded.

"Along with drug dealing, tobacco smuggling, forgery, pornography both legal and illegal, people trafficking, prostitution and pretty much everything else you can think of" Chandler confirmed "Up until this afternoon all we had were a load of shell company names, a money trail that ended in dead ends and no names other than Lord Chaos' alter ego in a series of pornographic videos and magazines."

"Busy fellow" Fuller remarked "He must be making millions in addition to his Brotherhood earnings and his lucrative money laundering operations."

"We only picked up on some of these activities very recently" Chandler continued "You remember that mansion house in Surrey that burnt down after that weird robbery thing last year?"

"The one containing the crew that were gunned down by their paymasters before they torched the place?" Fuller asked.

"That's the one" Chandler confirmed "Well a couple of days before the job the crew were hired for, your man Orbison provided a minibus full of young girls for the men to 'enjoy' as part of their benefits package along with copious amounts of booze and illegal drugs, also supplied by his various shell companies."

"And now you have a name" Fuller remarked "Life suddenly got interesting I reckon."

"Indeed" Chandler agreed "Quite frankly we would like to nail this guy to a wall by his testicles and use him for target practice. It would clear three quarters of our outstanding historical cases off our books in an instant."

"You may have to take a number and get in line" Fuller advised.

At that point Jack knocked on the door and returned.

"Sorry, I left my tunic behind" Jack apologised, picking up the uniform tunic off the back of the chair that Chandler was now sitting on.

"Jack, welcome back" Fuller announced "Your timing is fortuitous. Let me introduce you to Lieutenant Commander Eloise Chandler, Ops Commander of the Vice Squad."

"Lieutenant Jack Regent, Transport and anything else I manage to drop my size tens into" Jack confirmed with a warm handshake.

"We were just discussing our old friend Orbison" Fuller then went on to explain "It turns out all those shell companies that your dead guy's Private Investigator discovered are linked to all sorts of dodgy stuff that the Vice Squad are interested in."

"You see, you get all the juicy stuff" Jack wryly remarked "All us Transport guys get is broken down buses, dips and cable thieves most of the time."

"I wish it was as much fun as everyone thought" Chandler admitted.

"So, what can you tell me about the business empire of Mr Lord Chaos Orbison or whatever he likes to call himself these days?" Jack then asked.

"If it's bent and it comes under SO7's remit then he has his dirty sticky fingers all over it" Chandler confirmed "A veritable network of fake names, shell companies and dodgy financial arrangements which up until this afternoon we were unable to connect to a physical person or a real name."

"It also turns out that Lord Chaos also had a career as an actor in dirty movies back in his more youthful days" Fuller added "so we can add being an out and out nonce to his list of achievements."

"This guy is going to be on a one way trip to a dark cell if I have anything to say about it" Jack declared "Did you guys get a chance to look at any of the seized VHS tapes we found in Walthamstow earlier by any chance?" he then asked Chandler.

"A couple of my assessment officers are looking through the material now even though it is inadmissible sadly" Chandler confirmed "It seems like you stumbled upon the source for a lot of the unsavoury old material that has been appearing online over the last six months or so, thank you."

"You're welcome" Jack responded "I just wish it was admissible as evidence because as far as I am concerned, the sooner that sack of shit is off the streets and locked up somewhere dark and the key thrown away the better."

On the top floor, Christopher Dent was on his way down the corridor heading towards The Commander's office with Sir Richard following a short distance behind

"Ah, the blue file of doom" he indicated the folder under Dent's arm.

"You think it is a little obvious?" Dent asked.

"Whenever I was bringing bad news to The Yard" Sir Richard "Invariably it was contained in one of those blue folders just like the one you have there" he explained.

"Ah..." Dent responded whereupon their conversation was interrupted by the outer office door opening and The Commander appearing in the doorway with a determined look on his face.

"Right, you two, in here, now" The Commander insisted with a stern look and a waving gesture of the finger.

"It's like being called into the headmaster's office" Sir Richard remarked aside as he and Dent proceeded to follow The Commander through the outer office and on into the main office itself.

"Did that ever happen to you, getting called into the headmaster's office?" Dent asked as they were shown to seats in front of The Commander's desk with Tracy also joining them from the adjacent office at that point.

"More often than I care to remember" Sir Richard admitted "Something for my memoirs if I ever get around to writing them."

"Right Mr Dent" The Commander called "Take it from the top, leave nothing out" he declared as he and Tracy took their seats facing directly opposite their two visitors "We are all ears."

"Okay..." Dent responded as he placed the blue folder on the desk and took a sip of water before he began.

"The Hand" he then began with some hesitation for this was a conversation he most definitely never wanted to have.

"Ah..." Sir Richard responded "I think I am going to need a drink" he then remarked as he stood up and went over to the brandy decanter on the side.

"To understand where we are you have to look back a fair few years to a time when Islamic Extremists were a dominant and well organised force across three continents plus various assorted hangers-on and followers, not to mention numerous dedicated rank amateurs thrown in for good measure" he continued.

"That doesn't sound good" Tracy ominously remarked.

"The Hand were a splinter group that first appeared about six years ago" Dent continued "They were made up of generally disaffected former members of Al Qaeda, Boko Haram, Desch and various other similar groups who felt that the established extremist groups were getting a bit too warm and fuzzy."

"An interesting description" Sir Richard commented as he took a sip of his freshly poured brandy "So I guess these disaffected guys were annoyed that their then leaders hadn't butchered enough people yet?"

"That is basically it in a nutshell" Dent agreed "Under the leadership of a man we know only as Emmanuel, they formed this new group whose ideology is not that dissimilar to Orbison's Ixion Brotherhood group."

"Promote global chaos" Tracy mused.

"Exactly" Dent confirmed "Orbison and his loonies have always hoped that the non-believers would eventually wipe each other out leaving the world for him and his followers to then take over, The Hand want to achieve the same but accelerate the process through deliberate acts of violence."

"So, with Orbison's extensive financial resources and a dedicated army of fanatics following his every word and move..." The Commander remarked.

"Plus his various business interests in everything from publishing to gun running" Sir Richard added.

"...the two groups together present a perfect union of resources, finance, personnel and motive" The Commander then concluded.

"A marriage made in hell" Tracy added.

"That reminds me, I must call my second ex-wife" Sir Richard interjected.

"Are we sure these two groups are working together?" Tracy then asked.

"Up until three weeks ago The Hand had largely kept themselves to themselves, sticking to areas in some of the poorer war ravaged shit holes of central Africa, the Middle East, parts of Syria, Iran, Iraq, etcetera" Dent continued "Then an old friend of mine who also happens to be my opposite number in German Intelligence gave me a tip off the other day that one of The Hand's leading strategists was seen booking a hotel in and a flight to London."

"Ah, let me guess" Tracy remarked "That hotel room wouldn't by any chance happen to be on the top floor of the Park Lane Hotel would it?" she then asked with a sincere stare straight at Dent.

"Err yes..." Dent confirmed with a hint of embarrassment "We followed the target, a tall IC3 male travelling on a false South African passport under the name of Emmanuel Jesus Balista from Gatwick Airport to the hotel when he arrived."

"So the badly injured guy in the corridor on the top floor who was the victim of a so called 'industrial incident' was one of yours then?" The Commander then asked.

"Yes" Dent then admitted "How did you know?"

"The 'accident at work' report that just happened to fall into my hands stank of pure bullshit" The Commander confirmed.

"Well he was at work at the time, so it was sort of true" Dent tried valiantly to defend himself.

"Oh, so dazzling bullshit with just a hint of realism then?" Tracy remarked with a wry smile.

"So, you lost him then?" The Commander then concluded.

"Our man on the floor was on his way towards the lifts to see who Adbesi's contact was when the power to the whole building suddenly went off" Dent explained "The CCTV went down so we didn't see anything and by the time I had got up fourteen flights of stairs, our man was down with two bullet wounds in his back and both Adebese and his contact had vanished."

"Who knew about your operation in the Hotel?" Tracy asked with concern.

"Just me, the Director General, my team and my deputy, Gareth Pointer" Dent confirmed "and before you ask, I can vouch for all of them."

"Simon" The Commander then called over the intercom "Would you join us please?" he then asked.

"How do we know that this Adebese and Orbison's bunch of wackos are joining up?" Tracy then asked.

"Because just before I walked in the door a few minutes ago, Orbison broadcast his latest twitterings on his encoded television channel only this time with a very easy code to break so he wanted us to know about this" Dent went on to explain "On stage, hand in hand raised in the air was Orbison and Adebese along with their new Soldiers of Ixion."

"You sent for me Sir?" Fuller called as he joined them in the briefing room and at The Commander's indication took a vacant seat.

"Simon, where are we on our potential communications breaches?" The Commander then asked.

"I have managed to isolate all the potential breaches in our secure communications channels that we know about to a piece of source code that has been input into the central computer core by person or persons unknown at some point in the last eight to ten months" Fuller explained "Once in place it is very difficult to either detect, neutralise or remove let alone see who has been using it."

"That would be like installing your own secret door into a secured building?" Tracy asked.

"In layman's terms, yes" Fuller agreed.

"What would it take to cause a complete power cut in a major building?" The Commander then asked.

"Has there been one?" Fuller asked with obvious concern.

"Park Lane Hotel yesterday afternoon" Dent confirmed "Someone took out the power to the whole building, killing the CCTV in the process."

"Oh dear..." Fuller responded with obvious concern "I don't know if any of you are aware but the Park Lane Hotel is a Category Two building which means its power, telecommunications and security are all controlled through a special secure server as it is often used for housing various significant international dignitaries.

"Are you saying that in order to facilitate a power cut it would be necessary to access a specific secure system?" Tracy asked.

"Yes" Fuller confirmed "You can't just stroll into the switch room and flick the big red switch; it has to be done through a dedicated secure computer terminal with triple cipher security."

"Of the same sort that presumably also handles our secure communications protocols?" Tracy then suggested.

"The same" Fuller agreed "Someone somewhere has a very experienced cyber geek, a lot of money and some extremely hard to come by equipment stowed away somewhere in order to pull this sort of operation off."

"The CIA?" Sir Richard suggested.

"Not their style" Dent responded with a shake of the head "Besides they have no knowledge that any representative of The Hand is even in the country at the moment so why would they do something like this?"

"And the CCTV system as well" Fuller continued "The nature of a Category Two building or facility means that the system should have kept running on a backup power supply for up to an hour after the mains went off yet if what I understand is correct it went off simultaneously?"

"Yes" Dent confirmed "It didn't come back on until mains power was restored about twenty minutes later by which time Adebese and whoever his contact was had fled, apparently spirited away out of the building sight unseen."

"And the CCTV for the period in question was blank?" Fuller asked.

"Not so much as static" Dent confirmed.

"Somebody knows what they are doing that is for sure" Tracy remarked.

"Can you use this incident to trace where the infiltration may be coming from?" The Commander asked Fuller who scratched his head in thought.

"Possibly" Fuller responded after a moment for consideration "It is going to take a lot of work though and more computing power than I have here."

"You are welcome to use the Section Fourteen facilities if you like" Sir Richard suggested.

"Thanks" Fuller replied "I'll head down there in a bit."

"Let's just hope you find something" Tracy remarked "because at the moment all we have to go on is what Jack has been digging up with his dead body at Star Lane."

"Judging by what I saw earlier with Orbison and Adbesi's 'Soldiers of Ixion' I think you may want to warn Jack to be very, very careful" Dent warned "It looks like we may be seeing a lot more unpleasant incidents from these bozos in the not too distance future."

"Megan, are you free for a spot of afternoon tea?" Jack asked over his mobile telephone as he headed into his office at Holborn and scanned the messages lying on his desk awaiting his attention.

"Yes, I think so" Megan confirmed as she looked out of a third-floor window across the street, the ever-present bustling London traffic passing immediately below "The case I am sitting in on just got adjourned for the day."

"Great" Jack responded "Where are you?" he then asked.

"I've just returned to the Chancery Lane office" Megan responded.

"All right then" Jack confirmed "I'll take the Tube and meet you outside the station in say fifteen minutes?"

"Look forward to it" Megan replied with a broad smile.

"See you soon, love you" Jack then declared.

"Love you too" Megan responded before they both hung up whereupon she grabbed her briefcase and headed down the stairs towards the street level main exit situated on the corner where High Holborn meets Gray's Inn Road, immediately outside the entrance to Chancery Lane Underground Station.

No sooner had Megan stepped out into the street than two men emerged from a dark blue Ford Transit van that was parked by the side of the street close by.

As the two men discreetly proceeded along the pavement towards where Megan was standing, the driver of the van kept pace a short distance behind them.

The first inkling Megan had of something going on was when she felt someone grab her by the arm. Before she could cry out however, the second man had placed a cloth laden with chloroform across her face and knocked her out whereupon she was quickly bundled in through the side door of the van before they too got inside and the vehicle quickly sped away.

"Nice work guys" Reaper called from the driving seat as he drove quickly through the traffic with little if any regards for signals or safety.

"Thank you Brother" one of the men confirmed as he commenced binding Megan's arms and legs using copious amounts of gaffa tape.

The other man meanwhile searched Megan's jacket pockets and then her briefcase whereupon he found her mobile phone.

"Got the mobile Brother" the second man almost triumphantly confirmed, holding it aloft.

"You know what to do" Reaper then instructed which was the cue for the first man to take the mobile and connect a laptop computer to it.

"All right, here we go" the first man declared "Downloading the call logs and contacts now."

"Any sign of a PEI tracker?" Reaper then asked as he continued to drive abruptly with no regards for the traffic regulations or any traffic lights he passed through.

"Yep, right here, just as our friend predicted" the first man confirmed "Disabling it... now."

"All right" Reaper declared "Coming up on the rendezvous point, get ready" he then called.

A few moments later Reaper swerved off the main road into a side street and straight into a non-descript industrial storage unit where two more of the Ixion Brotherhood Facilitators quickly closed the doors behind them.

Waiting inside the otherwise empty warehouse was a replacement vehicle, another Ford Transit van but this time a white liveried example bearing the name of a convincing looking but dummy courier company.

With the assistance of the two men already on site, they quickly transferred Megan across to the back of the fresh vehicle before one of the Facilitators produced a case that he handed to Reaper.

"Thank you Brother" Reaper confirmed before taking the case to the first vehicle and placing it beneath the front passenger seat whereupon he then joined his associates in the courier van and they quickly departed.

A couple of miles away across the city in an office on the third floor of Thames House, the headquarters of MI5, an alarm began to sound.

The Duty Supervisor looked up from his computer terminal and proceeded over to the nearby desk where an Analyst was calling up the source of the alarm on her screen.

"What have we got?" the Supervisor asked.

"Looks like we may have a problem with a Category Two PEI Sir" the Analyst confirmed.

The Supervisor duly looked at the details now being displayed on the screen before reaching for the telephone on the desk and pressing a single button for a direct connection.

"Christopher Dent please" the Supervisor formally requested whereupon there was a pause as Dent, two floors above in his office answered the call as it was put through.

"Dent" he duly answered.

"This is Travers" the Supervisor confirmed "We just had a disconnection alert flash up on a Category Two PEI Sir" he duly reported.

"Which one?" Dent asked, now giving the call his undivided attention.

"Code Alpha Echo Three Zero One" the Supervisor confirmed "A Miss Megan Thorpe."

"Oh shit..." Dent responded as he quickly scrambled for the other telephone on his desk and speed dialled a number.

About a mile away on the top floor of New Scotland Yard, The Commander was about to get up from his desk in search of a much-needed cup of tea when the telephone on the desk began to ring.

"Blast!" The Commander responded, confining all thoughts of a cup of tea to history as he sat back down and picked up the handset.

"Whitehall one two one two" The Commander jovially answered, citing the old historic telephone number for Scotland Yard.

"Commander, it's Dent" came the urgent call "Sorry to disturb you Sir but we just had an alert on one of our Category Two PEI's."

"Category Two what?" The Commander responded with a look of confusion.

"Person of Extreme Importance" Dent explained "A category two PEI being the relation or close friend of a highly placed or important member of the Security Services."

"All right then, who is in trouble?" The Commander asked as he gestured towards Tracy who entered the office at that point.

"It's Jack's girl, Megan" Dent confirmed "The tracker on her mobile went dead about three minutes ago."

"Could her phone just be broken?" The Commander asked.

"Not likely" Dent explained "It looks like it was disabled by someone who knew what they were doing."

"All right, we are on it" The Commander confirmed as he stood up whereupon Tracy instinctively passed him his uniform tunic and gun holster "Let me know straight away if anything else comes up."

"Will do" Dent confirmed before hanging up.

"What's occurring love?" Tracy asked as together they rushed out of the office.

"It looks like Megan is in trouble" The Commander confirmed "Apparently her PEY..."

"PEI" Tracy corrected.

"Well I am glad someone knows what it is" The Commander continued "It's been disabled by someone who knows what they are doing so the odds are she is in trouble."

"Jack" Tracy called into her mobile phone "Where are you?" she asked.

"Just coming out of Chancery Lane tube" Jack confirmed as he skipped up the steps from the ticket hall located beneath the street "I'm meeting up with Megan for tea."

"Wait there" Tracy then called as she and The Commander headed down the back staircase "We are on the way to you."

"What's going on?" Jack then asked with a clear sense of concern.

"Can you see Megan anywhere?" Tracy asked as the lift slowed for the basement level car park.

"Err..." Jack looked all around the busy street for her but to no avail "No, I can't see her anywhere" he then confirmed, "There does seem to be something going on though" he remarked as he observed some sort of confusion occurring over on the opposite side of the road.

"No sign apparently" Tracy confirmed to The Commander as the lift doors opened and Terry pulled up in front of them in the official car.

"Security Service!" Jack called as he approached the scene, brandishing his warrant card "What's happened?" he then asked.

"Some guys grabbed a girl about five minutes ago and bundled her into the back of a van before driving off at speed" one member of the public confirmed.

"Late teens, blonde hair, green eyes?" Jack asked with increasing concern.

"Yes, I think so" the member of the public confirmed "I think she works at the law firm just over there."

"That's her" Jack grimly confirmed.

"She's been lifted all right by the sounds of it" Tracy confirmed "All right Jack, stay there, we are coming to you" she then called.

"Chancery Lane, step on it" The Commander called to Terry who duly fired up the lights and sirens before accelerating away up the access ramp and out into the street.

In the street outside Chancery Lane Underground Station, Jack was continuing to look around whilst other Security Service officers arrived on the scene.

"Lieutenant Regent!" came a call across the street from a Metropolitan Division officer "I've got something!"

"Give me good news" Jack responded as he came over to the officer who was with another member of the public who had witnessed something significant.

"I got the number of the van they used" the eyewitness confirmed, handing over an old shop receipt on the back of which the registration of the vehicle had been scrawled in a hurry "It was a dark blue panel van, Transit I think."

"Thanks" Jack responded before reaching for his radio "Lima Tango Nine Nine Three to Control, ultraviolet priority message. Immediate all-points bulletin for a dark blue Ford Transit van, registration Lima Delta Five Nine Echo Oscar Foxtrot."

"Control to all units" came the call over every Security Service radio in Greater London "Attention called to a dark blue Ford Transit panel van, registration number Lima Delta Five Nine Echo Oscar Foxtrot, last seen speeding away eastbound from Chancery Lane, possible kidnapping, suspects in the vehicle believed to be armed and dangerous."

"I want to talk to the Home Secretary" The Commander called over the phone as their car sped through the streets of central London whilst alongside him, Tracy continued to monitor the radio "What do you mean he is unavailable?!?" he then responded "Fine, I'll just lock down the city without his permission then" he retorted before hanging up and casually chucking the mobile phone over his shoulder.

"Lima Alpha One to Control" Tracy called into her radio "Lock everything down, nothing leaves or enters the city without a thorough search."

"What's going on?" Dent asked as he rushed into the MI5 Situation Room where there was even more bustling activity than usual.

"Just been confirmed that a group of men snatched Jack Regent's girl Megan Thorpe off the street near Chancery Lane Underground Station about five minutes ago" Travers replied "Lieutenant Regent is on site with The Commander and Ms Caverner due to arrive any minute."

"Any details of the vehicle involved?" Dent asked.

"Dark blue Transit" Travers confirmed "I've got the registration number washing through the computer now to see if we can track where it went."

