

Deception

By [Peter Burns]

ONE

'I am fluent in over seven languages' Adrian Smith, Foreign Office Minister said, 'but I prefer to speak in my own native tongue.'

'I do not mind' replied the French Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, 'I am always happy to speak your language.'

Smith gave the French Minister Jean-Marie Claude his best smile. Despite this, his eyes could not hide his hatred for his French counterpart.

Smith pulled out his blackberry, raising it to his face and then quickly slotted it back into the inside of his suit.

'Excellent' he replied.

He paused for a brief second trying to capture control

'Then we can get this meeting out of the way, can't we?' he said in a dismissive manner.

Smith had known Jean-Marie for the later part of his political life. What he learned about Jean-Marie during his career in politics was that Jean-Marie was ruthless.

He was born in La Tronche in Rhône-Alpes region, in France. The son of a waiter from the Hotel Grenoble, he came from humble beginnings. A very gifted student of politics and maths he advanced through school succeeding to enter the French business school ESCP Europe in 1980. Upon graduating, he started to work as a member of the staff of the Gaullist ministers in the late 1980s. He made a name for himself during the Gaullist period. Elected to the French National Assembly at 27 he quick rose through the ranks to become a deputy for the Savoie département. By the late eighties, under the banner of the Neo-Gaullist Rally for the Republic he served in this function until 1998.

Disillusioned with French politics Jean joined the Union for a Popular Movement and rapidly rose to be a driving force within the European People's Party gaining a reputation for delivering on his promises both to the people and to the bureaucrats of France and Europe. With his reputation secure, he launched his European career gaining a post as the European Commissioner for Internal Market and Services.

It was here that Smith first met Jean-Marie. Smith was trying to get a series of European loans to get a large supermarket to move into his parliamentary constituency of Ladywood, Birmingham. Jean-Marie personally rejected the loan application. A series of meetings followed but Smith failed to get the loans issued or agreed. This almost caused him to be defeated in the following election and certainly put his political career back some 10 years as a result.

Jean-Marie went onto a series of successes in European politics. Promoted to Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries his career continued to develop while Smith remained a backbencher.

Further success followed in which Jean-Marie joined the French cabinet after the large victory of his party in the 2009 legislative elections. He was rewarded with the post of Minister of the Environment a short time later. Three years later, after the election of a new President of France, he became Secretary of State for French and European Affairs.

After seeing Jean-Marie again in the flesh, memories of his career almost destroyed came back to him. With his dark black hair, cut short in an almost military manner, Jean-Marie certainly looked younger than Smith did. He also had an entirely different life from Smith. Jean-Marie had a wife that was almost young enough to be his daughter and he certainly looked like a man of action. Smith meanwhile had a wife that looked like a horse and acted more like his housekeeper than a lover.

As Smith met his foe, he could see beneath the line of his shirt and tie and the movement of his muscles as now and again they stretched his shirt stretched while walking towards him to shake his hand.

Smith meanwhile had been piling on the fat. When naked he could not help think how he looked like a fat whale as opposed Jean-Marie who looked like the perfect aging politician. Smith realised he would have to keep himself in check if he was to get through this meeting and not let his guard down.

For Jean-Marie, Smith was a big danger. He possessed a stillness that upset him somewhat. The English they never showed their feelings or emotions. This made them very hard to work out. Jean could not help think that Smith looked more like a picture than the real thing. His rounded nose only served to intensify Smith's peculiarity to Jean-Marie. It was if no one was at home and all that remained was a man that was impassive and focused only on the facts, or the 'net benefit' as Smith used to call it. His eyes were like the smog that drifted across the London skyline, filthy grey and soulless. He thought that if he never saw this miserable excuse for a man again that would be too soon.

Despite this Jean-Marie, knew he needed to get agreement today if he was to be successful. Smith had hinted that he was able to deliver what Jean-Marie was desperate to get. What Jean-Marie could not understand was what Smith wanted in return. There was always a quid-pro in these deals and both men knew that they would have to help each other out if they were to get what they wanted. They both knew what both sides offered would not be pain-free. One of them would have to give more than the other if they were to agree a deal.

Smith meanwhile hoped that the deal would provide him with the political capital that he needed to restore his prestige and maximise his powerbase within Whitehall and No. 10.

'Smith, you appear distracted', Jean-Marie said.

'Nothing could be further, from the truth. It is good to see you again my old friend'.

'You have my full attention'.

Smith went onto outline the advantages of such a deal. They would benefit France and the United Kingdom he went onto explain. To Jean-Marie it was just words. What he was interested in was getting something permanent, something that was sustainable.

Smith noticed Jean-Marie look at his watch. He realised that he was not selling the idea well.

'Jean you are aware of some of the ideas that China's diplomats are trying to float around the UN and the Middle East?'

With the mention of China, Jean-Marie's face-hardened. He felt like someone had thrown dog shit all over him.

'My point Jean, is that we will stop the President and the Chinese if we need to, but we need your unofficial support otherwise our friends are not going to support some of your ideas to get us out of this depression.'

Smith did not want to waste time asking Jean-Marie's view of the Chinese President or the Chinese nation, there had been enough French opposition to make it abundantly clear to the blind, deaf and dumb that French political and diplomatic moves would not change the Chinese Presidents views or policies of the west.

China's breakneck progress as an economic superpower and the rise of the current President of China had attracted the attention of the French government and its secret services over the last few years.

China's rise to the most powerful and richest nation in the world had been breath taking. Its expanding economic influence had placed China steadfast in destroying the economic and political

status quo of the west by using its economic powerbase as opposed its military arsenal and economic dominance.

This threatened to destroy the important position France had established herself as the economic and military leader of the European Union backed by a diplomatic alliance with the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Smith and Jean Marie would find it hard not to argue that the rise of China was not good for the global economy. New wealth for China's 1.3 billion people meant that 1.3 billion more people who could buy goods and services from the rest of the world, maintaining and creating new jobs across Europe and North America.

Yet Jean Marie and the French Government did not see China that way. Jean Marie and the French Government focused on the jobs China has "stolen" as opposed the jobs it had created. The French agonised that the world economy was too dependent on China for its growth. They worried that China would use its economic advantage to put economic pressure on Europe and the United States to dictate the pace of change within the Middle East. This pace of change would be dictated by China and not by the west and the international community.

In other words, China challenged not just today's economic orthodoxy and order, but the world's political and military framework as well. This forced France to look at innovative plans to undermine China and destroy its dominance of the Middle East and its valuable oil and gas resources.

Jean Marie continued the conversation

'OK so let's say you do make him change his mind, what do you want in return?'

At this point for the first time since Jean-Marie had known Smith, he saw a twinkle in his eye. It was almost as though the devil had just winked at him.

'I know that look Jean, you are expecting the worse. Well if we get rid of the Chinese problem then we would like you to get rid of Abdulla Megahit from Clairvaux Prison.

'Of course you want rid of him, the man is an Islamic radical as well as a menace to your country. He orchestrated the bombings in London and Glasgow'.

'Attempting to terminate him in a French prison would be political suicide.'

'Of course no-one in MI5 has been able to find a scrap of evidence that ties him to these acts of war'.

'Of course I do not doubt you, and I am sure that your best people and the American torture machine in Guantanamo Bay detention camp have not been able to pull out any legal evidence'.

A sudden smile came over Jean-Marie's face. An envelope appeared. In it was a series of bank statements, e-mails and strategy papers sent by Megahit to contacts in Bradford, Glasgow and London.

'Then you will find this quite helpful.' Said Jean-Marie as he mischievously passed it to Smith.

'Five days ago, we completed the final phase of a drug bust in Marseille. This was one we had been working on for just over six months because a Russian mafia cell had been operating out of Marseille distributing Afghan Opium.

We were entirely successful in this operation and in the final analysis of the evidence; we found one of the dead drug lords had an unencrypted laptop. Most of it contained porn and other things. However, we also found something else.

The information you are now reading came straight from his hard drive'

Smith could not believe what he was reading. This would allow the United Kingdom to extradite Megahit and bring him before a British judge.

Smith could not believe his luck. He thought they would have to get the French to kill him in Prison, this way all would look fair and bring about Megahit's fall.