"Good" Dent responded "I consider young Jack to part of the family so I want us to help any way we can."

The Commander's car was let through the cordon that was being quickly thrown up and screeched to a halt whereupon he and Tracy swiftly emerged and joined Jack on the pavement.

"Any further news?" Tracy asked.

"Nothing bar a few eyewitnesses who confirm what happened" Jack responded "Someone grabbed my girl and when I find them..."

"All right son, all right" The Commander calmed him down "Let's keep a cool head right now shall we?" he suggested "I've got the City locked down, they won't be going anywhere in a hurry if I have anything to say about it."

"They would have thought of that I am sure" Jack responded "These guys are too clever."

"Sir!" Kinderley called from the car "Call for you from Mr Dent, urgent!"

"Thanks Terry" The Commander responded as he came over and took the handset "Chris, give me good news."

"Our search of the traffic cameras has come up trumps" Dent confirmed "That van looks like it may have turned into a trading estate about four miles from your current location" he explained.

"Right, thanks" The Commander replied "Jack!" he then shouted over "Come on, we've got a lead."

"Don't worry" Tracy reassured Jack "I'll take charge of this circus, you get going."

"Thanks" Jack responded before rushing over to the car and quickly getting in the front passenger seat with The Commander relegated to the back.

"All right Terry" The Commander duly called "The boys at Five say we need to head east to a set of industrial units about four miles from here."

"They have already uploaded the co-ordinates to the sat-nav Sir" Terry confirmed as he quickly drove off, the tape cordon being swiftly held back to allow the car to pass without delay.

As they made their way quickly through the streets of London, the traffic swerved out of the way in response to the lights and sirens,

By the time they arrived on the scene, a Security Service van with several patrol officers was already there and had begun to seal off the area.

"All right guys, what have we got?" The Commander asked as he and Jack got out of the car.

"We've only just got here and sealed the area off Sir" Lieutenant Easley confirmed "but it looks like the van you are seeking has been abandoned and is inside the third industrial unit on the left."

"Right, thanks" The Commander responded before turning to Jack "It's your call son" he then declared.

"Let's go and check it out" Jack dutifully confirmed "Easley, come with us."

"Yes Sir" Easley responded before following Jack and The Commander down the narrow back street towards the industrial unit.

As they approached the large roller shutter door, all three of them drew their guns before Jack reached towards the button alongside it.

"Everybody ready?" Jack then asked, his finger poised.

"Good to go mate" Easley confirmed whilst The Commander merely nodded in response.

Cautiously Jack pressed the button and the roller shutter door began to open, revealing the van parked inside what was otherwise an empty industrial warehouse bar a few abandoned broken and empty wooden crates and associated discarded packaging materials.

"Looks clear" Jack called as they all surveyed the visible parts of the interior "Let's go" he then led the way, all three men exercising caution as they made their way across the floor to where the van was parked whereupon with everyone's agreement, The Commander reached for the door handle and with Easley's help, opened the doors wide.

"Nobody's home" The Commander concluded as they all saw that the rear of the van was empty before clambering inside.

"What's this?" Jack then rubbed his hands where he had picked up something off the exterior of the vehicle before smelling it.

Easley came over and looked at the dusty substance on Jack's fingers and also took a sample off the exterior of the bodywork for himself.

"Saw dust?" he then suggested.

"I think you could be right" Jack agreed.

Inside the rear of the van, The Commander had found nothing except for a garment lying on the far side that he then retrieved, finding a mobile phone lying underneath it on the floor.

"Megan's?" The Commander asked to which Jack merely nodded in confirmation as he looked through the jacket pockets but found nothing of significance.

"Eagle One from Control" The Commander's radio then rang out, echoing all around inside the building "Just checked that van registration and it shows up as a straight banana I am afraid Sir".

"Why am I not surprised?" Jack remarked with more than a hint of sarcasm as he climbed back out of the van "The year registration code is too new for this version of Transit."

"Control" The Commander had another thought "Can you see whereabouts this van entered the City through the Congestion Charge cameras by any chance?" he then asked.

"Walthamstow" came the response a few moments later.

"Hang about" Jack called as he took out his Swiss Army knife and, having extracted the main blade, gently worked away at the rear registration number plate which then came away in his hand to reveal a different identity beneath.

"Well, would you look at that" The Commander remarked "Okay then Control, got a new number for you. Lima Foxtrot One Five Echo Oscar Delta" he then called.

"Bingo!" came the response "Dark blue Ford Transit van, reported stolen from a dealership just outside of Walthamstow about six months ago, no reports of any sightings since."

"So where the hell has it been for the last six months?" Jack then asked.

"I've got an idea about that" The Commander suggested as he reached for his mobile phone and speed dialled a number which was almost instantaneously answered "Life Desk please" he then requested.

"Who are you calling?" Jack asked, understandably curious.

"My brother" The Commander explained "Unfortunately he is out on assignment attached to MI6 at the moment, so I have to contact him through the Life Desk."

Across the other side of the world James Garforth was relaxing in the early morning sun on a sun lounger beside the swimming pool at the best five-star hotel in Sydney, Australia when the mobile began to ring.

"Never a moments peace" Garforth remarked to himself as he looked at the phone and saw the number that was calling him before turning to the young woman lying face down on the adjacent sun lounger beside him.

"Sorry my dear, it's the office, I'll have to take this" he apologised to the young woman who nodded in understanding before casually getting up and proceeding to dive into the pool for a swim.

"Garforth" he then answered.

"Jim, it's your little brother" The Commander called "Sorry to disturb you when you are working" he then apologised.

"That's all right" Garforth responded as he watched the young girl stepping out of the pool over on the other side before diving back in again "I'm just relaxing as I keep an eye on my chief suspect's girlfriend, she's been very co-operative you know."

"Yeah, I think I will skip the lurid details thanks" The Commander responded as he rolled his eyes upwards, "I was wondering if you could point me in the right direction on a stolen van I have standing in front of me."

"What sort?" Garforth asked as he refilled his glass with a fresh serving of complimentary hotel champagne.

"2015 model Ford Transit van, fairly standard looking" The Commander confirmed "It's been missing for about six months with no sightings but does seem to have indications it may have been in the Walthamstow area, probably stored out of sight I would wager."

"Ah, Walthamstow" Garforth responded "I know it well. Guy you want to talk to is one Mickey Spears, Tricky Mickey to his friends, not that he has many mind" he confirmed "If it's a nicked Ford Transit in north east London, there is a ninety nine percent chance that his sticky mitts have been on it at some point. He is the go-to guy if you want a van for a job with no questions asked."

"Sounds like the sort of guy Orbison or his minions would go to" The Commander agreed "And where do I find this gentleman?" he then asked.

"Try his boozier" Garforth suggested "It's in Hounslow, our dad used to drink in there from time to time."

"I know the place" The Commander confirmed.

"What state is the van in by the way?" Garforth then asked as a thought occurred to him.

"It's intact, well minus the fake rear number plate that Jack just wrenched off that is" The Commander confirmed.

"Oh, that's a bit odd" Garforth then commented "Usually when Tricky Mickey sells a van for a job, one of his terms and conditions are that it is destroyed when the job is done, ensures that nothing linking to him is found by you guys."

"Maybe Orbison's muppets were in a hurry and forgot" The Commander remarked.

"Be careful though, just in case" Garforth warned.

"As always" The Commander confirmed "Thanks, I'll let you get back to work."

"No problem little brother" Garforth confirmed as the girl came back over to him and he smiled at her as he watched her barely bikini clad breasts jiggling as she approached "Just watch out for booby traps" he then cheekily advised.

Whilst the Commander was concluding his phone call, Jack was looking in the front of the vehicle when he noticed something out of place.

"I've got some sort of briefcase in here" he then called back whereupon The Commander came over.

"Where?" The Commander asked.

"Under the front passenger seat, looks like it's wedged in there" Jack confirmed as he shone a torch onto the item in question.

At that moment they both jumped in shock when the telephone fitted to the vehicle began to ring with a distinctive electronic chirping sound.

"Shall I?" Jack asked as they both exchanged a nervous look.

"It's your case and your girl" The Commander responded.

"Okay" Jack agreed as he picked up the handset and answered the call.

"Now, who is that I wonder?" called the familiar voice of Orbison over the phone "Superman or the Boy Wonder?"

"Lieutenant Jack Regent" he confirmed "I believe you have something that belongs to me" he then stated.

"Isn't that funny, I was going to say exactly the same thing to you" Orbison responded "I'll tell you what, one gentleman to another, would a deal be out of the question?"

"I'll make a deal with you" Jack tersely replied "You so much as harm a hair on Megan's head and I'll make sure the rest of your life is spent in a cell screaming in excruciating and endless pain. How does that sound?"

"Ouch..." The Commander remarked "Err perhaps I had better talk to him" he then suggested.

"All right" Jack reluctantly handed over the telephone handset and stood back.

"Mr Orbison?" The Commander called in a very formal and business-like manner "Sir Edward Regent, National Security and Police Service Administrator General" he confirmed.

"Good afternoon Administrator General" Orbison responded in an equally respectful tone, standing up at that point as well "This is an honour."

"I will come straight to the point if I may" The Commander then continued "I have very good reason to believe you or someone associated with you and your organisation has kidnapped a young woman off the street and is now holding her against her will."

"Nonsense in the extreme my dear Administrator General" Orbison casually replied "The young lady you are inquiring about is a guest of ours, there is no malice or harm intended or inferred as the large team of lawyers I have on speed dial will be more than happy to confirm for you if you so wish."

"I want confirmation she is alive and well please" The Commander then formally requested "Then maybe we can discuss how we will proceed."

"Hmm" Orbison considered his position before motioning towards Reaper who in response nodded in reverential understanding before leaving the office "One gentleman to another, I think I can agree to that."

"How very generous of you" The Commander responded with more than a hint of sarcasm.

"I am a very generous man Administrator General" Orbison responded "Have you not read my extensive writings? I'd happily let you have a copy at a discount, I always like to ensure those who serve our country so bravely are justly rewarded."

"Thanks, but I have always been more of a Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy kind of man myself" The Commander confirmed.

"Ah, come in my dear" Orbison then called as Megan was shown into the office by Reaper "Someone here wants to talk to you."

"Get your filthy paws off me" Megan called as she snatched her arm away from Reaper's hand.

"Come here my child" Orbison beckoned her over.

"I am not your child you sick son of a bitch!" Megan angrily responded.

"No need for name calling" Orbison replied as he handed over the telephone "It's for you..."

"Hello?" Megan answered, understandably confused.

"Megan?" The Commander called "It's Administrator General Regent" he confirmed "Are you all right?" he then asked.

"At the moment yes" Megan confirmed "Is Jack there?" she then asked.

"I'm here love" Jack then called as The Commander put the call on the speaker "Have they harmed you in any way?" he asked with clear concern.

"No, I'm okay" Megan replied, much to Jack's relief "But if any of these bozos so much as think about touching me again I am going to have to start some breaking bones around here" she looked around the room with a determined expression.

"Hold tight" Jack then instructed "We'll get you out of there."

"The deal I propose is quite simple" Orbison then called having taken the telephone back from Megan "You get the nice lady back as soon as you release my wife back to me."

"I would like to make a counter proposal" The Commander responded, "You get your wife back in exchange for Megan, but I want you personally to be there at the exchange, no goons."

"That would imply that we have trust Administrator General" Orbison remarked "I am sure that I can trust you, but do I believe you enough to reciprocate?" he then asked.

"That is for you to decide" The Commander confirmed "You have my word, do I have yours?"

"You know what?" Orbison remarked as he looked at Megan and also at a man who entered the room at that moment and stood behind her "I'll let you keep my wife, I have new friends now and I would dearly like to introduce you to what they can do" he then picked up a mobile phone that the man passed to him and proceeded to dial a number on it.

"What the hell is he talking about?" Jack asked but at that moment they both became aware of a beeping noise from within the case lodged under the seat.

"Oh, by the way, you might want to start running" Orbison then suggested before with a maniacal laugh he hung up.

Moments later Jack, Eislely and The Commander came running out of the building.

"MOVE IT!" The Commander called which saw all the other officers on the scene quickly respond by running away from the building.

"What the hell is going on?" Eislely asked as they all ducked for cover behind one of the Security Service patrol cars parked outside.

At that moment the question was answered when the briefcase detonated and in a bright blinding green flash the van was enveloped in a huge explosion that sent burning debris out in all directions.

"Christ!" Jack remarked as the initial echoes of the explosion died away to be replaced by the crashing of debris hitting the ground all around and the roar of flames from what little remained of the van and its immediate surroundings.

"This Orbison guy is starting to really piss me off!" The Commander agreed as they stood up again and surveyed the burning wreckage.

"I still got this though" Jack held up the removed fake number plate that he was still holding in his hand.

"Right" The Commander then determinedly declared "I think it is time we went down the pub and had a chat to our local stolen van dealer."

"I want to get Jenna Lotte moved to a more secure location ASAP" Jack responded as they proceeded back to the car which Kinderley was busy sweeping off dust and debris that had been deposited on it by the explosion and subsequent fire.

"Good idea" The Commander agreed "I'll get your mother to set it up, I think we may need to play a bit of proverbial chess though on that one as no matter what we think of Orbison, he is very intelligent and well organised."

"Where to Sir?" Kinderley asked as he got back in the driver's seat as Jack and The Commander got in the back.

"Walthamstow" The Commander confirmed "I feel the need for a pie and a pint."

There was a lot of interest from passers-by when the Security Service vehicles arrived outside the main entrance of Redhill Hospital, taking up position with a patrol car both in front of and behind an ambulance and backed up by four motorcycles.

Inside the reception area Tracy had just received the confirmation that the convoy was ready to go and immediately proceeded down the adjacent corridor to a single bed ward which was being guarded by two heavily armed Security Service officers.

They acknowledged her as she entered the room where she found Jenna Lotte being prepared by a dedicated medical team to be moved.

"Ready?" Tracy asked with some apprehension as she looked directly at Jenna, now a lot better having been brought out of the drug induced psychosis and able to communicate clearly.

"I erm think so Miss" Jenna confirmed, all be it with some understandable doubt, "Where are we going?" she then asked.

"Somewhere safe" Tracy reassured her as the medical staff finished up.

"As long as it is well away from my so-called husband and his army of bastards it will do me" Jenna confirmed as with a little help she got to her feet and one of the medical staff helped her put on a coat.

"Yes, your husband is a very bad man" Tracy confirmed.

"You don't know the half of it Miss" Jenna confirmed.

"You will have to tell me about it" Tracy urged as they headed towards the door.

"I might very well do that" Jenna readily agreed.

Discretion was most definitely not on the agenda when Jack and The Commander came in through the main entrance of the Black Horse pub in Hounslow and surveyed the busy scene in the public bar before them.

"Oh..." Jack remarked with a sense of sarcastic disappointment "I was expecting the music to stop and everyone to look around at the two strangers who had just rode into town."

"It's all right, I've been here before" The Commander sort of explained "Come on" he then gestured towards the bar whereupon Jack followed him over.

"Good afternoon Commander, it's been a long time since you were last in here" the friendly Landlord called from behind the bar as he replaced the clean pint glass he had been polishing back in the rack above his head "What can I get you gentlemen?"

"Two things" The Commander asked "Firstly, my young friend here is looking for one of your regulars, a man called Tricky Mickey Spears" he confirmed.

"That's him over there in the booth by the side window" the Landlord indicated a man sitting alone with a partially drunk pint glass of beer and a sandwich, studying the Racing Post newspaper intently.

"Do you want me to...?" The Commander began to ask.

"No, it's okay" Jack confidently confirmed "I got this" he declared before leaving the bar.

"Tell me, does your wife still make those fantastic meat and potato pies with the flaky pastry soaked with gravy?" The Commander then enquired.

"That she does" the Landlord confirmed with a sense of pride "Give me a couple of minutes and I will fetch you a couple."

Over on the other side of the public saloon, Spears was still studying the newspaper when he became aware of the shadow of someone standing in front of him.

“Do you mind?” he calmly but firmly asked before looking up and being surprised by the sight of the young Security Service officer standing there in front of him.

“No, I don’t, not at all” Jack responded with a smirk “Just wanted to ask you a couple of questions, that’s all.”

“I don’t know anything, I never saw anything, I never heard anything” Spears confirmed “I think you will find that covers all the possibilities, now if you will excuse me?” he then returned to his newspaper.

“Any luck?” The Commander asked as he arrived and stood just behind Jack.

“Not yet” Jack confirmed.

“What the...?!?” Spears then exclaimed as his paper was forced from his hand as a yellow plastic vehicle number plate crashed on it where Jack had tossed it onto the table,

“Know anything about this?” he indicated the plate.

“It’s a number plate” Spears angrily responded, “You find them on vehicles in case you were not aware.”

“This one came from a Ford Transit van that according to reliable sources almost certainly was sold or rented out by you” Jack explained.

“What the hell is going on here?” Spears demanded to know as Jack pulled out the chair opposite and sat down facing him directly.

"Let me tell you what is going on Mr Spears" he duly announced "My well informed sources tell me that you fenced a stolen Ford Transit van that was used by a bunch of lads who kidnapped my girl a couple of hours ago."

"I am a legitimate businessman trying to enjoy a relaxing drink so if you don't mind little boy, BUZZ OFF!" Jenkins coolly replied.

"Wrong answer..." The Commander discreetly remarked.

"Who are you? His dad?" Spears dismissively asked.

"Actually, as a matter of fact, yes I am" The Commander confirmed with an admirable smile.

“Does your mother know you are out playing coppers little boy?” Spears then dismissively asked.

“Yes, she does.” Jack confirmed “Now are you going to co-operate or am I going to have to get extremely unpleasant?”

“Shove it where the sun doesn’t shine” Spears confidentially retorted.

“I’d drink up quick if I were you” The Commander sarcastically suggested.

“Cheers!” Spears sarcastically held his glass up before drinking the remaining contents in a single go and then slamming the glass back down on the table.

“Okay, enough of the subtle approach” Jack then declared as he stood up and then grabbed Spears roughly by the scruff of the neck and hauled him to his feet.

“I want to speak to a senior officer about you!” Spears protested.

“Today is your lucky day for here I am” The Commander wryly declared

“Come on” Jack called as he unceremoniously bundled Spears towards the back door and then threw him outside where he tumbled to the ground.

“You can’t do this, I have rights!” Spears protested once again as he sat up.

“Do you need a hand there son?” The Commander asked as he stepped through the door after them.

“It’s all right, I got this” Jack determinedly confirmed.

“Okay...” The Commander casually responded.

“Right then” Jack then continued his somewhat unorthodox interrogation “Simple game, two players” he explained “You tell me who you sold that van to and you get to leave here with all your vital organs and most of your bones in the same condition they were in when you arrived here.”

“I’d tell him what he wants to know if I were you” The Commander wisely suggested “Otherwise I am going to have to step in and believe me, you don’t want that” he added with a hint of menace.

“All right, all right, all right...” Spears surrendered to the inevitable “I got asked by a group of lads for a van for a job this morning” he explained “Transit, nothing special, it just had to be a quick one.”

“The fake plates?” Jack then asked.

“I made them up to go on the van before they collected it” Spears confirmed “They paid in cash, took the keys and that was the last I saw of them.”

“Who were they?” The Commander asked.

“They do some work for this local company” Spears recalled “Orbison Investments and Holdings I think” he confirmed.

“And where might we find these gentlemen?” Jack asked.

“Try the industrial estate over on the north side of Edmonton Green, Halthrop Street I think” Spears confirmed “They have a number of business running out of there, all sorts of dodgy stuff apparently.”

“Thank you for your co-operation” Jack then remarked as he unceremoniously hauled Spears back to his feet and dusted him down “Have a nice day.”

Spears looked on with a disgusted expression as the two officers departed.

"Who taught you suspect interview techniques?" The Commander wondered as they approached their car "Frank Burnside?"

Right ladies and gentlemen” Bob announced to his team as they gathered outside the main entrance to Redhill General Hospital “We are going to be escorting a protective custody subject from here to a safe house in west London” he briefed.

The sight of the large team of fully armed firearms specialist officers made for an impressive sight for the various members of the public who were passing by, unaccustomed to such excitement in that part of the world.