'This money trail was financed by the Society of Muslim Brothers for which Megahit is the leader. Money from this went on to buy the very vehicle involved in the Glasgow bombings and even the train tickets used by the London Bombers.

'Megahit is also due to end his prison sentence in June' He is free to go then so if you were to present this evidence to our government then we would be left with no option but to extradite him to your country.'

'Ok' said Jean-Marie, 'However we want you to stage some form of terrorist attack on the Chinese President to bring down his government.

'We do not care how you do it we just want you to weaken the Chinese. We want you to force the Chinese Government to turn away from controlling the peace process within the Middle East. If can turn their attention away that will allow France, the United States and you British to continue to dominate the region and its useful oil and gas resource and in return we will give you Megahit.'

Smith paused for a second or two, then gave his answer

'Agreed'

The two men then leaned over the table and concluded the meeting with a firm and concrete grip.

TWO

The ring tone of Norman Brook smart phone woke him up. It is dark and very early in the morning.

For a second or two Norman wondered where he was. As he came around, he started to rub his eyes. His palms were hot and sweaty. A fog hung over his mind. One that hung over you between being asleep and being awake.

He heard the next verse of the song coming out of his smart phone. The ring tone got louder and louder. Waves of music bellowed across his bedroom forcing him to awake.

His ring tone went onto to its final verse as it continued to welcome the start of the day for him. It was still in the small hours of the day. Despite this, the ring tone continued to drone away.

God that song is annoying, he thought.

Switching the device off, He sat upright and looked at his watch.

'Four am! You must be joking!' he cried aloud.

He rubbed his eyes again and began to search the room for where the noise was coming from. Finding his smart phone, he immediately turned it off with a great force as though he was swatting an annoying wasp.

Happy that there was silence he contemplated turning over and going back to sleep.

However, curiosity won and he decided to see what the message was on his smart phone.

Reading the content of the subject matter and seeing whom it had come from he quickly realised an important message had come through and he had better read it fully. He double clicked the message with his left thumb opening up the note immediately and began to read it.

It said, 'GO TO PARIS IMMEDIATELY. MAKE SURE NO ONE FOLLOWS YOU. I WILL BE IN TOUCH AT THE USUAL PLACE. MESSAGE ENDS..... Please delete now.'

Norman groaned, and then grumbled to himself. He started to think about why he had chosen this life. The strange life, the crazy people he had to work for. Most seemed to be more concerned about their status than making a difference. Still there were many good things about his life. One of those would now include a trip to Paris.

He started to think about Paris and the Parisian culture. Things were not that bad really. Paris would be great to go to during the spring, French food was inordinate and so was the wine. With this thought in mind, he got out of his bed and started to walk towards his bathroom humming the French national anthem to himself and making a flippant impression of Napoleon as he walked past a wall mirror.

Memories of when he was at school learning French came rushing back to him. He remembered his French teacher. Half the class had a crush on her and he suspected half the teachers too. What was her name? That was it Miss Loreto. She was a native French tutor. He remembered how demanding she was. He remembered that when he walked in the room she insisted that everyone speak French and no English.

Norman entered his bathroom. He turned on his shower and stepped into the shower cubical. He started to wash his dreams away and his thoughts of Miss Loreto were washed away with that night's dream.

He started to daydream as he showered. His thoughts went back to last Christmas and how a 20-year-old Secretary had taken her dog out for a walk and never returned. M.I.6 were quick to realise the importance of losing one of their diplomatic staff in Zurich. The resulting firestorm quickly involved Norman and his then partner Nicole Hodgkin. Norman and Nicole concluded that

she had been kidnapped or run away. However, those theories shattered when Nicole found and then broke into her personal blog. They reveal a girl troubled by a mysterious relationship with an older man from Russia.

As the two agents raced against time to find her alive, Nicole's inner demons and external enemies were brought to the front. Finally, in an act of betrayal Nicole was killed. She died in botched up attempt to rescue the secretary. This left Norman to pick up the pieces. The girl and the unknown Russian were never found again.

He dropped his soap bar that landed on his big toe.

'Ouch'

This quickly ended his thoughts.

He picked the soap bar up from the white enamel surface. Smelling its lemon sent he continued to scrub himself for a few more minutes. Cleaned, his thoughts drifted back to his work.