"I want each and every one of you to keep a watch out for anything unusual, people, vehicles, anything that may indicate we have someone following or observing the subject" Bob continued "The moment you suspect anything, no matter how trivial it may seem, report it immediately."

"Are you ready to go?" Tracy asked to which Jenna nodded slightly reluctantly whereupon she reached for her radio "All right everyone, let's get ready to roll" she then declared.

A couple of minutes later amid a cacophony of sirens and blue flashing lights the ambulance with its Security Service vehicle escorts departed the Hospital at high speed, quickly making its way up onto the main A23 trunk road before turning north towards London.

Following the convoy's course from above was a Security Service helicopter whose crew were watching carefully not only the vehicles below them but also for any sign that they were being tracked or followed in any way.

"How are we all doing?" Tracy called over the radio.

"Just passing the Coulsdon turn off and about to go through Purley" the helicopter co-pilot confirmed before checking again through his binoculars "Looks all clear so far" he then added.

The normally packed traffic of the streets of south London were quickly moved aside by Traffic Division officers in preparation for the convoy to come flashing through at speeds well over the limit for normal traffic.

In fact, the convoy was going so well that it was not long before they were approaching the outskirts of Croydon with its numerous recently constructed tall apartment and office buildings now dominating the skyline all around.

Suddenly the convoy found itself with a problem as they approached the Reeves Corner junction where a Croydon Tram was stopped right across the road, its driver standing by the front cab looking underneath as if he had hit an object or something on the tram had broken.

"Looks like we have a problem" the helicopter co-pilot called "One of the Croydon Tram's is blocking the road ahead.

"Okay, go to alternate route Bravo now" Tracy ordered.

Just as the rear patrol car of the convoy began to reverse however there was a sudden volley of gunfire which shattered the windows of the car and ricocheted off the ground all around.

"Shots fired! Shots fired!" came the urgent call over the radio from several officers on the scene.

"We have got shooters on the roof, to the north west and south east" the helicopter co-pilot confirmed.

"Let me at them" the officer who was sat in the back of the helicopter called as she leaned forward to reveal it to be Commander Rosemary Baker, the foremost sniper and marksman in the Service who quickly deployed her specialist sniper rifle through the open side window, looked through the scope and within moments had shot all four shooters dead with single shots to each one.

"Okay guys, you are up" Baker then called into her radio whereupon two more specialist marksmen appeared from the rear of the ambulance and quickly took out the four armed men who had been approaching the stationary convoy clearly with the intent of snatching back Jenna.

"Clear!" came the call a few moments later after the sounds of powerful and precise gunshots had receded and it was confirmed that all the attackers had been very quickly and successfully neutralised.

"Is everybody all right?" Tracy asked over the radio with understandable concern.

"A few bumps and bruises but otherwise all okay Maam" came the confirmation.

"Most fun I have had in years" Baker confirmed as she happily dismantled her rifle and returned its component parts to its case.

"Okay, get the scene cleaned up and I will see you all for a debrief back at the Yard later" Tracy then confirmed "Angel One, out."

Jenna looked across from her seat in the First Class section of the Gatwick Express train heading towards London which she, Tracy, Bob and two of his own team had boarded fifteen minutes earlier having slipped out the back of the Hospital whilst everyone's attention including the Ixion Brotherhood's was focused on the publicly visible convoy which was part deception and part trap for the enemy.

"Nice call Maam" Bob remarked.

"Seemed likely that the Ixion mob would have someone on the inside leaking details of Jenna's movements, so I made sure they got them, the wrong ones of course" Tracy confirmed with a satisfied smile.

"Did they kill my Father?" Jenna then asked with a look of deep thought.

"You do know he is dead?" Tracy asked.

"I saw him being chased away by some of my dear husband's goons" Jenna confirmed with sadness.

"Are you up to telling me about it Jenna?" Tracy then asked with appropriate sensitivity.

"I was recruited by the Ixion Brotherhood about a year ago" Jenna began to explain "It all seemed so innocent at the time, I met a boy on social media, we struck up a friendship and it went from there."

"Let me guess, the boy turned out to be Orbison?" Tracy asked.

Jenna let out a deep sigh before nodding, "Yes..." she then confirmed with obvious regret and sadness.

"In which case we can probably add grooming and deception to his list of accolades" Tracy remarked with a sigh.

"My father was a cat burglar, had been for many years" Jenna then continued "although he only ever did it to provide for his family and was very careful about who he stole from, never anyone who could not afford it or did not deserve to be targeted."

"I gathered that from what I was told about him after his body was recovered" Tracy agreed.

"When he found out about me getting involved with the Ixion Brotherhood he tried to get me out" Jenna explained "He came to one of the Citadel's and confronted Orbison who simply had him thrown out. After that happened, he went to a Private Detective to try and find out as much dirt on Orbison and his organisation as possible in an attempt to blackmail him into letting me go."

"The Private Detective that your father hired" Tracy responded "It seems he managed to obtain a lot of data about numerous companies, accounts and clients that Orbison was involved with, set up or had dealings with."

"I got the impression from what I saw around that Orbison was into a lot of things, many of them illegal but protected through lots of shell companies, false names and clever accounting to keep him as far removed from anything he would have described as 'toxic' as possible" Jenna explained.

"So your father obtained all this information" Tracy continued "What happened then?"

"He contacted Orbison through one of his social media channels, a sort of secure online chat room which can only be accessed by the privileged few of his followers" Jenna continued to explain "My father pretended to join the Brotherhood, got the tattoo even so that he could get inside."

"Whereupon he duly tried to persuade Orbison to free you by stealing his very expensive jewellery collection?" Tracy suggested to which Jenna nodded in agreement.

"You see, my father was a man who believed in traditional values of wealth" Jenna continued "He presumed that if he took his jewellery that Orbison would do anything to get it back."

"I take it his plan backfired then?" Tracy asked.

"One of the key pillars of understanding in the Ixion Brotherhood philosophy is that nothing of any value is important, only chaos, the enjoyment of it and reaping its benefits" Jenna confirmed "So when my father stole the jewellery, it was in actual fact utterly useless and in terms of material or sentimental wealth it meant nothing to Orbison at all."

"That explains why when it was dropped Orbison's goons didn't even bother to try and recover it" Tracy remarked.

"Unfortunately my father was caught red handed trying to escape the Citadel by Orbison's chief muscle, a violent sociopath by the name of Reaper" Jenna continued "They chased him out of the Citadel and when he was cornered, shot him in the back of the head before dumping his body outside."

"Sufficiently battering him in the process to make it look like he died when he was hit by a train when in fact his death turned out to be far more sinister" Tracy concluded "Unfortunately for our friend Mr Chaos and his death worshipping minions, us plod are far more clued up these days. He wasn't going to get that one past us."

"So what happens now?" Jenna then asked as the train began to slow as it crossed the River Thames by way of Grosvenor Bridge and approach its final stop of London Victoria Station.

"When we arrive in a couple of moments you will be met by a team of specialist officers from MI5's Specialist Protection Section" Tracy explained "They will be taking you to a place of safety, make sure your health, mental and physical is treated and monitored and then you will be asked to make a full statement about anything and everything you wish to tell us."

"Am I in trouble?" Jenna then asked with concern.

"No" Tracy reassured her "Your troubles are behind you now. The only one in trouble now is Orbison and his disgusting band of morons and believe me, I am going to ensure they are locked up for a very long time."

"By my Lord of Ixion, I pledge myself to your teachings and ask you to welcome our Brother in Arms into our unholy Alliance of Chaos" Orbison reverently called up to the altar as Adebesei looked on "For thine is the word, the deed and the destiny" he then continued "To Life Immortal, Amen."

"Amen" Adebesei added.

"Welcome to the Brotherhood" Orbison then joyously declared before he and Adebesei embraced warmly for a few moments.

"Thank you Brother" Adebesei responded "Today marks the beginning of a new era."

"Indeed it does Brother" Orbison responded "You, me and our Soldiers of Ixion, we are going to change the world forever and have a lot of fun doing it too" he then laughed to which Adebesei responded in kind.

"So, when do we begin?" Adebesei then asked as they left the Black Chapel and headed out into the corridor.

"Aside from various wheels we have already put in motion" Orbison confirmed "Soon, my Brother, very soon."

Looking ahead, they both stopped when they saw Reaper approaching who bowed in respect as they met.

"My Lord" Reaper called.

"Brother" Orbison responded "What troubles you?"

"I regret to inform you My Lord that the attempt to rescue Lady Chaos has failed my Lord" Reaper confirmed.

"Decoy job?" Orbison asked.

"Yes, My Lord" Reaper confirmed apologetically. "I am truly sorry My Lord."

"No need to apologise Brother" Orbison replied "I should have seen this was going to happen really."

"We could probably still get her if we can locate her My Lord" Reaper then suggested.

"Hmm..." Orbison mused "Walk with us Brother" he then instructed.

As the three men proceeded down the dark corridor, Orbison mused for a few moments as to his next course of action.

"All right" he then declared "I want you to find our source who gave us the dud information on Lady Chaos' movements and re-educate them" Orbison instructed "I don't want him neutralized, not yet anyway as he may still be useful to us but I do think his naivety needs addressing with a lesson, don't you agree Brother?" he then looked across at Adebese.

"Failure is something I never tolerate" Adebese responded in agreement.

"There you go Brother" Orbison confirmed

"By your command My Lord" Reaper agreed.

"When that is done" Orbison then continued "Prepare a team of our finest brothers to be put on immediate alert for my announcement tonight."

"Announcement Brother?" Adebese asked.

"Indeed" Orbison explained "Now that we have our Army of Chaos ready, it is time to get on with the show!"

"Eagle One from Control" the radio in the car called with an urgent tone "Eagle One from Control."

"Go ahead Control" The Commander responded as Terry continued to drive the car under full lights and sirens through the busy traffic of north east London.

"Divisional Commander Caverner reports that the decoy convoy was intercepted by so called Soldiers of Ixion near Reeves Corner, Croydon" the Control Room Supervisor called.

"Any casualties?" The Commander then asked.

"Just the assailants" came the confirmation "Commander Baker was very thorough."

"Nice..." Jack remarked in admiration.

"And the erstwhile Lady Chaos?" The Commander then inquired.

"On her way to a safe location, Sir" the Control Room Supervisor confirmed "Angel One would like to know your current whereabouts please?"

"Jack and I are on our way to an industrial estate in Edmonton" The Commander explained "We are following the trail of the van that was used to snatch Megan, with a bit of luck there should be a sufficient trail of breadcrumbs to lead us right to her."

"I'll pass it along Sir" the Control Room Supervisor confirmed.

"Oh, whilst you are about it" The Commander then interjected "Chase up the full ballistics reports on our Ixion shootings" he requested "I have a hunch I want to check. If I am not back in time, give it to Tracy, err I mean Divisional Commander Caverner."

"Understood Sir" came the confirmation "Control Out."

"Ballistics?" Jack asked.

"Something that has been nagging at the back of my mind since this started" The Commander admitted as he replaced the radio handset "I can't help feeling that there is another player at the table and they hold a much better hand than us."

Tracy emerged from St. James' Park Underground Station and headed across the road, making straight for the main entrance of New Scotland Yard where she met Christopher Dent who was waiting for her just in front of the main doors.

"Chris" Tracy called as they met up whereupon he handed her one of the cups of takeaway coffee he was holding which she gratefully accepted "If I didn't know better I would think you were expecting me."

"I thought I had better deliver the news in person as I don't trust our communications channels at the moment" Dent explained the reason for his presence as they headed through the automatic sliding doors into the main reception area.

"Probably wise" Tracy agreed "Okay then, give me some good news, I need it right now" she then asked.

"Ms Jenna Lotte is now safe and secure in one of our special off-list safe houses" Dent confirmed "Her exact whereabouts are known only to me, my deputy, the Director General and the two trustworthy agents I have with her."

"Excellent" Tracy replied "Jack and my husband are apparently wandering around Edmonton Green looking for Megan" she then confirmed as they reached the elevator and entered the vacant lift car before she pressed the button for the top floor whereupon the doors closed and they began to ascend.

"I've had my best tech guys and gals working with Simon Fuller to try and find out who leaked the information on the decoy convoy to the Ixion cretins" Dent determinedly remarked "Whoever it is, they are either very high up the tree or else very good at what they do because thus far we have found nothing, no back door, no electronic fingerprint, zip!"

"I don't like this Chris" Tracy remarked as the elevator reached the top floor and the doors opened allowing them to step out into the corridor "I don't like this at all."

"What I can't fathom out is how a two bit nut job like Orbison has managed to build up such an empire and huge following just by wibbling his random codswallop" Dent commented "and now it looks like he has hooked up with that wacko Adebese as well, I mean what the hell is going on?"

"Best guess?" Tracy considered her response "Lots of money attracts lots of supporters hoping to get a piece of it like moths to a flame."

As they headed towards her office, a junior officer came running up and handed her a file.

"Thanks" Tracy responded, nodding in appreciation before the officer departed once more, leaving her to peruse the report as they continued down the corridor.

"What's that?" Dent asked, more out of professional curiosity than anything else.

"Oh?" Tracy responded, looking up for but the briefest of moments "It's the final ballistics report on our various Ixion incidents and their perpetrators" she then confirmed.

It was as they were approaching her office door that Tracy suddenly paused as something in the report caught her attention. Then she turned smartly on her feet and quickly changed direction, swiftly followed by Dent who was rather taken by surprise at her sudden deviation.

A few moments later Tracy arrived in the Control Room and made directly for the Duty Supervisor.

"Ma'am" the Duty Supervisor called as she arrived.

"Is Commander Baker still on the premises by any chance?" Tracy discreetly enquired.

"She reported that she was going to get some lunch in the canteen Ma'am" the Duty Supervisor confirmed.

"Excellent" Tracy responded "Get her on the phone, radio, whatever and ask her to stay where she is, I am going to head down to see her."

"Yes Ma'am" the Duty Supervisor replied as Tracy was just departing.

"Oh, and see if you can track down my husband as well" Tracy then called over "He'll want to know about this too" she briefly held up the report before leaving.

"Ah stuff it" Baker remarked as she chose the cake option from the canteen servery "The diet starts tomorrow."

As she was about to reach the hot drinks service area however she thought she heard her name being mentioned by someone nearby.

"Commander Baker? Yes, she's here" the Canteen Manager confirmed over the internal telephone behind the counter before receiving further instructions "Yes, I'll tell her, bye."

"Please don't tell me that was my mother banging on about my diet again?" Baker asked.

"Divisional Commander Caverner is on her way down, she wants a word apparently" the Canteen Manager confirmed.

"Hmmm..." Baker considered her tray with the cake and coffee on it "In which case I will have custard tart as well and err put it on the Divisional Commander's tab?" she instructed.

"She won't like it" the Canteen Manager warned with a wry smile.

"Call it a consultation fee" Baker responded with a smirk.

A few moments later with Baker now sat down at a table on the far side of the canteen near the window, Tracy appeared at the entrance and after quickly scanning around, located her and came over with Dent not far behind.

"Hi!" Tracy called as she sat down at the same table "Sorry to bother you" she then apologised.

"That's quite all right Ma'am" Baker confirmed.

"Have you met Christopher Dent, our man from MI5?" she then introduced.

"Indeed" Baker responded "Good to see you Chris, you are looking well."

"Thanks, likewise" Dent replied "We did some work on a little project a couple of years back" he then explained.

"So, what can I do for you Ma'am?" Baker then asked.

"I was hoping you could give me your expert opinion on this" Tracy produced the full ballistics report and placed it on the table in front of her "You seem to be the best person to ask around here about firearms and the thing they shoot."

"I take it this is the various encounters with the Soldiers of Ixion or whatever those boneheads call themselves?" Baker asked.

"All the bullets fired by or at them and weapons found at the scenes" Tracy confirmed "Does anything catch your attention."

"Hmmm..." Baker pondered before taking a sip of coffee as she considered her response to the contents of the file through which she was leafing carefully "Interesting."

"One incident you can ignore is that one at Broadway" Tracy then added "That was one of Sir Richard's talented minions doing a little pest control" she explained.

"That helps make things clearer" Baker responded "So basically what you have are a group of mostly military experienced goons although which military seems to be of some debate I see, all using the same manufacturer and model of weapon on each occasion, except one."

"Let me see?" Dent asked whereupon Baker turned the file around towards him and indicated one part of the details in particular.

"In all bar one incident they are either carrying and or using the same weaponry, all high tech South African manufactured weapons, not easily obtained outside of the African continent but available if you know the right people to contact and have a sizeable bank account to pay for it" Baker explained "but crucially all firing ammunition that is pretty much untraceable as it is so common, effectively 'over the counter' if such a thing existed in this country."

"Except for this one" Dent then noted the details Baker was alluding to.

"Well done" Tracy confirmed "You win a custard tart."

"Except I just had the last one, sorry" Baker smirked.

"Point two seven calibre high velocity amour piercing rounds, two of" Dent read from the report "That's bloody unusual isn't it?"

"It is most definitely not a commercially manufactured bullet that is for certain" Tracy agreed "Those were the bullets from the two Ixion muppets that were nailed at London Bridge Station the other night."

"That incident where no weapon or gunman was found despite an almost instantaneous lock down?" Dent asked to which Tracy nodded in confirmation.

"Now..." Baker continued having finished off the last of her custard tart, getting crumbs on the report that she then quickly brushed away "Specialist calibres' mean specially made at great expense for a custom made weapon designed for a specific purpose" she explained.

"So not the sort of thing the Ixion morons would be likely to be carrying?" Tracy asked.

"No way" Baker confirmed "If I was a betting woman, I would say these came from a custom-made miniature but highly powerful rifle which could be disguised as a small everyday object like a pen or even a lipstick."

"That explains how we never found a weapon at the scene then" Tracy concluded.

"I would wager whoever fired those bullets probably did it in the blink of an eye and was out of the door into a cab and away before those guys had even hit the floor" Baker remarked "Now, as for who did it..."

Both Dent and Tracy watched as Baker extracted a leather-bound notebook, crammed with bits of paper and old maps from inside her uniform tunic pocket before opening it and flicking through its many pages to a specific part.

"Ah, here we go" Baker then declared "Point two seven calibre special" she read from her extensive library of notes that she had collated over many years "Try the Israelis, they have just the right sort of weapon, takes the correct calibre and this sounds like their handiwork."

"The Israelis?" Dent asked, "What are they up to?" he wondered as Tracy took out her mobile phone and proceeded to make a call.

"Probably the same as Sir Richard's little minion" Baker commented "Doing a little domestic pest control."

"Ben?" Tracy called in a friendly manner once her telephone call had been answered "Tracy Caverner, Scotland Yard" she then confirmed "Yeah, I'm great, how are you?"

"Who is she talking to?" Baker asked.

"My best guess would be the Israeli Ambassador to the UK" Dent responded.

"I'll come straight to the point if I may Ben" Tracy then called before her tone of voice changed suddenly to one of deadly seriousness as she asked "Are you running a hit team on my manor?"

"Subtle and diplomatic as always" Baker remarked.

"Well I have two dead guys in the morgue with point two seven calibre special slugs in them which may as well have 'Made in Jerusalem' printed on them" Tracy explained "and I have my specialist here who says the style of the shooting is definitely your lads area of expertise."

"As we say in the trade" Dent remarked "caught bang to rights."

"Oh, I am all ears Ben" Tracy then confirmed "Start from the stop and don't leave anything out."

"General Ford, the Courier is here with the files you requested Sir" came the call over the intercom to Ford, the Ministry of Defence Joint Chief of Staff who was in his office on the top floor of the MoD building in the centre of Whitehall.

A few moments later an Army Lieutenant appeared, they exchanged salutes and then he handed Ford the black bag containing the files he had requested.

"Thank you Lieutenant" Ford responded as he took the bag "That will be all."

"Sir" the Lieutenant replied before saluting again and then leaving.

Ford waited until the door had been closed before opening the bag and taking out the files which he then proceeded to place carefully on the desk in front of him.

All of them were clearly marked with big red stamps 'CONFIDENTIAL' and 'EYES ONLY' which emphasised the seriousness of the contents which Ford began to methodically study.

Ford already suspected the answer before he had received the files, it was reading through them that duly confirmed his worst fears which then saw him reach for the telephone on the desk.

"Get me the Secretary of Defence and Sir Richard Crowthorne on the scrambler, ultraviolet priority please" he then formally requested "plus I will need a car downstairs to New Scotland Yard in twenty minutes."

"Do the words 'dead end' mean anything by any chance?" Jack regretfully remarked as he and The Commander looked around the interior of the empty warehouse building in Edmonton.

"I think if anything was going on here then we have well and truly missed it" The Commander was forced to agree as he kicked over an old abandoned wooden packing crate in the vain hope of finding something inside it.

"Hang about..." Jack then remarked as he noticed something over on the far side and went over to it.

"What have you got?" The Commander asked.

"Tyre tracks, looks like a light van, possibly our Transit" Jack confirmed as he knelt down and looked "and more of that red sawdust again, quite distinctive."

"Some sort of pine type wood I would wager" The Commander took a sample in-between his fingers and sniffed it.

"The Transit van that was used in the snatching of Megan was covered in this same sawdust" Jack commented, clearly deep in thought "and it strikes me as not the sort of stuff you would find domestically from say someone replacing their garden fence."

"Indeed" The Commander agreed "this amount and type would almost certainly have come from a commercial sawmill I would have thought."

"I have an idea" Jack then called "Let me make a phone call" he then declared as he took out his mobile and walked towards the exit in order to get a clear signal.

"Christ!" Tracy exclaimed as she arrived back in her office and slammed the file she was carrying on her desk "What a mess!"

"I have to admit I didn't see that one coming" Dent admitted "Although you would have thought that by now I would have been used to such surprises."

"Mind you I can understand their anger" Tracy added "Having one of your best agents sent home air freight is no way for anybody to go."

"Especially given how many different boxes he was spread across" Dent added.

"Yuck..." Tracy remarked.

There was a polite knock on the door whereupon Tracy stared at it for a moment, sighed and then called for the knocker to come in.

"This had better be good" Tracy called as Fuller entered.

"Jack has just called in and asked for a search for any properties owned by Orbison or any associated companies that may be located adjacent to any industrial sawmills" Fuller confirmed.

"Huh?!?" Tracy responded.

"Something to do with sawdust on a van apparently" Fuller explained.

"Okay..." Tracy mused "I don't suppose you found a match by any chance?" she then asked.

"Just the one" Fuller confirmed "There is a large supposedly disused industrial building in deepest rural Essex that is right next door to one of the largest industrial sawmills in the country."

"And Jack's on his way there now?" Tracy asked.

"With the Chief" Fuller replied "I think their theory is that if they follow the trail of breadcrumbs, or in this case, sawdust for long enough then they will find Megan."

"Can't argue with that sort of logic" Dent remarked in agreement.

Tracy sat back in her chair and pondered for a few moments, the expression on her face clearly one of very serious concern.

"Simon" she then addressed Fuller "Put everyone we have over that end of the manor on alert and have a car downstairs for me right away."

"Yes Ma'am" Fuller quickly agreed.

"You think it is a trap?" Dent remarked.

"Maybe" Tracy admitted "However, whether it is or not, I want backup to be available at the click of the finger."

“Probably wise given the circumstances” Dent agreed as he watched Tracy stand up and put her uniform tunic on.

“Of course, it could be just another dead end” Tracy added ruefully as she checked her firearm before holstering it “But there is still Megan to find if nothing else.”

“I best get back to Thames House” Dent confirmed “I have the strangest feeling that it’s going to be a busy evening” he admitted.

A few minutes later Tracy and Dent arrived in the basement car park where a marked patrol car was waiting for them.

“Lieutenant Eisley” Tracy called to the officer driving “You get about a bit, don’t you?” she remarked.

“I was in the area when your request came through” Eisley confirmed as he opened the passenger side door for her and she got in before he closed it again and went around to the driver’s side whereupon he got in himself and started the engine.

“Right, for now head east towards Essex” Tracy then instructed as Eisley began to drive up the exit ramp that led to street level “Hopefully I should get a more accurate location for our destination on the... What the hell!!!”

Tracy’s instructions were rudely interrupted when a black saloon car came screeching to a halt right across their path forcing Eisley to perform an emergency stop that almost threw Tracy’s forehead into the dashboard such was its suddenness.

“Who the hell is this idiot!” Tracy demanded to know as she angrily got out of the car to confront whoever it was that had intercepted her.

Marching purposefully to the black saloon, it was obvious Tracy was furious and she had her firearm in her hand ready for anything.

“Oi!” she then called “You could get nicked for that!”

“I’m terribly sorry Divisional Commander Caverner” came a voice whereupon Tracy looked on to see Major Ford appear from the rear of the car “I need to speak with you on a matter of considerable urgency” he informed her.

“Don’t you guys over at the M.O.D. have telephones or something?” Tracy demanded to know as she re-holstered her firearm.

“Believe me Divisional Commander, this is something that I cannot trust to any form of electronic communication” Major Ford explained “Where is Jack?” he then asked.

“Jack the lad, Jack the Ripper, Jack Regan...” Tracy sarcastically reeled off a list “We’ve got quite a few possible.”

“Your son” Major Ford confirmed “Lima Tango Nine Nine Three.”

“Currently out on enquiries” Tracy responded.

“Anything to do with a Michael Orbison and in particular his associate Adam Reaper?” Major Ford then inquired with an increasingly worried tone.

“Jack and my Husband think they have tracked Orbison down to some old industrial building out in Essex” Tracy confirmed “I was about to round up some backup in case anything went pear shaped.”

“Bring everything you have got and then double it” Major Ford strongly advised.

“It’s definitely a trap then” Dent remarked.

“Almost certainly” Major Ford confirmed “Reaper is a very dangerous man, very dangerous indeed.”

“Join the party” Tracy indicated the rear passenger seat of the patrol car “You can tell me all about it on the way.”

"Is this the place?" Jack asked as he and The Commander looked around, the senior of the two using a pair of binoculars to scan the rooftop.

"Well for a supposedly disused industrial building, there is a hell of a lot of communications equipment on that roof and what looks like a couple of armed goons on patrol up there so unless the CIA have opened another office in town without telling me" The Commander concluded "I think this is the place."

"We should check in" Jack responded as he reached for his radio.

"I can tell you just came out of the Academy" The Commander responded with a smirk "Give it a few years and you will soon pick up the usual bad habits."

"Perhaps..." Jack remarked with a smirk "Lima Tango Nine Nine Three to Control, are you receiving, over?"

"Control receiving you loud and clear Lima Tango Nine Nine Three" came the swift response "Is the Chief with you? Over."

"Yes, he's here, over" Jack confirmed.

"Wait one please Lima Tango Nine Nine Three, his wife wants a word with the pair of you, over" Control explained.

"Uh-oh...:" Jack and The Commander responded in unison looking at each other.

"All right you two renegades" Tracy was then heard over the link "Where the hell are you?" she asked.

"Somewhere out in the delightful scenic vistas of the Essex North Thames Estuary" Jack confirmed as he looked around at the run down industrial dereliction surrounding them which mainly consisted of long since abandoned and partially demolished buildings and piles of crumbling debris through which nature was making a very good job of reclaiming back into the landscape as it had been left undisturbed for so long.

"I've got some interesting developments for you" Tracy confirmed "It transpires that the two Ixion guys that were assassinated at London Bridge the other night were targeted by Israeli Intelligence no less."

"The Israelis? What the hell are they doing in this mess?" The Commander asked with a look of surprise.

"It took a bit of persuasion as initially Ben over at the Israeli Consulate was a little reluctant at first but as soon as I started casually dropping the possibility of forced deportations in diplomatic bags into the conversation he suddenly had a change of heart and became co-operative" Tracy responded.

"Nice one..." Jack remarked with a smirk.

"It turns out some of the so called Soldiers of Ixion used to be in various armed forces but all of them have one thing in common" Tracy went on to explain "They all served in a United Nations Peace Keeping Force specialist tactical unit under the command of a man we now know as Adam Reaper."

"What a small world it is..." The Commander commented.

"Oh, it gets better" Tracy continued "There was apparently an 'incident' involving Reaper's unit, they went off message and decided to effectively go into business for themselves, Africa has the habit of influencing people like that from time to time and they usually go freelance for the cash."

"That explains a few things" Jack agreed.

"The country where Reaper and his merry men did their dirty deeds, and believe me according to Major Ford at the M.O.D. it is a pretty long list of war crimes" Tracy looked at the extensive paperwork on the desk in front of her "was a little backwater republic by the name of Mobuto."

"The same place that guy Adebese comes from?" The Commander recalled.

"The same" Tracy confirmed.

"It really is a small world" The Commander concluded.

"Well I am going to keep working on this and Major Ford is digging around as well to see what else he can turn up" Tracy continued "It's complicated and involves delving through some pretty well buried ancient history but I think it may give us some sort of insight into Adebese and his group should we run into them."

"Good thinking" The Commander agreed.

"So, what are you two doing?" Tracy then asked.

"We were just thinking of dropping by Orbison's place and annoying him" The Commander casually confirmed with a smirk.

"Well try not to get in 'owt" Tracy requested.

"Will do" The Commander agreed "Just going to pop in for a cuppa and pick up Megan, that's all."

"Hmmm..." Tracy responded with suspicion.

"What could possibly go wrong?!?" Jack commented.

"Would you like a list?" Tracy sarcastically replied.

"Look, we will be back home before you know it" The Commander reassured her.

"You had better be" Tracy wryly responded "Take care love, and you too Jack."

"Will do" Jack and The Commander responded together.

"All right then, what's the plan?" Jack then asked The Commander as he scanned the horizon with the binoculars once more.

"You go around the back, see if you can get up on the roof" The Commander instructed "Take care of those two goons and sneak in, find your girl, get out and put as much distance between yourselves and this place as you can."

"Roger that boss" Jack readily agreed as he took out his revolver and checked it "So what are you going to do?" he then asked.

"Go up to the front door and knock" The Commander admitted "Having heard so much about him, I think it is time Mr Orbison and I formally met, don't you?"

"By the power of the mighty God's of Ixion" Orbison murmured, kneeling in front of his personal chapel's black altar, head bowed "Give me the strength to bring forth your chaos to the World..."

It was at that point he was interrupted by an Aide who knocked politely at the door.

"Yes Brother..." Orbison responded.

"My humblest apologies My Lord, our soldiers have reported we have a visitor approaching" the Aide confirmed "It may be a Security Service Officer."

"Interesting..." Orbison remarked before briefly returning his attention to the altar again "By your command, to life immortal, amen" he then quickly concluded.

A couple of minutes later The Commander approached what appeared to be the only entrance into the vast metal and concrete industrial building immediately adjacent to the sawmill where its ever-running huge saws could be heard cutting away in the background.

"Hmmm..." The Commander thought to himself as he looked all around "Better knock I suppose" he then concluded before stepping up and knocking three times on the battered looking green metal door.

Within moments a small hatchway opened, and the face appeared of an Aide who looked at The Commander with an understandable sense of surprise.

"Good afternoon!" The Commander cheerily called, practically relishing behaving almost like a cheesy 1960's door to door salesman "I am here to see your Mr Orbison please" he confirmed "National Administrator General Sir James Regent, National Security & Police Service" he then handed across his official business card "Sorry, I don't have an appointment."

As the door creaked slowly open and the somewhat hunchbacked looking Ixion Aide showed The Commander inside, Jack was quietly making his way up and onto the roof where he took cover from the two armed lookouts stationed up there by hiding behind an old metal vent chimney.

"Right fellas, just hold still for a second" Jack quietly remarked to himself as he proceeded to fit a silencer to his revolver before rolling across the roof, taking aim and opening fire.

The first armed guard never knew what hit him as with two silenced and very accurate shots he simply fell, the other did manage to swing around in response but before he realised what had actually happened, he too wound up being taken out by two shots himself.

"Hmm" Jack remarked to himself as he calmly got up, dusted himself down and walked casually over to the two dead guards where he kicked away their weapons just in case they were still alive.

"To Life Immortal..." Jack then mocked as he reloaded his revolver and removed the silencer before bending down to pick up one of the semi-automatic machine pistols that were now lying on the deck and looked at it.

"Hope you don't mind if I borrow this and a couple of clips, thanks" he then remarked before slinging the acquired weapon around his torso and taking the spare ammunition clips off the nearest dead guard's utility belt and stuffing them in his jacket pocket.

Jack took a brief moment to look all around, just the view of the sun starting to set over the derelict industrial wasteland and the adjacent saw mill were all that was of remote interest before he headed towards a roof access door nearby that meant he could access the interior, hopefully without detection.

With revolver drawn, Jack carefully opened the door and peered down the dimly lit metal spiral staircase inside that led down into the interior of the building and, as carefully and as quietly as he could, began to head down the steps.

The only sounds initially was the whistling of the wind from outside, the metallic clunking of his boots on the steps and his own breathing as Jack moved cautiously down the staircase, the evenly spaced bulkhead type lights providing minimal illumination until he reached a floor and stepped out into a corridor.

The building being an old industrial factory type site meant the upper floor that Jack now found himself on was mostly made up of old office accommodation which from the looks of it had not been touched by its new occupants as he found the remnants of abandoned office furniture in various states of dilapidation with dangling remains of tatty old window blinds gently tapping against broken windows.

Voices coming up through the floorboards from the corridor immediately below him caused Jack to pause for a moment until they had passed whereupon he continued along to another staircase that led one storey further down.

Being cautious, Jack stepped quietly down the stairs to the next floor where the condition of the offices and other rooms showed that this level at least was in use.

Looking around, Jack could see that there was nobody about at that moment so used the opportunity to head down the corridor, taking a brief look in some of the rooms as he went. His investigations revealed that there seemed to be a lot of computer equipment and associated data cabling in many of the rooms, all very sophisticated looking but as to what it all did, he could only speculate.

Three storeys below Jack, The Commander was being escorted by a couple of Aides to Orbison who was practically hopping from one foot to the other with excitement at the prospect of receiving this most unexpected and important visitor in the Citadel Room.

"Administrator General, welcome!" Orbison theatrically announced as The Commander was shown into the Citadel Room "What an unexpected pleasure!"

"I was in the neighbourhood so thought I would pop in, say hello" The Commander casually admitted as he looked around the Citadel Room.

"Can I offer you a drink?" Orbison asked, proffering a crystal glass decanter of brandy.

"No thanks, I'm on duty" The Commander politely declined.

"How did you find me?" Orbison then enquired "I'm not exactly in the phone book."

"The van your goons used had a fine covering of sawdust all over it" The Commander explained "Lieutenant Regent checked with the records of your business activities that came into his possession a few days ago and discovered this place is on the list, right next to an industrial sawmill and only forty five minutes' drive from central London so, you could say that I took an educated punt."

"And here you are" Orbison agreed as he nodded at his aides to leave them alone before taking a sip of brandy "So now that you are here, what can I do for you Officer?"

"Apart from fire your interior decorator?" The Commander wryly remarked which saw Orbison smirk in response "I believe you have a Megan Thorpe tucked away around here somewhere and it would be awfully nice if you could let her be on her way."

"Seeing as you have come here in person and asked so nicely" Orbison remarked thoughtfully "I am amenable to your request although I am somewhat surprised that enthusiastic little sidekick of yours isn't here. He is a tenacious little fellow, isn't he?"

"That he is" The Commander agreed.

Creeping quietly through the corridors of the upper levels, Jack had so far managed to escape detection, finding nothing of interest other than further computer equipment and some store rooms full of various unmarked boxes and crates which judging by their clean condition showed that the Ixion organisation had placed them there very recently and that they were not leftovers from the buildings former life.

"Come on Megan, where are you?" Jack remarked quietly to himself as he then headed down another level to what looked like personal quarters.

Some of the doors were open and Jack cautiously peered inside but found nothing apart from empty living quarters each with a basic bed and a small personal black altar inside.

It was towards the far end of the corridor that Jack found a door that was different however, there being a secure silver padlock on it which meant something or more likely someone was being securely held inside.

Jack initially went to put the silencer back on the revolver before taking a second look at the padlock and smiling as he returned the gun and silencer back to his holster and then took out some keys, quickly finding the specific one that he was looking for.

Megan was woken from her sleep by the sound of keys being rattled and immediately reached over to the bedside lamp to turn it off before making for the door with a piece of wood and waited in the shadows of the doorframe waiting for whoever it was to enter.

A few moments later the door opened and Jack cautiously entered the dark room only to suddenly be hit across the back of the head by a piece of wood wielded by Megan that sent him spiralling to the floor.

"Ohhh..." Jack murmured as he rolled over, clasping the back of his head in pain.

"Jack?" Megan responded in shock as she quickly put the light back on and tossed away her makeshift weapon as soon as she realised who it was.

"Hi love" Jack responded with a wry smile as Megan helped him back onto his feet.

"I'm sorry, I thought you were one of Reaper's bone heads" Megan admitted as she got out a handkerchief and proceeded to mop the blood from the small wound on the back of Jack's head "How did you get in here anyway?"

"It seems that Orbison reused a railway padlock from his previous accommodation" Jack showed Megan the bunch of railway keys "Abloy padlocks and a BR1 key, between them opens ninety nine percent of the UK railway network's locks."

"Let's get the hell out of here" Megan then suggested.

"An excellent idea" Jack agreed "Do you want a gun?" he then proffered the revolver.

"No thanks" Megan declined "I'll leave the James Bond stuff to you my dear."

"I know you know" The Commander remarked as Orbison showed him around the Citadel Room.

"You know what exactly?" Orbison responded.

"I know you are into a lot of naughty business" The Commander confirmed "I also know that you are in league with a particularly unpleasant gentleman by the name of Adebese" he then added.

"Brother Adebese is a very bad man I will admit" Orbison agreed "Some of his methods during his time in the African continent have been somewhat abrupt but his heart is in the right place."

"I would be very careful if I were you" The Commander then advised "Adebese and his merry men are on the shit list of certain foreign intelligence agencies, some of them with a bullet apparently."

"The price of freedom can be a hard one to pay" Orbison responded "I know, I have sacrificed much to uphold and bestow my beliefs on my followers."

"And then there is your whatever you call him, Reaper" The Commander continued "He has a very colourful history apparently."

"His skills are quite extensive although he does tend to be a bit of a free agent when he comes to the methods he uses to further the cause of the Brotherhood" Orbison remarked.

"I'd keep him at arms length and downwind if I were you" The Commander suggested "with his military skills and his attitude to violence, he could turn on you in an instant."

"I'll err, bear it in mind" Orbison agreed.

"So, what's the plan?" Megan asked as they slipped quietly out into the corridor having checked the coast was clear.

"Get the hell out of here without raising the alarm" Jack confirmed as he led her down the corridor towards the stairs at the far end "Probably best out the way I came in I think."

"Good plan" Megan swiftly agreed "Lead on" she then gestured.

As they reached the stairs, Jack checked above to make sure there was no one there before, with gun drawn, he led the way up to the next level.

"Hold it right there!" came a sudden shout as lights came on and they found themselves confronted with a group of armed men with Adebesei at the front.

"Would now be a good time to say you are all under arrest?" Jack wryly asked as he shielded Megan behind him whilst lowering his weapon down and to his right.

"Cute little policeman" Adebesei responded with stern menace "No one offends the Brotherhood; you will pay for your disrespect."

"Yeah, whatever..." Jack casually dismissed this threat before suddenly opening fire, shooting the fire extinguisher alongside Adebesei and his men which instantly disorientated them and allowed he and Megan to flee.

"Plan B?" Megan asked as she and Jack raced back down the corridor the way they had just come.

"Plan B" Jack confirmed as they searched for another exit while the urgent footsteps of their pursuers echoed all throughout the area.

"Down there!" Megan then called as she pointed out in the gloom an old rusty ladder that seemed to lead up to the roof.

"That'll do" Jack agreed as they made straight for it.

Moments later they burst through an emergency exit door situated at the top of a set of external metal stairs, the broken lock flying off and falling to the ground far below.

"Stay close" Jack instructed as he and Megan proceeded down the metal steps, quickly reaching the bottom which was situated in among weed strewn waste ground which was only just visible as the sun had now set over the horizon

"Where now?" Megan asked but then shrieked when a volley of gunfire was aimed approximately towards them from above.

"Anywhere that is away from those clowns!" Jack exclaimed as he grabbed Megan and they quickly ran off into the dense undergrowth.

"Did anybody hear something?" Orbison generally asked around the main Citadel chamber.