He switched off the shower and stepped out of the shower cubicle onto the wooden floor. He picked up a towel from the back of the bathroom door and began drying himself off with his Egyptian towel. Once dried he began to get dressed. He selected his tailored fit navy suit with a white shirt and purple tie from his cupboard and began to get dressed

Norman lived in a one bedroom terraced house in Daisies Road, London. The bedroom had a large mirrored wardrobe. The walls were white, with a picture of a beach scene in the centre.

Once dressed and ready for the day he left his house. He headed off towards Waterloo Station. To most people this would seem strange but to Norman this was how he lived his life. Ok it was lonely but it let you focus on they what really mattered in life.

As he closed his door, he carefully and deliberately checked he was not being followed or watched by anyone. Norman walked towards a local cafe by the underground tube station with its

all too familiar red and blue sign. Norman started to think about how his life had led him into this secret world.

Educated at Rugby School and Queen's College, Oxford, Norman obtained a commission in the Royal Corps of Signals in 1996. He became an Intelligence officer in the Middle East before joining the Secret Intelligence Service in 2007.

Later he became involved in Operation Boot, a plan to overthrow the Pakistan leader which failed despite US and Indian support. He was later shifted to the Balkan Office operating out of Belgrade. He was moved back to London following the disaster of a mission in Zurich. However, he had followed the book and had done nothing wrong unlike Nicole. Then when the post of joint liaison officer with the China desk came up a few weeks ago he took it.

Crossing the Road, he soon arrived at Cafe Lyon that was just nearby his home. This was the very convenient place where he met his handler for off the record conversations. Arriving a little after 6.30, he was met by Tony Eden the senior desk head for the China station.

Having ordered a bacon roll and a mug of coffee, he headed to the toilet.

'Morning Gordon, I see you got my message' said Tony

'Yes I was up anyway' he lied.

At the toilet as always, he met his handler Tony.

He turned on the tap at the sink to drown out any surveillance of their conversation. This automatic action had been drummed into him since he joined the service in 2007.

They talked for about ten minutes during which Tony ordered Norman to travel to Paris. There he was to meet with contacts from the French Secret Service. During the discussion, Tony kept on reiterating to Norman the damage that the Chinese President's peace moves had inflicted on the United Kingdom and the west. Norman already knew that his handler was worried about

Chinese moves to disarm the major powers. Tony told him without going into any details that the UK and America shared the French Government's view that China was threatening the international communities rule and its military operations within the Middle East and it might be required to take actions against the President of China.

'That man, who does he think he is dictating to us how we should run our lives here in England? Really!'

Norman could not help think of the hypocrisy there. The British and the west had been doing that to China for the last few hundred years.

'It is time we in the west did something about this Chinese Junta. Something needs to be done and we are the team that will do it' he continued.

Soon Tony got into the details of his plan.

Tony started to tell Norman in his monotone upper class crisp voice of his that 'the government of France and the United States have considered public warnings but we all feel that this would only encourage the Chinese President even more'

'The Chinese seem hell bent on this path to destroy the military arms industries of all three countries and destroy some of the great work the 'International Community' has been doing over the last few decades'.

'Now Norman when you meet with the French and our American cousins I want you to state that although the plans have been discussed between the United Kingdom, United States and France it was essential to make absolutely sure before final decisions are taken that none of the governments could be held accountable for such an action'.

Tony was desperate to ensure that the media did not get their hands on any linkages to the British Government. He remembered how the Foreign Office Minister had called him over to one of

the lifts after a visit to one of those parties at Canary Wharf to have a word. On the way down the minister outlined what was expected. A clean death and the blame placed upon some Islamic group and no official links to MI6 or the UK government.

It was quite clear to Tony that this would be highly illegal but he felt it was one of those 'for the greater good missions' so the moral and constitutional side of things was not an issue. He was also sure that Norman would go along with it, as some of the liberals in the service had not yet seduced him.

Norman felt yet again that Tony was going to go off on one of his long-winded lectures. He was such an old fart. He belonged to the era of Glasnost and the Cold War not one of the iPod and 4G technology. The people of the UK did not care if we attacked China today or tomorrow as long as they were able to watch X Factor or Britain's Got Talent, or their latest application was available.