"No..." The Commander feigned ignorance.

"Ah well" Orbison responded "Big place like this, sound does tend to echo a bit, makes for great preaching to my followers though."

"Whatever turns them on..." The Commander remarked.

"There must be a road or something in this direction" Jack remarked as they continued to run across the rough ground, brushing tall shrub growth out of the way.

"I hope so" Megan agreed "because I think we have a tail" she looked over her shoulder with obvious concern.

"Lima Tango Nine Nine Three" Jack then called into his radio "The good lady and I are clear but we do seem to have picked up some unwanted followers."

"So, Administrator General, you mentioned the possibility of a deal, a mutual arrangement." Orbison remarked "What do you have in mind?" he asked.

"Well..." The Commander thoughtfully began.

At that moment there was sudden noise and commotion, doors thrown open, shouting and screaming as the building was suddenly overwhelmed by the forced intrusion of over a hundred armed Security Service officers.

"Surprise!" Tracy called as she arrived on the scene amidst officers deploying all around and detaining everyone they could find with little subtlety.

"What is the meaning of this desecration?!?" Orbison shouted, looking around with a sense of shock and bewilderment as he saw his followers and facilitators being chased and arrested by armed officers pretty much everywhere he looked.

"In a nutshell..." The Commander considered his response as Tracy joined him and he indicated her to her "Would you like the honour love?"

"Why thank you darling" Tracy responded before turning around "Michael Xavier Orbison, you are under arrest."

"You want the cuffs?" The Commander proffered the handcuffs to which Orbison subtly shook his head.

"Okay guys" Tracy called to two officers nearby "Take him away, Paddington Green for this one."

Orbison smirked knowingly before he was led away.

"Right" The Commander then called into a radio that was passed to him at his indication "I want this entire place taken apart and searched from top to bottom and get Forensics in here pronto!"

"Where is Reaper?" General Ford asked as he joined Tracy and The Commander.

"For that matter, where is Jack and Megan?" Tracy then asked as they all looked around.

"Where's Adebese and his Soldiers of Ixion?" Dent asked as he too joined the group.

"Don't tell me...?" The Commander responded.

"No sign of any of them Sir" Bob confirmed as he also joined the group.

"Lima Tango Nine Nine Three, come in please, over" Tracy urgently called into her radio.

"Down!" Jack called as another volley of gunfire was fired in their direction and he pushed Megan to the ground only for them both to fall down a slope that they could not see in the dark and roll to the bottom, a loud crunching noise being heard two thirds of the way down.

"You okay?" Megan then asked as she got back up and then helped Jack back onto his feet where it was clear he was in pain.

"I think so" Jack confirmed "Oh no..." he then remarked as he then noticed the reason for the loud crunch and his pain, the smashed remains of his radio hanging off his belt.

"Ah..." Megan responded.

"That is the end of that then" Jack admitted as he took the remains of the radio off and threw it away "Come on" he then took Megan by the hand "Let's put some distance between us and the goons and find some wheels."

"No argument from me" Megan responded as she grabbed Jack's hand and they pushed on.

A couple of minutes later they reached an old boundary fence.

"Why can't there just be a gate?" Jack exclaimed.

"I hate to be the bearer of bad news" Megan then remarked as she looked behind them with clear concern, "but I think our 'friends' are still following us."

"In which case I fear we are going to have to climb up" Jack confirmed as he holstered his firearm and prepared to hoist Megan up to the top of the fence.

Fortunately, the fence was sufficiently low enough that Megan was able to reach the top of it with the boost up from Jack and managed to haul herself over and land safely on the other side.

Jack then scrambled up and over and they were quickly reunited once more.

"Let's get the hell out of here" Jack then suggested as they could see lights in the distance which indicated that their pursuers were still after them.

"A very good idea" Megan agreed as, hand in hand, they ran off.

As further gunfire could be heard being vaguely aimed in their direction, Jack and Megan headed across a rubble strewn courtyard towards what appeared to be an exit gate of some kind which as they reached it, they discovered a narrow country lane.

"Where the hell are we?" Megan then asked.

"Looks like the middle of nowhere's back yard" Jack admitted as he looked up and down the country lane before looking back with concern at the complex "and the natives are getting restless" he then added with some urgency.

"What we need is some wheels" Megan then suggested.

"Come on" Jack then took Megan's hand and headed up the country lane.

They quickly reached a farmyard where an old rusty blue tractor was parked up in a state that suggested it had not been moved for some months if not years.

"Well, we are not going to get far in that" Jack remarked to which Megan looked on in agreement before they headed across the farmyard to see if there was anyone around who could help or possibly a telephone they could use.

"That looks more promising" Megan indicated a farm workers cottage nearby "Come on" she then took the lead with Jack following closely behind.

"Hello?" Jack called as he knocked on the door whilst Megan shielded her eyes to peer through the window which looked into the kitchen.

"Doesn't look like anyone's home" Megan remarked.

"I agree" Jack confirmed before trying the door handle only to discover it to be locked.

"What's that?" Megan then turned and looked back across the farmyard when she heard something in the far distance.

"The bad guys probably" Jack confirmed before indicating to her "Stand back" he then warned before unceremoniously kicking in the door and then proceeding inside.

"I think we can safely say no one has been here in a while" Megan remarked as they looked all around the cobweb and dust covered interior.

Jack stooped down and picked up some of the post that was piled up on the floor to see if there was any information that he could glean from it.

"Oldest postmark here is six months ago" Jack confirmed "Looks like whoever lived here left in a hurry."

"Considering who their 'charming' neighbours are I don't blame them" Megan agreed as she then noticed an old-style dial telephone on the wall behind the door and picked up the dusty receiver.

"Ah ha!" Jack then called out as he saw something through a doorway and went through to take a look.

"What have you found?" Megan asked.

"Yes, that will do very nicely" Jack declared with a smirk as he returned with a large shotgun and a box of shells "The one thing you can always depend upon when it comes to rural folk is a plentiful supply of things to decimate the local wildlife with."

"The phone is dead" Megan confirmed as she replaced the receiver handset "and we still need some transport" she pointed out "and quickly as I think we are about to have company" she urgently looked towards the window.

Jack looked around with urgency until he noticed in amongst the dust and detritus on the kitchen table something protruding from beneath a copy of the Farmers Weekly magazine.

"Bingo!" Jack declared as he retrieved some car keys and held them up "Now we just need to find the car it fits."

"And hope it works" Megan pointed out.

A short distance away, two large black four by four vehicles were racing out of the main gateway of the Ixion Compound, accompanied by four motorcycle outriders.

In the leading car as it took to the road and made off at some considerable speed was Adebesi.

"Split up Brothers" he ordered over a secure radio link "Find and destroy the enemies of our freedom for chaos, they were on foot so they can't have got far."

The men in the cars and on the motorbikes were professional. Despite the breakneck speed with which they were traveling, their search pattern was very systematic and direct which meant it was not long before one of the cars and a motorcycle were pulling into the farm yard where Jack and Megan were just a short time earlier.

Adebesi got out of the car as the dust it had thrown up settled all around before taking off his reflective sunglasses and stooping down to look at something on the ground, his tribal tracking skills passed down to him through a hundred generations of his ancestors immediately spotting a vital clue.

"They are here" Adebesi then declared before silently indicating to the two men who had emerged from the back of his car to proceed.

Moments later there was the sound of breaking glass as the two men threw something large and heavy through the lower floor front windows of the farmhouse.

They quickly stood back before there were two heavy explosions in quick succession and the whole ground floor of the cottage was enveloped in a huge flash of green flame with debris blown out in all directions.

"There" Adebesi then indicated one of the barns adjacent to the rapidly burning and collapsing cottage whereupon his two men proceeded without hesitation to raise their automatic weapons and open fire, shattering windows and riddling the structure with bullet holes from which no one who may have been inside would have been able to escape.

After fifteen seconds of rapid fire, both the men were out of ammunition and proceeded to reload which was when suddenly from a nearby outbuilding came the sound of a rough diesel engine starting up and the old wooden doors burst open as a battered old dark green Land Rover came speeding out and swerved across the yard.

"Oh look, Orbison's buddy Adebesi has brought along some friends" Jack remarked as he accelerated quickly across the farmyard and headed straight towards the two gunmen who were still trying to reload having been delayed by the distraction of the appearance of the Land Rover.

"Out of the..." Megan began to call only to see both the gunmen struck by the Land Rover as Jack crashed through at as high a speed as he could drive across the rough terrain of the farmyard.

"Never mind..." she then finished as Jack swerved and the back of the Land Rover bounced off Adebesi's vehicle before heading out onto the open track.

"Infidels!!" Adebesi screamed in fury as he turned to see the Land Rover rapidly leaving.

"I do believe we might have pissed him off just a little bit" Jack remarked with a wry smirk as he watched Adebesi disappearing from sight in the cracked rear-view mirror.

"Where's the seat belt in this old rust bucket?" Megan asked as she looked around the debris laden interior of the cab of the old Land Rover which had most definitely seen better days.

"It's a 1973 Series IIB Land Rover 109" Jack explained as they jolted along the rough farm track "Seat belts were an optional extra in those days."

"Ah hell!" Megan then exclaimed as they banged across a particularly spine jolting hole in the road "This thing is going to fall apart at this rate."

"Don't worry love" Jack tried to reassure her "These things are built to last until doomsday."

"Did it mention anything in the manufacturers description about that?" Megan then asked as another black four by four vehicle along with two motorcycles appeared from a side track and cut them off.

"Dam it!" Jack replied as he hit the brakes and brought the Land Rover to a sudden stop before quickly reversing and turning around to head back the way they had just come.

"Is there a Plan 'B' by any chance?" Megan asked as she looked over her shoulder to see that the black four by four car and the two motorcycles were as expected now in pursuit of their rapidly ailing vehicle.

"I think we need to take the high road" Jack confirmed as he swerved off the track and drove through a wooden field gate and onto open ground "Those modern four by fours have all the off road capability of a dead tortoise, we'll soon out run them."

Megan looked across at Jack with a definite look of uncertainty to which he responded by merely looking across at her with a wry smile as if by way of reassurance.

As they bumped across the field, Adebese and his men arrived at the gate whereupon both his and the second four by four vehicle immediately became bogged down.

"Imbeciles!" Adebese angrily called out as he got out of his vehicle and immediately stopped one of the motorbikes, forcing its rider off and taking his automatic weapon before climbing on himself and speeding off across the field in pursuit of the rapidly disappearing Land Rover.

"Ah nuts!" Jack exclaimed as with one particularly hard jolt, the rear-view mirror fell off and crashed into the foot well of the cab accompanied by a shriek of shock from Megan.

"I think there is a motorbike following us" Megan then confirmed as she looked back through the rear window "It looks like that creep Adebese again."

"I wonder if he has calmed down yet?" Jack asked as they reached some trees and he began to weave his way around them.

His question was swiftly answered when the rapidly approaching Adebese opened fire with his automatic weapon with bullets striking surrounding trees and the tailgate of the Land Rover.

"I am starting to find this guy really irritating!" Jack exclaimed as he continued to swerve through the trees until, with some understandable relief from both Megan and himself, they reached the paved road.

Adebese reached the paved road a few moments later where he immediately abandoned the motorbike, casually dumping it by the side of the road before climbing back in to the black Mercedes four by four which screeched to a halt a moment later and then accelerated away, continuing the pursuit.

Despite its vintage, the Land Rover managed to maintain a decent pace along the road which Jack took with reasonable assumption that they were heading back towards London or at least some form of civilisation.

"Oh shit..." Jack remarked as he then saw Adebese's black Mercedes SUV reappear behind them, clearing continuing the pursuit.

"Huh?" Megan responded to which Jack motioned to the rear-view mirror "Oh, they've found us."

"Well we aren't going to keep ahead of them in this old thing for much longer" Jack confirmed "and if they catch us, we are probably done for."

Behind Jack and Megan, Adebese was staring directly ahead from the front passenger seat at the Land Rover in the distance, his look being one of intense determination.

"My Lord" one of Adebese's men urgently called after taking a call on his mobile "There's a problem!"

"Speak up Brother!!" Adebese prompted.

"The Citadel has fallen to the authorities" the man confirmed.

"We need to get to the Haven quickly" Adebese then instructed.

"But, My Lord, what about the non-believers?" the man then asked, gesturing to the Land Rover with Jack and Megan ahead of them.

"They can wait" Adebese menacingly confirmed "Their time will come, all of them."

"Where the hell did they go?" Jack exclaimed as he and Megan looked around and realised that Adebese and his men were no longer in pursuit.

"Perhaps they changed their mind?" Megan suggested.

"I don't like it" Jack responded as he stopped the vehicle and they both looked around.

"Jack" Megan then called "Over there!" she indicated in the distance where the vehicle that had been pursuing them could be seen speeding away from them.

"He's heading back towards central London" Jack commented as he quickly reversed the Land Rover around into a side street in order to turn around.

"We will never keep up with them in this old crate" Megan remarked as Jack floored the accelerator and set off in pursuit.

"It's got some decent poke but it is not much of a match for a top of the range Mercedes" Jack admitted.

"Whoa..." Megan exclaimed as Jack took advantage of the Land Rover's four-wheel drive capability and cut across grass verges in an attempt to close the gap.

A few moments later Jack returned to the paved road a couple of hundred yards behind Adebese's vehicle.

"There you are!" Jack called "Come on!" he then called to the car.

"Where did you learn to drive one of these old things anyway?" Megan then asked.

"The Falkland Islands" Jack responded "Err, long story..." he then sheepishly added.

Jack drove the Land Rover at the absolute limit of its ability forcing both he and Megan to hold on as they lurched and bumped over every hole, rut and imperfection in the road.

"Do you know what speed you were doing Sir?" the uniformed patrol officer asked the driver of the car that he and his colleague had just pulled over.

"Erm, forty five Officer?" the driver tentatively suggested.

"Try again mate..." the other patrol officer wryly remarked.

"Nearer sixty five more like" the first officer confirmed but then all three of them had their attention diverted when a car sped past them, quickly followed by the sound of squealing brakes from a second vehicle immediately behind them.

"What the...?" the other patrol officer remarked.

"Jack?" the first patrol officer called as he recognised the driver of the Land Rover that had stopped behind their patrol car.

"Tony!" Jack responded as he and Megan swiftly approached.

"What are you doing in this part of town?" Tony then asked.

"Getting an upgrade" Jack explained "I need to borrow your car mate" he then confirmed as he then got in the patrol car's driving seat and started the engine whilst Megan got in the passenger side.

"What?" Tony responded.

"Don't worry, I'll bring it back" Jack called out of the side window before quickly accelerating away.

"The Duty Commander is never going to believe this!" the other officer commented as she and Tony watched as their patrol car disappeared into the distance.

"This is more like it" Megan remarked as Jack quickly closed the gap on the target vehicle.

"Those two buttons on the left-hand side" Jack motioned towards a control panel in front of Megan "Press them" he urged.

"Oh yes!!" Megan called out with glee as her action pressing the buttons activated the blue flashing lights and sirens "I've always wanted to do that!"

"Hi there!" Jack called as he noticed that Adebese's vehicle had suddenly sped up in response to the sirens being activated.

"Here we go!" Megan remarked.

Many miles away from the pursuit, Tracy and The Commander were still overseeing the search of the Citadel when a call came through.

"Angel One from Control, are you receiving, over?" came the call over Tracy's radio.

"Angel One receiving, this had better be good, over" Tracy responded.

"Duty Commander Cryer just called us from the Sierra Oscar Area Control Room" the Control Room Supervisor called "Apparently, and I quote good old Bob word for word here, some whippersnapper junior officer from the Transport Division along with his bird just 'borrowed' their area patrol car and sped off towards Central London following some nutter in a black Mercedes SUV."

"Darling!" Tracy called across the room to The Commander "I think I know where Jack is."

"What's happened?" The Commander asked as he came over.

"It looks like Jack has borrowed Sun Hill's area car and is headed into town" Tracy confirmed.

"Control from Eagle One" The Commander then called into his radio "Patch me through to the frequency for the south side area patrol cars please" he then requested.

"Okay Sir, you are on" came the response a couple of moments later.

"Lima Tango Nine Nine Three from Eagle One" The Commander then called.

"What the...?" Megan responded as The Commander's voice emerged from the radio set in front of her.

"Whoa..." Jack called out as he swerved around a bus that had started to pull out in front of him as he drove at high speed with lights and sirens in full cry down Sutton High Street.

"Get that will you?" Jack called across as he continued to concentrate on his driving as the target vehicle, the black Mercedes four by four maintained its distance some hundred yards ahead.

"What did your last secretary die of?" Megan wryly asked as she picked up the radio handset "Jack's kind of busy right now, can I take a message?"

"That's Megan" Tracy exclaimed upon hearing her voice over the radio to which The Commander nodded in agreement.

"I know this is going to sound like a silly question Megan" The Commander responded "But, erm what's going on?" he tentatively asked.

"We are currently pursuing some toe rag by the name of Adebese and several of his trigger-happy goons" Megan explained.

Tracy and The Commander took one look at each other and then proceeded to run out of the building, rushing past the various officers who were escorting various Ixion prisoners out to waiting vans before reaching their own official car whereupon Tracy got in the front passenger seat whilst The Commander got behind the wheel and started the engine.

"Where are you?" The Commander then called over the radio as he accelerated quickly away down the dirt track.

"That's a good question" Megan remarked "Where the hell are we?"

"Just passing Sutton Bus Garage heading north" Jack called across "Speed eight five miles an hour."

"Crikey, that Adebese guy is really motoring" Megan commented as the pursuit continued.

"What are you driving?" The Commander was heard to ask over the radio.

"BMW Five Series pursuit special with over two hundred and eighty seven thousand on the clock and rather spongy brakes" Jack commented "Your old Cortina has better road holding at this speed than this clapped out old crate."

"Sounds like I had better have a word with our crack team of accountants and rustle up some new area cars" Tracy commented "They are not going to like that..."

"Jack, were do you think you are headed?" The Commander then asked.

"Get out of the bloody way you prat!" Jack was heard to call.

"Erm, we think this guy is heading towards central London" Megan confirmed "We are flashing through South Morden now" she then called.

"Control from Angel One" Tracy called "Mobilise everything we have that is on a direct line of travel from where Lima Tango Nine Nine Three is now through to Central London."

"Some armed backup might be a good idea" Jack then called "Adebesi has several of his Soldiers of Ixion goons and that gun nut Reaper with him and they are almost certainly tooled up."

"Zulu One" Bob was heard to call at that point "Roger that, rolling to you."

Ahead of Jack in the black Mercedes, Adebesi was making an urgent telephone call in a strong Afrikaans dialect whilst Reaper was driving swiftly and skilfully through the traffic with ease.

"At our current rate we should reach safety in about fifteen minutes" Reaper estimated, information that Adebesi re-laid in his own language to his people on the other end of the phone "We need to shake this guy off our ass though" he then nodded towards the rear view mirror where in the distance Jack's patrol car could be seen still in pursuit.

"Not a problem Brother" one of the two armed men responded as he and his associate took out automatic weapons and checked them.

Over on the opposite side of Greater London, The Commander was driving quickly through the traffic with Tracy pretty much constantly on her mobile and the radio both sending and receiving updates.

"All right, cheers Bob" Tracy called before terminating her call.

"Get a bloody driver's licence you idiot!" The Commander shouted as he was forced to swerve around a car that was being driven in complete ignorance of the half dozen Security Service vehicles with sirens and lights in full cry that was coming up behind it.

"Bob has a van load of his guys flooring it has best as is possible in a knackered Sherpa minibus to try and intercept Adebese and his merry men on route" Tracy confirmed "and everything our local lads and lasses can find in the area is being rolled in Jack's direction."

"Lovely" The Commander responded, "Ruddy idiot!" he then shouted at another inattentive driver who nearly collided with the increasing number of Security Service vehicles that were now speeding along on approach to Central London.

On the other side of Central London as Jack continued his pursuit, he was joined by a couple more Security Service cars which fell in line behind him as they sped on, the black Mercedes still managing to maintain the same distance ahead of them.

"We are definitely heading for the centre of town" Megan remarked as she studied an A to Z map of Greater London.

"Doesn't exactly narrow it down" Jack admitted "Hang on" he then called as he was forced to execute a textbook perfect handbrake turn before putting his foot flat down back on the accelerator.

Vehicles and pedestrians scattered in all directions as first the Mercedes and then the pursuing vehicles with sirens and lights came screaming through.

"Whoa!" Jack then exclaimed as he slammed on the brakes as the vehicle he was pursuing suddenly stopped ahead of him before the reversing lights came on and it began to reverse at speed towards them.

"What the...?" Megan began to exclaim but then suddenly found Jack pushing her down below the level of the dashboard as the Mercedes screeched to a halt right in front of them, the two men in the rear of the car then appeared out of the side windows and opened fire with automatic weapons towards them.

"Christ!" Jack exclaimed as Megan shrieked and they were showered with granules of glass as the windows were shattered.

"All units be aware, reports of shots fired" came the call over the radio as the gunfire abated and the Mercedes was heard to speed off again and Jack sat back up before checking that it was safe for Megan to sit up too.

"You okay love?" Jack asked to which Megan nodded in confirmation.

"Well, what are you waiting for?" Megan then encouraged Jack "Get after them then!"

"Yes Ma'am" Jack cheekily responded before hitting the accelerator and resuming the pursuit.

"Lima Tango Nine Nine Three from Zulu One" Bob's voice was heard over the radio "You okay mate?" he asked.

"The windscreen has a few holes in it but otherwise we are okay" Jack confirmed as the pursuit continued.

"Angel One to Control" Tracy called over the radio "We are just passing through Whitechapel, where is the pursuit now?" she asked.

"Heading towards the river" came the response.

"Definitely heading for the centre of town" The Commander commented.

"Zulu One here" Bob called over the radio "If we can somehow persuade the target vehicle to cross the river over a specific bridge of our choosing then we could create a pinch point and close the box on these guys."

"They are heading through Wandsworth" Tracy "Putney Bridge would be our best bet I would wager."

"Get Control to co-ordinate with all units in the area" The Commander ordered "See if we can gently persuade them towards Putney Bridge."

"Did you get that Bob?" Tracy called over the radio.

"On the way" Bob confirmed before turning to his driver "Geoff, take the next left and floor it the bastard" he then ordered.

"Road block on the right there" Megan motioned over to a turn off in the distance where the Mercedes was forced to bear to the left in response to the right hand route being blocked by Security Service vehicles which had the desired effect of diverting them.

"Putney Bridge it is then" Jack responded "Hopefully Bob and his guys will be setting up a nice little meet and greet for them."

"Zulu One from Control, are you receiving, over?" came the call over Bob's radio.

"Damm it..." Bob responded as he scrambled to turn up the volume on his radio set as he was struggling to hear it over the loud roar of the engine of the rough old van that was being driven hard at the very limit of its capability.

"Zulu One from Control, are you receiving, over?" the call was repeated louder and much clearer.

"Go ahead Control" Bob finally managed to answer.

"The plan to send the target over the river at Putney Bridge seems to be working" the Control Room Supervisor "They should be there in about two minutes."

"Received" Bob confirmed "All right, you heard the lady" he then called to his driver "Let's set up a little welcoming committee."

Moments later Bob's team arrived at the south end of Putney Bridge amid squealing tyres and much commotion as passers-by scattered out of the way.

"Right!" Bob called out as his team deployed from their two vehicles along with additional officers who were also arriving on the scene "I want these side roads blocked off, make sure our friends don't slink off down the south side of the river" he indicated around the area at the south end of bridge.

"We're on it Guv" some Traffic Division officers confirmed before heading off to the west side of the street.

"Okay, everyone else I need on the bridge" Bob then continued to brief everyone else "The plan is for the target vehicle to drive over the bridge, we stop it at the half way point, the rest fall in behind them and then we will have them trapped with nowhere to go."

"How many in the target vehicle boss?" one of Bob's officers asked.

"At least four, two of which are confirmed as armed" Bob confirmed "These guys are professional ex military, they are tooled up and they know how to use them so I am hoping that surrounding them and significantly outnumbering them with superior firepower will make them change their world view."

"Come on, come on!" Jack called out as the pursuit continued north towards the river.

"Zulu One to Lima Nine Nine Three" Bob's voice came over the radio "You still with us mate?"

"Still here Bob" Jack confirmed "Should be with you in less than a minute."

"We're ready and waiting with a warm welcome" Bob confirmed as he looked around him at almost a hundred armed officers gathered, ready and waiting on the bridge "You shove him into our little trap and we will close the box in behind him."

"Sounds good to me" Jack agreed "Here we go" he then called as the bridge could be seen looming in the distance.

"All right everyone" Bob called out "Here he comes, let's show the target superior firepower and we can get this all done without a shot being fired."

Approaching the bridge, Reaper was not in the least bit worried by the roadblocks of Security Service vehicles and officers who were blocking off potential side exits, instead he was aiming directly for the bridge without hesitation or deviation.

Ahead of him was a blockade of vehicles, blue flashing lights and armed officers ready to intercept him and his passengers but the comfortable look of Reaper and Adebisi in the front of the vehicle showed that they were highly confident of coming out on top.

"What the...?" Bob remarked as, against all expectations the black Mercedes came to a steady halt approximately fifty feet short of the blockade that stretched across the centre of the bridge.

Immediately, further Security Service vehicles and officers rushed in behind and blocked off any possible escape back the way they had come whilst Jack pulled over to one side of the road.

"Stay in the car" Jack called across to Megan who nodded in agreement.

As Jack got out of the car he could hear Bob's voice calling out over a megaphone.

"You in the vehicle!" Bob ordered "Turn off the engine and step out of the vehicle, drop any weapons and take two steps back with your hands up!"

There was a nervous silence in the air as the hundred or so Security Service officers looked on at the Mercedes where its occupants could be seen, not moving in any way.

Jack discreetly walked behind the cordon down the side of the bridge to see what was going on as the tense stand-off continued.

"I'll say it again" Bob was then heard to call "Turn off the engine, step out of the vehicle, drop all weapons and take two steps back!"

"Something's wrong" Jack remarked to himself as he looked on at the stalemate situation.

"Boss!" one of Bob's officers called which caused his superior to put down the megaphone on the bonnet of his car in clear frustration.

"What?" Bob called, turning around to see what his officer was trying to point out to him "What the hell?" he then exclaimed.

Approaching the rear of the blockade from the north side of the bridge was a pair of red London buses, travelling at a fairly sedate pace.

"I thought the bridge was supposed to be sealed off" Bob responded "Get those jokers off it now!"

"Right Guv" a couple of Bob's officers responded but before they could act, the two approaching buses suddenly accelerated towards them.

"Oh hell, RUN!!" Jack shouted as he quickly realised what was really happening.

Officers quickly scrambled out of the way as the two buses were deliberately driven at their top speed into the vehicle barricade, smashing the cars out of the way before parting their formation and stopping either side of the Mercedes whereupon a significant number of armed men deployed and began to open fire all around.

"Whoa!" Jack exclaimed as he ducked for cover behind a patrol car as he and the other officers found themselves pinned down by automatic gunfire.

In the centre of the dramatic scene, the occupants of the Mercedes were being rescued and were swiftly escorted through the breach in the barricade to a waiting car that was brought into the scene along with two vans.

"Zulu One to Control, we need back up!!" Bob was heard to call over the radio as Jack ducked around various damaged vehicles and then stood up with his back against the rear of one of the buses, gun drawn.

"Oh no you don't" Jack uttered as he saw Reaper a short distance away, putting Adebese in the waiting car before it sped off at his instruction.

"Come on, let's go Brothers!" Reaper then called to his men whereupon under continuing fire, the armed men retreated back through the breach in the barricade and piled into the waiting vans.

Having seen his Brothers safely into the waiting vehicles, Reaper was about to get into one of the vans himself when he was stopped in his tracks by two gunshots that struck the ground right by his feet.

"Hold it right there pal!" Jack called as Reaper looked up with an obvious sense of surprise.

"What the f...?!?" Tracy exclaimed as she and The Commander arrived at the north end of the bridge just in time to see the car carrying Adebese rush past them at high speed heading into Kensington & Chelsea.

"Oh shit..." The Commander responded as he was forced to then swerve out of the way, almost hitting a parked vehicle as the two vans followed the car before heading off in different directions.

"Jesus Christ, it looks like a war zone" Tracy remarked as, whilst the patrol cars that had been following them dispersed off after the two vans, they approached the scene where Bob was in the process of ensuring everyone was all right amidst the wreckage.

"Wait!" Tracy then called out, causing The Commander to slam the brakes on "There's Jack" she pointed out.

"Oi!!" Jack was heard to call as he pursued Reaper on foot in the opposite direction towards the north end of the bridge.

Tracy quickly got out of the car and joined the pursuit on foot, but she was not needed as Jack managed to outrun Reaper and grabbed him, bringing both men to the ground in a crumpled heap on the pavement.

"Come here!" Jack called out as Reaper struggled to free himself from underneath his captor.

"Watch out!" Tracy shouted as she got near to see Reaper pull out a large military style hunting knife and was about to brandish it towards Jack only for Tracy to stamp hard on his wrist, forcing Reaper to drop the knife which she swiftly kicked away.

"Anything you say..." Jack began as he continued in the struggle to restrain Reaper.

"Do you want a hand?" Tracy asked.

"It's okay, I got this" Jack called back "Where was I?"

"Anything you say" Tracy reminded him.

"Sod it" Jack then exclaimed "Reaper?" he then held up his head and spoke to his face up close and personal "You're nicked!"

"Did anyone see what happened to Adebese?" The Commander asked as he surveyed the wreckage of damaged and bullet ridden vehicles strewn across the bridge.

"He was bundled into a black Lexus a few minutes ago" Bob confirmed as he helped one of his injured officers to his feet.

"Damm it!" The Commander responded, "The car that practically rammed us off the road at the north end of the bridge just now."

"Eagle One from Angel One" came the call over the radio "Jack has just nicked Reaper."

"Nice one!" The Commander responded.

"Guv!" Bob then called over "One of my lads has something for you."

"Let's hear it" The Commander called back as Tracy joined him.

"That car Sir" the clearly injured Specialist Firearms Unit officer responded as Bob held him up "Black Lexus, it had diplomatic plates" he informed them.

"Diplomatic plates?" The Commander exclaimed.

"Did you get any part of the number?" Tracy asked.

"Just saw the letter 'D' in the middle of two sets of numbers Sir" the officer confirmed.

"All right, thanks" Tracy then responded "You best get off to hospital."

"All units from Eagle One" The Commander called into his radio "Urgent message. Attention called to a black Lexus saloon, diplomatic plates but number unknown. Last seen north end of Putney Bridge about three or four minutes ago."

"What the hell is going on?" Dent asked as he walked into the Main Situation Monitoring Room at Thames House, MI5's Headquarters on the north bank of the River Thames in central London "I am reading reports on the BBC News website about a Security Service jamboree on Putney Bridge!"

"Details sketchy at the moment Boss" Pointer responded as he removed a radio headset "Apparently the Ixion Brotherhood have sprung Adebese and he was last seen scarping in an unidentified diplomatic plate carrying black Lexus."

"Extend the plot every help we can and alert the Diplomatic Section" Dent ordered "I have this strange feeling a certain senior officer is about to upset the Foreign Office..."

"One other bit of news Sir" Pointer then called "You'll like this."

"Hit me" Dent responded.

"Reaper has been nicked" Pointer confirmed to which Dent gave a fist pump of delight "Arresting officer shown as none other than call sign Lima Tango Nine Nine Three."

"Nice one Jack, nice one" Dent responded with a broad smile.

"Sir!" one of the operatives in the room called across "I think I have got something on the Diplomatic Plate vehicle!"

"Thames House Operations to Eagle One, urgent message, over?" the call came over The Commander's radio.

"Eagle One receiving" The Commander responded.

"Dent here Sir, I think we may have your diplomatic plated car" came the explanation.

"Talk to me" The Commander prompted.

"One of our Diplomatic Surveillance Operations just noted an unfamiliar diplomatic plated black Lexus saloon stuck in a traffic jam and trying to just a little too hard to avoid attracting attention" Dent confirmed.

"Where?" The Commander asked as he attracted Tracy's attention and together, they ran back to their car.

"Currently on the King's Road, stuck in traffic approaching Sloane Square" Dent responded.

"On the way!" The Commander responded as he started the car whilst Tracy got on the phone.

"Simon" Tracy called over the phone to Fuller as The Commander quickly accelerated away back across the bridge towards the north side of the river with lights and sirens in full cry "MI5 have spotted our missing diplomatic plated car in a traffic jam approaching Sloane Square" she informed him "See if you can find it on the traffic cameras."

"Time to take the back roads" The Commander remarked as he headed straight down a narrow side street, the sound of the sirens echoing all around the high walls of the buildings either side.

"Come out, come out, wherever you are..." Fuller remarked as he scanned the various live traffic camera feeds in the King's Road and Sloane Square area until he did a double take at one view which he quickly took remote control of the camera and zoomed in.

"Gotcha!" Fuller then called out before reaching for the telephone.

"Get out of the way!!!" The Commander shouted as he swerved around another couple of cars that were getting in the way as he sped through the narrow side streets.

"Eagle One from Control" Fuller was heard to call over the radio "Target vehicle, black Lexus saloon registration number Three Four One Delta Four Zero Eight, currently moving slowly around the north west corner of Sloane Square."

"You got an owner of that yet?" Tracy asked.

"Should be able to get some idea from the country code on the plates" The Commander remarked "but I can hazard a guess..."

"Registered to the Consulate of the People's Democratic Republic of..." Fuller read from his computer read out.

"...Mobuto" The Commander finished the sentence.

"Yes Sir" Fuller responded with some slight surprise "How did you know that?"

"Intuition..." The Commander confirmed as he turned out of a side street and into the busy traffic on the King's Road.

"We are never going to get him in this mess!" Tracy gestured towards the heavy slow-moving traffic with a sense of exasperation.

"Where is the Mobuto Consulate?" The Commander asked as despite the sirens, flashing blue lights and him hitting the horn repeatedly, the traffic held solid, refusing to move.

"According to the Diplomatic Protection Division, Delabole Street, number thirty three" Fuller called which prompted Tracy to consult a London A to Z.

"Two streets from here, take that left just up ahead" she prompted.

"Hold on to your hat!" The Commander responded as he turned off the road, mounting the pavement and managing to drive through to the turn off and then into the side street

"Next right then first left" Tracy directed as The Commander drove at high speed through the narrow back streets until the target vehicle cut across in front of them at a junction.

"Gotcha!" The Commander exclaimed as he turned into the road behind the Lexus which had now accelerated significantly having seen the Security Service car in their rear-view mirrors.

Moments later the Lexus came to a sudden stop immediately outside a particular building and before The Commander could reach it, the car's occupants had decamped and proceeded quickly inside.

"In there, in there!" one officer shouted as Tracy and The Commander quickly got out of the car almost before it had come to a stop.

"Got it, thanks!" The Commander acknowledged as he and Tracy led approximately a dozen officers up the formal stone steps and through the ornate wooden double doors.

"Hold it right there Adebese!" The Commander called as he saw him nearing the top of the staircase that dominated the centre of the main entrance hall.

With over a dozen guns now pointed directly at his back, Adebese wisely stopped a few steps short of the top of the staircase and calmly turned around.

"Sebastian St. John Adebese!" The Commander called "Put your hands up, you are under arrest."

"I don't think so Mr. Policeman" Adebese confidently responded.

Suddenly there was the sound of raised voices from all sides as armed men in military fatigues, barking orders in a strong African dialect, emerged from all sides and surrounded the officers as well as forming a protective wall between them and Adebese.

"All right, all right!" Tracy called out to the other officers "Lower your weapons" she ordered.

At that point, a tall and neatly dressed official appeared at the top of the staircase, was seen to warmly greet Adebese with a shake of hands and an embrace before heading down the steps towards them.

"Good evening officers" the man politely yet firmly called as he came to a stand immediately opposite Tracy and The Commander "May I enquire as to the nature of this intrusion by you and your associates please?"

"I'm sorry" The Commander responded as he re-holstered his firearm "You would be...?"

"Ambassador Peter Boru" the man confirmed "Duly appointed diplomatic representative to the United Kingdom for the People's Democratic Republic of Mobuto."

"Ambassador" The Commander formally replied "I am National Security Service Administrator General Sir Edward Regent, this is Metropolitan Divisional Commander Tracy Caverner and we are here to place that man..." he pointed directly at Adebese standing just behind the Ambassador, smirking knowingly "...under arrest."

"Hmm..." Ambassador Boru looked back momentarily at Adebese "Err, I don't think so."

It was at this point that Tracy discreetly stepped back a bit to make a phone call.

"And why not?" The Commander asked even though he could already sense where this was leading.

"Mr. Adebese is a citizen of Mobuto, a highly respected one in fact" Ambassador Boru began to explain "He has full diplomatic protection status granted by our President himself."

"Oh really?" The Commander responded, clearly unimpressed.

"Furthermore, this is the Embassy of Mobuto which means you and your associates are currently standing on Mobutian territory" Ambassador Boru continued to explain.

"Tracy" The Commander called aside "Get me the..."

"Foreign Secretary?" Tracy responded, passing him her mobile phone as she had already made the call.

"Thanks love" The Commander responded as he took the phone "Adrian, I have a diplomatic situation here."

"I think you will find that your Foreign Secretary will confirm you have no jurisdiction here" Ambassador Boru informed Tracy as The Commander continued to discuss the situation with the Foreign Secretary.

"Yes Sir, I understand" The Commander was heard to say which saw Adebese and Ambassador Boru both increase their smirks whilst Tracy just glared at them in return.

"Problem Mr. Policeman?" Adebese taunted as The Commander finished the call and returned to the front of the confrontation.

"It has been confirmed to me that Mr. Adebese is indeed in possession of full diplomatic status" The Commander confirmed "Be assured however we will be pursuing this matter through the courts and directly with your President, Mr. Ambassador."

"I can wait silly Mr. Policeman" Adebese taunted once again before starting back up the stairs.

"You can run but you can't hide!" The Commander warned.

"Oh..." Adebese calmly responded "I have no intention of hiding, quite the opposite in fact" he ominously warned.

"You step so much as a toenail outside this embassy and I'll nick you" The Commander confirmed "You have my word."

"Be seeing you..." Adebese signed off before disappearing from sight.

"These gentlemen here are the assigned elite detachment of the Mobutian Army" Ambassador Boru indicated the soldiers surrounding them almost with a sense of pride "They will open fire if you persist with remaining on our territory."

"Come on love" Tracy prompted, taking her husband's arm "There is nothing more we can do here" to which The Commander reluctantly nodded in agreement.

"Colonel" Ambassador Boru called to the leader of the soldiers "Kindly escort our guests off the premises."

The prisoner escort van, accompanied by several escorting Transport Division marked vehicles and motorcycles, screamed through the centre of London with lights and sirens in full cry, ensuring that their progress was swift and unimpeded.

"All right everyone" Jack called from the front passenger seat of the leading vehicle "we are almost home so, two motorcycles and Car Three follow us down, the rest stay on station at the entrance until I give the all clear."

"Here we go" Appleby confirmed as he slowed down at the top of High Holborn before turning sharply around and descending down a cobblestone surfaced ramp that led down the centre of the road to the old Kingsway Tram Subway below, now the subterranean car park and access for the Transport Division headquarters building directly above.

As planned, Appleby and Jack led the convoy down, the Prisoner Escort Van followed in close formation whilst two motorcycles and another patrol car brought up the rear with the remaining vehicles blocking off the entrance to ensure no uninvited guests attempted to interfere.

Below ground, the Prisoner Escort Van was reversed up to the Custody Suite entrance and armed Security Service officers formed a cordon.

"Okay everyone" Jack then called "Let's get him out."

With that command, the rear doors of the Van were opened and Reaper, shackled and handcuffed to two officers, emerged, limping somewhat where his artificial leg had been damaged when he was arrested.

Jack, Appleby and the other officers watched as Reaper was duly led inside where he was immediately taken to a cell and secured.

"All right ladies and gents" Jack confirmed over the radio "Our boy is safely tucked away, you can stand down now. Thanks everyone, good job!"

As the various officers duly dispersed, they were joined by Shelby who was walking with the aid of a stick and with almost his entire leg encased in a large plastic medical splint device.