'This meeting is going to take place later today; someone will meet you in Paris and take you to where you need to go to. You will be meeting the CIA, MI6 and Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure so this is a good opportunity for you to shine.'

Norman of course jumped at the chance to prove himself to Tony and the wider MI6 establishment. Tony had felt that the failings of Operation Boot had damaged Norman's career somewhat. This was a real chance to make a name for himself and build on what had happened in Zurich. It would allow him to attract some of the glory he was desperate for. All that work, late hours and dedication were going to pay off in one single move.

'Norman make sure that the British attitude and intentions are made and understood clearly. Very Clearly. I want you to obtain their acceptance. If they do not accept them then Norman I want you to make it absolutely clear that the United Kingdom will not accept its side of the bargain, no matter what the minister has or is alleged to have said to the French.'

'This visit is to remain secret because it involved something that the liberal press might possibly feel is an illegal murder'

'Norman it's imperative that you use only private transport too.'

With the conversation finished both men left the toilet. Norman returned to the table where his food and drink lay. He finished off his semi-warm bacon roll and took a few gulps of his coffee before he left for Waterloo Station and the train to Paris.

On his way to the underground tube station, he brought a small rucksack and a change of clothes from a 24 hours supermarket. He then crossing over the road and entered another supermarket where he brought a toothbrush, toothpaste and a comb. He then went down to the underground station and got a tube straight to Waterloo Station.

At Waterloo Station, he brought some coffee and a sandwich from one of those east coast American coffee shops.

The Coffee tasted like shit, but it was better than nothing and at least it kept him awake and alert.

Once in the station, he looked up at the massive clock that guarded the main entrance and began to read the engraved sign, which said 'Dedicated to the employees who fell in the war'

Must have been the First World War he thought, before he took another swig of his coffee. It is strange how something as central as an engraved stone can stand out and yet remain invisible to the vast majority of people.

As he walked through the train station Norman started to think about his last trip to New York a few weeks ago. One of his friends had sent him a Tweet urging him to come visit to join him and his new friends for a cup of coffee while in New York. Of course, he did not want to miss the

chance to see Toby who had managed to get a job as a finance officer for the Sierra Leone UN office in New York.

He met a few hours later and after talking at length about his new job and how he missed the UK, they went to a Kenyan coffee house. There he took a sip of the coffee Toby gave him and exclaimed, "Wow! This is really, really good." His voice emphasising the word really.

'What is this called'?

The coffee was so good; he practically scoffed at their reply. Today, you are sipping Kenyan AA Green Coffee.

He wished the coffee he was forcing down was half as good now.

Gathering his bearings, before going towards the ticket booth for Eurostar he checked he had his passport and some cash on him. Once at the office he booked the next train to Paris using the money and ID that he had collected from a hidden shelf in the Café Toilet. Paying by cash, he booked his ticket across the counter. The woman that served him sounded depressed and bad tempered. She looked very unwell and in some pain. He told her he was travelling to Paris for a job interview, but she seemed uninterested and it was pretty clear to Norman that this woman did not enjoy her job at all.

Arriving at the check-in barrier, he quickly inserted his ticket into the machine smiling at the young barrier controller before walking down the platform towards his modern looking express train. The train was yellow and grey and looked like a rocket perched on its side. It looked like something that would be at home in a space museum not a train station.

Checking in at Waterloo was very slick and he was not kept waiting too long. He grabbed a small bottle of mineral water from one of the over-expensive sandwich stalls before he boarded the train.

To his surprise, on his seat was a travel goodie bag that contained a blue blanket, earplugs, sleep mask and socks that he stuffed into his rucksack in case he needed them.

The section he sat in was filled to capacity, the narrow seats made more uncomfortable by the constant shaking of the train as it started to glide off out of Waterloo Station. In the background, a baby cried as it lay in its mother's arms. Other children grumbled. They were quickly silenced with the zealous handing out of DSI's and Tablet computers. Most of the passengers were silent. Some drinking their drinks a bit more quickly than usual. A few of the passengers looked scared as the train approached the Channel tunnel. Norman could see that many were fearful that soon several million tons of water would be above their head. Many feared what would happen if the tunnel burst open from above and what they would do in those last few seconds before they were washed away and crushed by the downward plunging waters of the English Channel.