"You got him then?" Shelby remarked.

"Oh yes..." Jack confirmed with a very broad smile "We got him."

"You got him you mean" Appleby remarked "The rest of us barely got a sniff of the action, you were moving so fast."

"Now all you have to do is keep hold of him" Shelby commented.

"Oh, he is my collar, he is going nowhere" Jack determinedly confirmed.

"Yeah..." Shelby slightly reluctantly replied "Erm..."

"What?" Jack asked directly.

"There are a couple of visitors upstairs" Shelby confirmed "They arrived not long after you slammed the cuffs on Reaper, they need to talk to you urgently."

"There goes my hope for a quiet evening in with the other half and a pile of paperwork" Jack responded with a slightly despondent tone "All right then, where are they?" he then asked.

"Guvnor's office" Shelby confirmed.

"Do you want me to talk to them?" Appleby asked.

"No, it's all right Sir" Jack replied "I'll talk to them, but I would appreciate you being in on it though."

"The Hand of Chaos calls out to you my Brothers in Chaos!" Adebese preached from the second floor balcony of the Mobuto Embassy where already a crowd of interested onlookers, passers by and what looked like Ixion Brotherhood supporters were gathering on the street below.

"He's getting off to an early start" Tracy remarked as she and The Commander stood by their car preparing to depart.

"I stand before you this evening as an imprisoned warrior dedicated to the cause of freedom of chaos and I call upon you my Brothers to rise up in my name!" Adebese continued his preaching.

"Ah hell..." The Commander responded "Eagle One to Control" he then called into his radio "We are going to need a round the clock detachment of Diplomatic Protection Group officers camped outside the Mobuto Embassy in Delabole street and regular drive by patrols" he explained.

"Best make sure they have plenty of flasks of coffee and sandwiches" Tracy remarked "I reckon this is going to be a long job..."

"Aye..." The Commander regretfully agreed as they got in the car and drove off, leaving Adebese to continue his preaching to the street.

"Jack, this is..." Shelby began to introduce as they came into the office.

"Major Ford" Jack confirmed as he and the formally uniformed Head of the Armed Forces warmly shook hands "We are old friends" he confirmed.

"Looking good young man" Major Ford confirmed.

"And this is Benjamin Nathaniel" Shelby then introduced the other man present "Israeli Intelligence Service, London Office."

"Pleased to meet you" Jack confirmed as he and Nathaniel shook hands.

"Likewise" Nathaniel confirmed "Heard a lot about you."

"All good I hope" Jack wryly remarked to nods of confirmation "This is my Guvnor, Divisional Commander Jim Appleby."

"Welcome" Appleby responded as he too exchanged warm handshakes with the two visitors "Have a seat everyone, by all means" he then gestured.

"Firstly, I wanted to congratulate you young man on arresting Colonel Reaper" Major Ford began "A fine piece of work, well done."

"Thank you Major" Jack responded.

"Nice work" Nathaniel agreed "We have been wanting to get this guy for ten years now" he explained.

"Twelve years for us" Major Ford added in agreement.

"I know Reaper is a psychopathic death worshipping gun for hire" Jack remarked "What's your interest in him if I may ask?"

"About fifteen years ago there was a particularly nasty little civil war in an otherwise little known or just plain forgotten corner of Africa nowadays known as the People's Democratic Republic of Mobuto" Major Ford began to explain.

"Would that be the same Mobuto that Adebese has just bolted to the Embassy of by any chance?" Appleby asked, already sensing a connection.

"The very same" Major Ford confirmed.

"Adebese is another gentleman we would dearly love to have a little chat with too" Nathaniel added, practically seething at the mention of his name.

"Hmm..." Jack responded.

"The civil war for want of a much more descriptive term" Major Ford continued "was effectively tribal in nature but backed up by some rather unpleasant embryonic extremist groups and managed to result in the annexation of a chunk of land that now forms Mobuto."

"A good old-fashioned land grab then?" Appleby remarked.

"Quite" Major Ford agreed before continuing "Adebese rose from the wreckage of the conflict to become the head of the Mobuto Armed Forces but there were still problems in the region mostly from the disgruntled locals who got booted out in the process of Mobuto's creation so the United Nations sent a peacekeeping team in."

"Which presumably is where our boy Reaper enters the story?" Appleby suggested.

"He was the Officer in Charge, a Colonel at the time" Major Ford confirmed "A multinational group of forty men."

"The various Ixion goons we have encountered that we have managed to identify have all had various military backgrounds but from different countries" Jack remarked "A United Nations team drawn from different nationalities would explain the otherwise eclectic mix."

"The duly elected President of the then newly formed People's Democratic Republic of Mobuto managed to persuade Colonel Reaper and most of his group that it was far more lucrative to work for him instead" Major Ford continued to explain "They went on to pillage, murder and wipe out anyone who got in the way of the new regime, committing war crimes by the hundred."

"Just how democratic is the People's Democratic Republic of Mobuto?" Jack asked out of curiosity.

"Well the President was elected by a democratic process" Nathaniel confirmed "One hundred percent turnout on polling day by the country's registered voters which consisted solely of the President himself, his wife and the Head of the Armed Forces."

"Nice..." Jack sneered in response.

"You said most of Reaper's group" Appleby picked up on one point "Presumably not everyone on the Colonel's team felt the same way and became, what? Mercenaries?"

"As far as we are aware seven of the forty men in that detachment refused to play along with Reaper's sick little plans" Major Ford confirmed "Three were dragged out of the wrecked remains of their UN Land Rover which had wound up at the bottom of Lake Mobuto, two disappeared altogether never to be seen again and another was killed in action as far as we are aware."

"The seventh was our man" Nathaniel added "He was one of our agents who we had placed in the Unit as we were dearly hoping to catch up with the new head of the Mobuto Armed Forces, Adebese as we wanted him for killing three of our citizens in a car bomb in Kenya a few years earlier."

"The Israeli man kept his head down initially and then when he thought it was safe, contacted his United Nations superiors directly, he was about to blow the whistle on Reaper and his band of thugs" Major Ford continued.

"Unfortunately, before we could extract him, he disappeared" Nathaniel added with sadness "He turned up a few weeks later on a cargo plane at Tel-Aviv airport, packed into several very small boxes personally addressed to the President."

"Poor sod..." Appleby remarked.

"What happened to Colonel Reaper and his band of merry men?" Jack asked.

"A few years later once the dust had settled and Mobuto began to gain some recognition as an independent state, they quietly disappeared" Major Ford explained "They went freelance, turning up in all sorts of particularly unpleasant parts of the World, specialising as far as we can ascertain in violence and wet work for cash."

"And now this thug and his band of violent muppets are the 'Soldiers of Ixion' and over here" Jack concluded, his concern obvious.

"And they have Adebese and his nutters, followers, whatever you want to call them along for the ride" Major Ford then added.

"All right" Jack then decided to get down to the case at hand "I've got Reaper tucked up downstairs, what do I do with him?"

"Charge him" Major Ford confirmed "With what I understand you have on him from your investigation you can get him put away for at least fifteen years, more if he doesn't get early release for good behaviour."

"All right" Jack agreed "I get to process and prosecute him, I want that" he confirmed "Once I have ensured he is locked up, I don't really care what happens after that just as long as I never see him free again."

"Oh, you can be assured of that" Nathaniel confirmed "We have waited this long, a few extra years won't matter as we are a very patient lot."

"All right, understood" Tracy called over the radio "We should be back in a couple of minutes, Angel One, Out."

"We should have taken the bus..." The Commander remarked as he drove them through the heavy central London traffic at little more than walking pace at times.

"Do you want the good news or the bad news?" Tracy then asked.

"Hmmm..." The Commander mused for a moment as the traffic lights ahead changed to green and he was able to drive a little further on around the corner into Victoria Street only to then stop again "I'll take the good news first" he then confirmed.

"Jack has managed to get Reaper safely back to Holborn nick where he is now locked up" Tracy confirmed "He is going to process and charge him tonight, Appleby has volunteered to be his second in the interview."

"Excellent" The Commander responded as the traffic began to slowly move off again "What's the bad news?" he then asked.

"Half a dozen agency representatives are waiting for us at The Yard who all want a piece of Reaper and Adebese" Tracy explained "Also we may be looking at the possibility that Orbison might walk if the noises from the Attorney General's office are anything to go by, our old friend Bermann has been on the case apparently."

"Why am I not surprised?" The Commander sarcastically replied as he spotted a gap open in the traffic ahead and he accelerated away to reach the turn off for Broadway before bearing left.

"Seems like Bermann has been burning the ears of anyone in the Attorney General's office and the Home Office for the last two hours, pretty much started the moment we slammed the cuffs on Orbison apparently" Tracy explained "It looks like he is trying to shift the blame for everything away from Orbison and say it was Adebese and Reaper that put him up to it and that he was an innocent pawn in their game."

"Great..." The Commander responded as they reached the front entrance of New Scotland Yard and he stopped the car immediately outside.

Outside the main entrance there were a large number of representatives of the Press and television news media, all firing off questions amid the bright lights from cameras and flash bulbs as Tracy and The Commander emerged from their car.

"Smile dear..." Tracy quietly remarked aside to her husband as, arm in arm, they paused and faced the cameras for a few moments.

"Ladies and Gentlemen!" The Commander then called, raising his other arm for silence "LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!" he then called again, somewhat louder which finally yielded the desired affect and the gathered members of the press began to quiet down.

"I am sure you will appreciate that it has been a very long day for many of us here, yourselves included" The Commander then announced "As soon as we have got our head together and consumed a not inconsiderable amount of tea, we will release a formal statement later this evening concerning today's events and hold a full press conference in the morning. Thank you" he declared.

Despite his request there were still some half-hearted attempts to fire questions at them as Tracy and The Commander turned away.

It was as they turned away however that they both noticed something behind the press gathering, on the other side of the road.

"You see that?" Tracy motioned towards the new development, a group of people dressed in almost religious like hooded cloaks who were now gathering and beginning to set up banners and placards, many of them with a pro Ixion Brotherhood message.

"Yes love..." The Commander confirmed as the automatic sliding doors opened and they proceeded inside "What with all this hullabaloo and that nut job Adebese preaching his codswallop out on the Mobuto Embassy balcony pretty much unchecked, I fear this is just the beginning."

"Administrator General, Divisional Commander?" called a voice as they approached the Reception Desk which caused them both to turn around to see a tall slender man in his thirties, neatly pressed suit and silk tie, rise from a seat and greet them.

"Good guess" The Commander sarcastically responded.

"Excuse my husband" Tracy apologised "He's grumpy though a dangerous combination of a long day, a lack of freshly brewed tea and Christmas is coming up" she explained "and you are...?" she then asked.

"Ian Grantham" the man introduced himself slightly nervously "I am the new Foreign Office Liaison to the National Security & Police Service" he explained "It's an honour to meet you both."

"We haven't got a Foreign Office Liaison" The Commander recalled "at least not that I know of."

"I think we do now..." Tracy concluded.

"You have a situation developing with a major internationally wanted terrorist and war criminal on foreign soil, consigned to an embassy right here in London" Grantham confirmed "Trust me, you will need me and I come at the insistence of the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister" he then produced a letter that he handed across.

The Commander took the letter, put on his reading glasses and studied the document carefully before respectfully folding it and returning it.

"Your credentials are impeccable Mr. Grantham" The Commander admitted.

"Oh, you can call me Ian Sir" Grantham confirmed.

"All right then Ian, find yourself a spare desk and a telephone somewhere on the top floor and we will have a proper chat later" The Commander responded.

"Yes Sir, Ma'am" Grantham replied "Thank you."

"Do the words rabbit in headlights mean anything to you?" Janice the Receptionist remarked with a wry smirk as they watched Grantham leave towards the lifts.

"Yeah..." Tracy agreed whilst The Commander merely nodded.

The tape recorder in the interview room buzzed for a few moments upon Jack pressing the record button before falling silent whereupon he took a seat alongside Appleby with Reaper sat, stony faced directly opposite across the small table.

"This is a taped interview" Jack formally began as he checked his watch "The time is twenty forty one on the twenty third of November, this interview is being conducted in Interview Room Three at the National Security & Police Service Transport Division custody suite in Holborn, London."

"Present are myself, Lieutenant Jack Regent, badge number Lima Tango Nine Nine Three, also present is..."

"Divisional Commander James Appleby, badge number Lima Tango One Zero One" Appleby then confirmed.

"And Adam Alexander Dennis Reaper" Jack then concluded the formal and legally required introduction.

Reaper merely remained seated, his arms crossed in front of him, sneering.

"I have to remind you that you are still under caution" Jack continued "You do not have to say anything unless you wish to do so but anything you do say may be given in evidence. Do you understand?"

Reaper formally nodded before uttering "Yes..."

"For the benefit of the tape, you have declined legal representation" Jack stated "Do you wish to change your mind Mr. Reaper?" he then asked.

Reaper merely shook his head in confirmation.

"Very well, at this time you are facing several serious charges including murder, kidnapping, conspiracy and half a dozen others" Jack began the interview "Do you have anything to say about any of this before we get down to the details?" he asked.

"No comment..." Reaper responded.

"In addition to our interest in you for various crimes" Jack then continued, unfazed by Reaper's refusal to comment "There are a number of outstanding warrants from several different agencies both here and overseas on your head as well, you've been a busy boy haven't you?"

"No comment..." Reaper responded once more although this time with a little smirk.

"At the last count there was the M.O.D. Police, our own Vice Squad, the Bomb Squad, the Israeli Intelligence lot and a couple of burly broad shouldered lads from MI5 all lining up to talk to you" Jack continued "But lucky me, I have got first dibs on you."

"Aren't you the lucky one?" Reaper responded.

"When you were arrested you were carrying this" Jack produced a clear plastic evidence bag containing a firearm which he then placed on the table.

"For the benefit of the tape Lieutenant Regent is showing the suspect exhibit JR1, a silver semi-automatic handgun and two clips of ammunition" Appleby declared for the tape recording.

"Being ex-military I am sure you know a lot about firearms" Jack continued "and as soon as we are finished here, this little beauty" he indicated the gun "will be on its way to our ballistics experts and I am willing to bet that the rifling of the barrel will be a match to some of the various slugs the forensics boys have spent the last week or so digging out of numerous dead people."

"No comment..." Reaper responded once again.

"Perhaps you would like to tell us about what happened to Leonard Raffety who was discovered dead by the side of the line at Star Lane earlier this week?" Jack asked, "He was murdered, a bullet in the back of the head, in fact I would say executed would be closer to the truth, wouldn't you?"

"No comment" Reaper restated firmly.

“There is also the execution style killings of Frederick Gladman and Trevor Granger along with the death of Raffety’s wife to explain” Jack carried on, unfazed by Reaper’s attitude to the proceedings “At the very least I am sure we could find something that will enable charges of conspiracy on those matters.”

“No... Comment...” Reaper responded with a smirk.

Jack looked across at Appleby for a moment who responded with a very subtle slight shake of the head before he continued.

“As it stands at the moment, on just the charges we have already listed you could be looking at fifteen to twenty years behind bars” Jack set out the position “Then there are whatever additional charges and prosecutions that other organisations may wish to bring against you which seem, even at a casual glance to me, many, varied and deadly serious.”

“No comment” Reaper once again defiantly replied.

“This is your chance to say something in your defence, anything!” Jack then pointed out “Otherwise you may not see the outside world again for decades” he warned.

Reaper said nothing.

“I tell you what” Jack then decided on a different tactic “You tell us everything you know about Michael Orbison’s operations, business interests and all the naughty things he is up to and I will make sure your co-operation is brought to the attention of the courts when the time comes.”

Reaper momentarily thought about this last proposition but soon decided to respond in the same way he had throughout the whole interview.

“No comment” he replied once more.

“Very well” Jack declared “In which case I declare this interview terminated!”

"Christ!" Dent exclaimed as he disconnected the call he had just received on his mobile before heading towards the main entrance of New Scotland Yard where he was joined by Sir Richard.

"You look glum" Sir Richard remarked as they headed through the door together "You've heard the bad news then?"

"Straight from the Ministry of so-called Justice's dedicated crack team of legal advisors" Dent confirmed, just about managing to contain his fury "As soon as the paperwork clears, Orbison walks."

"A disappointing result to be sure" Sir Richard agreed as Janice the Receptionist waved them through "Don't worry, he will get his comeuppance one day."

"I'm not so sure about that" Dent responded as they entered a waiting lift car and he pressed the button for the top floor.

"Have faith my friend" Sir Richard attempted to reassure him "I know Orbison has more connections than a telephone exchange and this whole thing stinks of high level political interference but one day he will make a mistake and we will nail him for good."

"Hmm" Dent replied as the lift reached the top floor and the doors opened "Then there is the Adebese mess."

"All the time he is in that embassy nobody can touch him" Sir Richard confirmed "and that is a situation that will not change unless there is a radical change of power in Mobuto, something I can't see happening for a very long time."

It was as they approached The Commander's office that they could both here a not inconsiderable argument, multiple raised voices shouting over each other coming from behind the door.

"What the...?" Dent remarked as they stood outside the door and listened for a few moments.

"Ah! That sounds like my sort of a party" Sir Richard remarked with a wry smile "Shall we?" he then gestured towards the door.

"Gentlemen, GENTLEMEN!!!" The Commander attempted to call for order from the half dozen people stood in front of him in his office, all arguing and talking loudly over each other as Dent and Sir Richard discreetly entered.

"OI!!!" Tracy then called loudest of all, banging the butt of her firearm on the desk loudly.

This finally had the desired effect as the noise subsided and they all turned towards her and The Commander.

"Right then!" The Commander resumed "As of this moment, none of us can have that death worshipping scumbag Adebese unless any of your respective Governments has any influence over the President of Mobuto but rest assured the moment he emerges from his hiding place I intend to throw the book at him, actually make that an entire library!"

"Any chance of first dibs at Reaper when you Transport Division lads have finished with him?" Ben Nathaniel, the Israeli Intelligence Service UK representative asked "When his military unit went rogue, they murdered one of our best covert agents and we want blood."

"Reaper is the Transport Division's collar" Tracy responded.

"Jack, err I mean Lieutenant Regent is going to be charging Reaper over at Holborn Nick within the next hour" Divisional Commander Appleby confirmed "Once he is banged up for the various serious charges we are slapping him with you are welcome to pop down with your legal teams and have a chat with him."

"We do have four members of Reapers old rogue unit in custody in the secure unit over at Charing Cross Hospital" The Commander remarked "They got some holes in them mind but as soon as they are fit to interview quite frankly you are welcome to them."

"I'll take them if I could please?" Nathaniel responded to which The Commander nodded in agreement.

"What about Orbison then?" CIA Area Chief Adam Barwell asked, "I've got a load of calls on my voicemail from Langley, they want him and in particular the details of his various financial dealings."

"Orbison is walking" The Commander regretfully confirmed which initially started off the arguments again but he quickly regained control and the voices subsided once more "I have already had this argument with the Prosecution Service, the Attorney General, hell I have even tried the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister, nothing doing."

"Isn't it great to have friends in high places..." Sir Richard sarcastically commented at the back to much mutual agreement from the others in the room.

"As far as we are concerned as long as Reaper is banged up and Adebese is going nowhere that is fine by us" Dent confirmed "Orbison we can keep an eye on, if he is sensible and from what we know he is one very bright cookie, he will be willing to keep his hands clean as he knows we will be watching."

"I think I speak on behalf of everyone here in saying that whatever happens, we all want to be kept fully informed at all times" Barwell admitted to nods of mutual agreement.

"Consider it done" The Commander readily agreed "I want Orbison and his band of nutters taken out of circulation just as much as all of you."

At that moment a message from his Personal Assistant flashed up on the display on the telephone on his desk which The Commander immediately took notice of.

"Err look..." The Commander then called "It's been a very long day for many of us and something has come up that needs my urgent attention so if you could all possible please excuse us? We can reconvene in the morning if anything else arises on this matter."

There were mutual nods and acknowledgments of respect as the various people in the office duly departed, Sir Richard being the last to leave resulting in Tracy and The Commander finally being alone.

"What's happened?" Tracy asked.

“Erm...” The Commander slightly evasively responded as he went over to the connecting door that led through to Tracy’s office next door and opened it to reveal Dawson standing there “This...”