Nevertheless, none of this bothered Norman. He knew he would be asleep soon. Norman prided himself on being able to sleep almost anywhere and quickly fell asleep.

In his sleep, he started to dream about a beautiful and successful singer-songwriter. He dreamt he was her biggest fan. He dreamt that she replied to one of his fan letters with 'XO'. He is convinced she loved him, and that a song has been written for him. Nothing persuades him otherwise. Then the singer started to get an anonymous phone call that Norman started to play down the phone.

When Norman awoke, he was at the outskirts of Paris and the tune he was playing down the phone was being played across the in train music system.

He rubbed his eyes and then stretched out almost touching the roof of the train.

He started to look around; he noticed a man sat opposite him. He had a tanned face reflecting a quiet essence of maturity and confidence. His brown eyes were akin to a very rich

chocolate cake. Then he realised it was none other than Lloyd Jones one of the old guard from French division.

'Good morning Mr Brooke', said Lloyd.

'Hello Lloyd', he said with a sigh

After a pause, Norman spoke again with the coolness of a poker player.

'So Norman, I am glad I have bumped into you again. There is something I have been dying to talk to you about.'

'Yes'

'I understand that you have been given a new French project'

He then went on to tell Norman very quietly and quickly how he should be informing him as Section Head for France before arriving in Paris. Norman was not pleased that other people knew about his mission and what was worse it looked like he would now be chaperoned by Lloyd for the majority of his trip.

Norman and Lloyd exchanged notes and instructions after which both agreed how they would approach their little Paris problem. They discussed their mission in some detail making sure that none around them could hear what they were saying.

Solo seats lined the side of the train carriage parallel to a line of twin seats covered in pink dressing. A mixture of Families and business people occupied the seating.

Now fully aware of his surroundings, he looked around the carriage looking out for that tell-tale sign of someone watching him too much.

Norman noticed the odd glance now and then from one of the men sat just opposite them. Perhaps it was just a coincidence. He was sure that the man had been listening to Lloyd and Norman's conversation. Perhaps he was some bored traveller whiling away his time before he

arrived in Paris. Then the man put on his headphones and Norman's attention drifted back to the Lloyd and his conversations.

Lloyd looked out across and through the train window. He noticed the Graffiti splattered across train walls and fences. Lloyd wondered why people would risk their life just to write a few words on a wall in bright Florissant paint. The train sped under bridge after bridge and he watched as the landscape turned from green and brown to the grey concrete of Paris. Stationary trains lined line after line of the railway. Tall blocks of White and Black towers populated the areas around the railway line intersected with the odd tall green tree or bush of yellow and pink flowers.

With his attention back on Lloyd, Norman learned that Lloyd had been party to a previous meeting between Foreign Office Ministers of both France and the United Kingdom some 4 months previous. Norman found this interesting, making him more excited to get to the meeting and make a name for himself.

A short time later, the train started to slow down as it pulled into the train station. Both men could start making out the details of buildings as the train slowed down to a crawling speed. Another train passed rushing past in the opposite direction.

In English and then French, it was announced that the train had arrived at its final destination.

Like a massive Mexican wave people started to get out of their seats and lift down their luggage, coats and belonging as they prepared to get off the train.

The train pulled into the station like a massive caterpillar pulling along the track into the station.

The two men looked at their watches as they arrived in Paris Nord Railway Station.

'That's just after four o'clock, not bed really' stated Norman to Lloyd.

Walking out of the station both men strolled past the front facade that had been designed around a triumphal arch. The building was the usual U-shape of a terminus station with a main beam supported by cast iron. The Facade was lined with statues that represented the towns and cities the station was linked too.

They both took a left passing a large bazaar before crossing over the road where they sat down and ordered a coffee in the Le Cadran Du Nord. The station was very busy and was obviously a bustling beehive of activity.

Norman and Lloyd sat outside the cafe drinking their coffee when a man with a Green and Black Dublin T-shirt walked up to the two men and placed a note forcefully on the table. His action almost knocked their drinks on the ground.

Norman and Lloyd looked at the note.