“Ah...” Tracy remarked disdainfully.

“Can I come in?” Dawson asked.

“By all means” The Commander agreed as Dawson stepped through the door and was shown to a seat “So to what do we owe the pleasure of your company on such a lovely evening?” he then sarcastically asked, indicating the heavy rain beating against the window outside.

“During the course of my inquiries into the business and finances of Mr Orbison, I came across something rather interesting that I thought you may be interested in” Dawson went on to explain as he produced a file and presented it to them.

“What’s this?” Tracy asked with an understandable sense of distrust.

“Mr Orbison may be a complete and utter lunatic with ideas above his station and an ego to match” Dawson explained “but one thing he most definitely is, is highly intelligent and very savvy when it comes to the management of money.”

“Indeed” The Commander agreed “Despite having retrieved a not inconsiderable amount of financial information about his business, our Fraud Squad and the Inland Revenue guys have said there is not a lot they can prove, certainly not enough to pursue any kind of prosecution.”

“Quite...” Dawson confirmed “But there is something here that may be of use in undermining one of his most loyal supporters” he went on to explain “Page two, third entry down.”

The Commander watched as Tracy opened the file and turned to the indicated page.

“What am I looking at?” Tracy then asked.

“About a year ago at least five tax avoiding shell companies set up and distantly run by Orbison made significant cash contributions to a particular fund” Dawson continued to explain “All tax deductible of course.”

“Naturally...” The Commander agreed.

“Crikey!” Tracy exclaimed on seeing the numbers detailed in the file “That it is a hell of a lot of money!”

“About two hundred and fifty grand and change” Dawson confirmed “All directed at the same little fundraiser account.”

“Raising funds for what?” Tracy then asked.

“Two lines further down for the headline” Dawson explained “and then detailed down to the last penny on the following pages.”

The Commander duly scanned down the page, his eyes opened wide in response and then he turned over to the following pages to confirm what he had just seen before beginning to laugh.

“What’s so funny?” Tracy then asked before looking down at something in the file that The Commander then indicated “Bloody hell...” she then exclaimed as she too realised the significance of what was detailed on the pages before them.

“I thought you would like it” Dawson responded, “Makes for very interesting reading doesn’t it?”

“It does indeed Mr Dawson” The Commander readily agreed “It does indeed.”

Twenty minutes later, Tracy and The Commander was traveling through the dark streets of late-night London in the back of his official car with Sir Richard Crowthorne sat in the front whilst Kinderley was as ever doing the driving.

“I hate days like this” The Commander grimly admitted.

“I know the feeling” Sir Richard humbly agreed.

“You can’t win them all” Tracy responded, “At least that is what my Grandmother used to say.”

“Your Grandmother used to say quite a lot if I recall correctly” The Commander remarked.

“Well she was a Brummie” Tracy honestly admitted.

“We are here” Kinderley then called as he turned off the main road and pulled to a stop at the rear entrance of the Marylebone High Security Office just beneath the canopy over the entrance, affording them some protection from the highly inclement weather as they got out of the car and proceeded inside.

“All right, where is he?” The Commander called as he, Tracy and Sir Richard Crowthorne came into the Custody Suite area and the Duty Custody Supervisor produced the visitor book for them to sign.

“Cell number seven Sir” the Duty Custody Supervisor duly confirmed “The prisoner is with his solicitor at the moment and the Attorney General.

“Right, thanks” The Commander responded before turning to Tracy and Sir Richard “You too stay here, I’d like to handle this one on my own.”

“Are you sure love?” Tracy asked with obvious concern.

“This time, yes” The Commander confirmed before heading off towards the cells.

“Ah, Administrator General, so glad of you to join us!” Bermann called with much delight as The Commander appeared at the cell door.

“The pleasure is all yours I suspect” The Commander muttered quietly under his breath as he entered the room.

“Good evening Sir” the Attorney General then responded “Not that in either my personal, professional or legal opinion that there is anything actually good about it though” he then added.

“You can say that again” The Commander readily agreed.

“Gentlemen” Bermann prompted “If we may get on with it please, my Client is getting impatient at his illegal incarceration.

“All right then” The Commander reluctantly agreed “Let’s get on with it then.”

“Sir” the Attorney General confirmed before turning to Orbison who was already beaming with a huge smile “Michael Xavier Orbison, following detailed assessment of the charges that were filed against you, the evidence supporting those charges and having taken legal advice from both sides of the argument, it has been concluded that there is insufficient evidence to warrant the pursuing of a prosecution at this time.”

Bermann and Orbison both looked at each other at that point with big smiles.

“As a result of these conclusions, all charges are hereby dropped and you are free to go” the Attorney General then declared, showing him the cell door.

“Thank you so much” Orbison responded, shaking the Attorney General’s hand much to his disgust.

“Shall we?” Bermann showed his client the way but as they were about to leave, they were interrupted.

“Mr. Orbison” The Commander called whereupon Orbison turned and the two men came face to face “A word to the wise, keep your nose clean, reign in your minions, stay well off my radar” he sternly warned “because if you or any of your band of muppets so much as put a toe out of line I will sling your backside back in jail so fast you will think you are in a time warp, is that understood?”

“Hmm...” Orbison smirked in response “Be seeing you Commander...” he then calmly replied before leaving the cell with Bermann.

"Eurgh..." The Commander responded in disgust; a sentiment shared by the Attorney General.

A few minutes later, Sir Richard, Tracy and The Commander watched from an overlooking window as below them Orbison, Bermann and the rest of his legal team could be seen getting into the back of waiting car.

"There goes old Lord Teflon" The Commander remarked with a distinct sense of anger as the car drove off, heading out towards the main Marylebone Road.

"With a legal team like that watching his back and the connections he has got we won't be sticking any charges on him for quite some time I would wager" Sir Richard admitted.

"Any word from the Foreign Office on Adebesei?" Tracy asked as they proceeded downstairs towards the main entrance.

"All the time he is in the diplomatic protection of the Mobutu Government and safely tucked up in their embassy we can't even ring him up to ask how he is let alone touch him" Sir Richard reluctantly admitted.

"Damm..." The Commander responded "That preaching death worshipping fascist sack of shit is laughing at us" he remarked as they exited the building and approached The Commander's official car parked just ahead.

"I am happy to wait" Sir Richard commented "He can't go anywhere, the moment he leaves the Embassy he will either be arrested by our people or shot dead by any of the half dozen national secret service organisations who have him firmly at the top of their shit lists."

"Time to go home I think Love" Tracy then declared.

"One little errand to run first though" The Commander responded indicating the folder he was carrying.

"Oh yes..." Tracy responded in realisation.

"Want a lift home?" The Commander then asked.

"Err, no it's all right" Sir Richard confirmed thoughtfully "I think I will head over to my Club and interrogate a bottle of twenty five year old single malt, it's been that kind of week."

"I know that feeling" Tracy admitted.

"I want Orbison locked up again at the earliest opportunity" The Commander declared as he and Tracy got in the back of his official car "To jail immortal!" he then remarked, mocking the Ixion Brotherhood's infamous saying.

"Don't worry Commander" Sir Richard reassured him "It may take a bit of time, oh and probably a regime change in the charming country of Mobutu but the infamous 'Lord Chaos' and Adebesei will get their comeuppance sooner or later"

"Enjoy your single malt" Tracy called as Kinderley started the car.

"Oh, I intend to" Sir Richard confirmed as he closed the car door and watched as Kinderley drove off into the night.

The champagne bottle popped its cork loudly leading to a cheer from Orbison and Bermann as their car proceeded through the rain-soaked streets of Central London heading north.

"That, ladies and gentlemen is how you tell the criminal justice system to shove it up their arse!" Orbison gleefully announced as Bermann poured the champagne into his glass and its frothed over "Err in a legally speaking sense of course" he then poignantly added.

"Of course" Bermann quickly agreed, raising his glass in acknowledgement.

"A pity about Brother Reaper though" Orbison then added with regret "It looks like the tenacious young Lieutenant Regent finally got his man."

"That's being worked on from another angle" Bermann elusively confirmed "It's going to take a while though so Mr Reaper will just have to sit tight for the moment."

"Meantime Brother Adebese is safely tucked up in the Embassy, preaching to our special Brothers" Orbison remarked "Quite a cosy arrangement and there is not a damn thing the authorities can do about it!" he chuckled.

"The diplomatic legal arguments could take years" Bermann commented "and I will ensure they do until the time is right."

"Excellent, most excellent" Orbison declared "You my friend are worth every penny."

"Where to Sir?" the driver formally asked.

"My special sanctum in the country" Orbison confirmed "I have an announcement to make!"

"Administrator General Sir Edward Regent to see The Mayor" The Commander announced as he entered the outer office and proceeded straight to the main door "Is he in?"

"Sir!" the Personal Assistant protested as she rose from her seat and went to stop The Commander "You can't just barge in..."

"I wouldn't if I were you" Tracy politely but firmly warned as she stood in the Personal Assistant's way and prevented her from stopping The Commander who promptly open the door and proceeded inside "...and I would advise against making any calls either" she then added, taking the telephone handset out of the her hand and replacing it back where it belonged.

“Good evening Mr Mayor!” The Commander firmly announced as he entered the office and slammed shut the door behind him “I hope this is a bad time?”

“What the HELL is the meaning of this?!?” the Mayor demanded to know as he stood up behind his desk and glared at his unexpected sudden visitor before reaching for the telephone.

“Don’t!” The Commander sternly warned to which the Mayor then retreated his hand away again.

“So, to what do I owe this unexpected displeasure?” the Mayor then asked, “or did you just pop around to appraise my furniture whilst you pace up and down?”

“Here you go” The Commander casually slammed a file onto the Mayor’s desk in front of him.

“What’s this?” the Mayor then asked with some disdain as he proceeded to locate and put on a set of reading glasses.

“It’s a report” The Commander began to explain “Well, it’s a copy of a report actually, the original is stored somewhere very safe.”

“Go on...” the Mayor responded.

“It details certain financial transactions” The Commander continued “these interesting little nuggets of information only came to light in the last couple of hours, it details that eight months ago during your successful campaign to become Mayor, you received generous contributions to your fund from a number of sources.”

“What can I say” the Mayor responded, “You don’t get anywhere in politics these days without significant financial backing.”

“Of course” The Commander readily agreed “However this report has brought some interesting facts to light about the sources of some, no actually, almost all of your campaign funds.”

“My lawyers will be happy to inform you, ahem for a fee of course, that all donations made to any political campaign with which I have been associated with or a beneficiary of are made in the strictest of confidence and subject to background checks before any funds are accepted” the Mayor confidently announced.

“Yeah” The Commander casually dismissed that statement “Keep telling yourself that.”

The Mayor simply looked on at The Commander with a mixture of insult and indignancy.

“You see there are a number of companies and organisations listed in that there document that up until a couple of days ago were seemingly legitimate” The Commander went on to explain “That is until certain inquiries turned up new evidence.”

“None of this is impressing me so far Commander” the Mayor defiantly dismissed.

“Your campaign fund was approximately eighty five percent funded by companies that have at the heart of their operation one Mr Michael Xavier Orbison” The Commander announced “That psychotic nut job and his band of fruit loops generously donated you money that originated from an extensive international money laundering operation that over the years has provided clean and meadow fresh cash for all sorts of very unsavoury people and organisations including organised crime and international terrorism.”

“Bollocks...” the Mayor defiantly responded.

“No wonder you have been so keen to support Orbison and leap to his defence at the drop of a hat” The Commander responded with a gradually growing tone of anger in his demeanour.

“This could be disputed” the Mayor tried to build up a defence “There is no concrete proof that Orbison is linked to these companies or any organisations that they may or may not have represented or provided financial services for.”

“If you had asked me that last week you would have been correct” The Commander confirmed “However since certain personal files of Mr Orbison’s came into our possession, a whole new world of information has opened up, the Fraud Squad are crawling all over his accounts like a cheap suit and you, Mr Mayor have been dropped right in it.”

“I see...” the Mayor responded, sitting back in his chair.

“So here is the deal” The Commander then continued “You will immediately sever any associations, dealings or arrangements you have with Orbison and any of his associates, companies or organisations, you will cease any public support or defence for Orbison, his actions or the actions of any of his followers and associated flunkies.”

“What makes you think Commander that I have any ‘associations’ as you put it?” the Mayor then asked.

“Don’t play me the fool” The Commander warned in response “If at any point from now on you act all supportive towards Orbison, his Brotherhood and their activities or if anything, ANYTHING happens then this report gets released.”

“You wouldn’t dare...” the Mayor tried to bluff.

“Let me make myself patently clear on this matter Mr Mayor” The Commander angrily reemphasised “Anything happens and this report gets released, the Political Ombudsman’s Office will send their beefy lads over to kick your door down inside of thirty minutes and the story will be spread across the media faster than a measles outbreak at a nursery school!”

“Hmmm...” the Mayor contemplated his position.

"You toe the line, cease any support for Orbison and his band of lunatics and keep quiet and I will see this report remains firmly buried" The Commander warned "You do ANYTHING that crosses that fine line and I will bring down so much hell upon you it will make the four horsemen of the apocalypse look like a donkey ride along Blackpool Pleasure Beach!!"

"Always good to know where I stand..." the Mayor sarcastically responded as The Commander turned to leave "Erm, what about your report?" he then asked, proffering the file.

"Oh, you can keep that" The Commander remarked as he opened the door "I have copies, plenty of copies..." he smirked before leaving.

In the outer office The Commander found Tracy smiling.

"I love it when you are angry" Tracy remarked.

"I have my moments" The Commander admitted as he took Tracy by the hand and they headed out.

"I haven't heard you go off on one like that since the time you met the Chairman of ITV just after they cancelled The Bill..." Tracy commented.

"Let's get back to the office and get this file locked away safe and sound" The Commander suggested.

"A wise idea love" Tracy agreed "And there is also a memo from Building Services that needs your urgent attention before we go home."

"Marvellous..." The Commander responded with a heavy sigh.

Reaper looked up when he heard keys being jangled outside his cell and then the door being unlocked before it was opened.

For a fleeting moment he thought he was going to be released from his imprisonment, his hopes were quickly dashed however when two Security Service officers entered the cell and threw a set of restraints onto the seat beside him.

A few minutes later, now in full shackles, Reaper was escorted out of the detention area to the Custody Desk where the Duty Custody Supervisor was waiting behind the desk which, thanks to its elevated position, looked down on the prisoner as he approached.

"Lieutenant" the Duty Custody Supervisor called whereupon he duly stepped aside to allow Jack to take his place at the desk.

"Thanks" Jack responded with a nod of acknowledgement before turning to face Reaper.

"Adam Alexander Dennis Reaper" he then formally called before commencing to read from the official charge sheet in front of him "You are hereby charged with the following."

Jack cleared his throat before continuing.

"Firstly, that on or about the 23rd of this month you did wilfully and deliberately murder Leonard James Raffety, contrary to common law" he announced.

Reaper said nothing so Jack continued to read the charges.

"Secondly, that on the 25th of this month you did wilfully and deliberately murder Frederick Alfred Oldman and thirdly, you conspired to murder Trevor George Granger contrary to common law" Jack then confirmed.

There was still no reaction from Reaper whatsoever which was confirmed when Jack looked up momentarily before returning to the charge sheet and continuing.

"Fourthly" Jack carried on "You are charged under the Terrorism Act 2012 as amended with possession with intent to use, armaments and explosives for the purposes of committing terrorist acts."

Despite the seriousness of these charges, Reaper still stood, completely emotionless, the only sound from him being the chinking of the chains and shackles of his restraints.

"In addition to these listed charges" Jack carried on "You can expect to be charged with further offences in the coming days as our enquiries continue. Do you have anything to say in your defence?"

"You are a dead man Jack" Reaper ruthlessly and calmly warned.

"Yeah, whatever" Jack casually dismissed the threat "Because of the seriousness of the charges, you will not be permitted bail, you are entitled to legal counsel during all interviews and you have the right to remain silent at all times."

"When I get out of here little boy" Reaper then reinforced his threats "I am going to watch as you die slowly and painfully."

"In your dreams mate" Jack replied "Take him away" he then ordered.

"You are a dead man Jack!!!" Reaper called loudly as he was dragged back to his cell
"Dead you hear me, dead!"

A few minutes later Jack was heading back upstairs towards his office when he met Appleby in the corridor.

"Jack!" Appleby called "Step into my office" he then urged.

"Yes Sir..." Jack replied although his body language and tone showed he was far from enthusiastic at the prospect.

"So, you've charged him then?" Appleby asked as he entered his office and showed Jack to a seat in front of his desk.

"Indeed I have Sir" Jack confirmed as his superior officer passed him a drink which he gratefully accepted.

"How did it go?" Appleby then asked as he sat down behind the desk "It was your first big case, actually it was your first case, your first arrest and your first charging too."

"Strangely satisfying" Jack admitted "Despite the death threats."

"Oh, and your first death threat as well?" Appleby responded with an amused look
"You have had a busy week, haven't you?"

"Indeed Sir" Jack agreed.

"So let's do your end of first week assessment" Appleby continued "So far since graduating from the Academy you have investigated at least three murders, been shot at a couple of times, got dropped into the middle of an armed bag that went a bit pear shaped, pissed off the Mayor of London not once but twice - that's my favourite bit by the way - been involved in at least three gunfights, shot a couple of bad guys, damaged one of the South London area patrol cars and nicked one of the most wanted villains on the books of half the security agencies in the northern hemisphere."

"Can I go and do something simple now like putting the wind up fare evaders and prosecuting pick pockets now?" Jack asked.

"I think your first port of call is home for a good meal and a decent night's kip" Appleby recommended "and I will make that an order rather than a recommendation if I have to."

"Yes Sir" Jack responded with a resigned look as he handed back the now empty glass
"Thanks for the drink" he then remarked as he stood up before heading towards the door.

"Jack" Appleby called after him as he was leaving.

"Sir?" Jack turned back at the door.

"You did good lad, really good" Appleby called.

"Thank you Sir" Jack replied before leaving, quietly closing the door behind him.

"Hmm, he'll be Divisional Commander in five years" Appleby then remarked to himself with an amused smirk before finishing his drink with a sense of satisfaction.

"I still think they all look the same" The Commander admitted.

"Building Services say it's down to you though" Tracy explained "Parisian Moonlight White or Apple White?" she held up the colour charts, one in each hand.

"Whatever that one is in your left hand love" The Commander gesticulated vaguely "Moonlight White?"

"At last, a decision!" Tracy jubilantly called "Well that is the colour of your new office sorted, that just leaves the Reception Area to choose."

"Oh, I'll let Janice choose" The Commander responded, "She pretty much lives in there after all."

"All right, will do dear" Tracy readily agreed before looking out of the office window at the full moon sending a glow of ethereal light across the skyline of London before them.

"I'm going to miss this place" The Commander then remarked "I know our new offices on the Embankment will be modern and painted Apple White but it won't be the same somehow."

"I know what you mean my love" Tracy confirmed as she put her arm around her husband and together they watched the sunset "If these walls could talk then they would certainly have some tales to tell."

"Mmm" The Commander mused before turning to Tracy whereupon they kissed "not all of them printable either."

"Cheeky..." Tracy responded with a smile and a cheeky giggle.

"Come on, let's go home" The Commander declared whereupon Tracy lowered the window blinds and turned off the desk lamp before they prepared to leave.

As they left arm in arm, the fax machine located on the side behind the desk suddenly beeped to indicate an imminent incoming message

For a moment The Commander looked back but then decided to instead shrug his shoulders in ignorance.

"Ah to hell with it, it can wait until tomorrow" he then declared before he and Tracy left the office.

A few moments later after a series of beeps the fax machine began to print the incoming message, a single piece of paper emerging and dropping into the receiving tray, its message a simple statement consisting of three paragraphs and a final sign off.

'The people of the United Kingdom, its Government, Security and Police Services and associated agencies are hereby placed on notice that they have opposed us for the last time.'

'Today the mighty Hand of Ixion formally declares that a state of war now exists between us and all those that oppose our philosophy, freedom and way of life.'

'Rest assured that we have the power, determination and resources to reign down a comprehensive campaign of revenge on any and all of the non-believers using whatever methods we deem fit and appropriate.'

'To Life Immortal...'

To Be Continued.....

© 2020 - John M Upton
All Rights Reserved