A Minute later, a grey taxi pulled up and asked the two men to jump in. A grey and black Citroën Picasso Taxi then drove Norman and Lloyd through the streets of Paris. They intersected and the overlapping streets of Paris passing the various tourist traps and ghettos that littered Paris like a patchwork quilt.

As they passed Place de Vosges, Lloyd broke the silence.

'Did you know Norman?' He then paused

Norman sighed inside. He waited for Lloyd to commence his story and was surprised when he started to tell him about the square they had passed. It was one of the oldest and most beautiful square in Paris; apparently, this is where Victor Hugo lived.

He then suggested they grab a drink afterwards in one of the cafés on the square and then roam around the Marais on the end on the square.

Lloyd went onto to tell him that Henry IV of France built the square in 1612, over 400 years ago.

To Norman's surprise, he found Lloyd quite interesting

'Yes let's grab a coffee afterwards in the square', he paused

'That would be most interesting'.

A little while later, they arrived at their destination. They travelled for just over an hour arriving at the entrance to Villacoublay and the wall to a small graveyard.

Lloyd had been here before. He remembered coming here when he was a child for some reason his school has insisted on dragging him around every single church and cathedral. Once you have visited a few they all start to look the same. However, he did remember this church. It was very bland and basic and stood out against the other ornate and lavish churches that littered the landscape of Paris in the 1980's.

As the vehicle pulled up towards the Church, all Norman started to prepare for his meeting. He was nervous. He felt like everyone feels when they are forced to stand up in front of a crowd and speak. Partly nervous and partly excited. A mix of emotions and fear. He also wanted to make sure he did not screw up in front of his new coach for he knew that if he messed up Tony would hear immediately from Lloyd.

His fearlessness was brought to an end when his attention drifted towards small TV screen in the front of the car. It was announcement of the Chinese President coming to the UK for the graduation of his daughter later in the year. At the ending of the report a pictures of Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989 and several tanks driving towards a sole man standing between an Army and the square was run.

Both men turned towards each other and a smile came over their faces. It was one of those all-knowing confident smiles that told the world that as was well and all was going to plan.

At that point, the moment of satisfaction was broken when the driver told them that they were about to arrive at their destination.

THREE

They stood by the side of the graveyard for a few minutes when three men dressed in black opened the doors a small white van. The Graveyard looked like a haven of serenity away from this chaotic world. It a places where people could find a welcome in the of bosom of the earth.

The three men walked towards Lloyd and Norman. Norman froze for a second or two. He watched as Lloyd automatically scanned the area around them both. Both men swiftly worked out if they were in danger or not.

Lloyd who was much older than Norman was wished he had a gun on him. He remembered the good old days when special agents wore arms. Those days were now gone.

'Gentlemen, welcome to France', one of the man said with the twang of a French accent that made his words far more sophisticated than they actually were.

'We hope you enjoy your stay' said one of the other men.

'Please come with us'.

It was more of a command than an invitation.

The five men turned right and walked into the woods taking a path directly parallel from the graveyard. The lilacs and wisteria were in bloom across the whole of Paris. As they turned into the woods, a wonderful fragrance consumed all five men. Horse-chestnut trees line the path blooming in their glory with high stalks of white flowers. The day was warm, calm and almost serene. It felt like they were going for a walk in the park at lunch time rather than on behalf of the secret services of France, United Kingdom and the United States who were coming together to plan to topple the Chinese.

'You OK, Norman', enquired Lloyd

'Keep a look out, I don't really trust these guys'

'Did you come armed or did you follow protocol?'

'Protocol' answered Norman. His voice failed to hide disappointment. He knew from the tone of Lloyd's voice that he was expected to come armed.

'That's Ok, Norman that's Ok' reassured Lloyd.

One of the men asked if Lloyd and Norman were hungry in French. There was laughter and Norman thought he could make out the men saying that the roast beef's do not speak any language other than English.

Norman had to fight back the urge to speak French to him and to criticise the man's assassination of the French language. His accent placed him from the South of France.

After a pause the man then asked the question in very wooden English. You could sense from his expression his loathing of the English language.

The front man then tossed them both a French stick as well as a small bottle of water.

He then said, 'Hope you enjoy French Cuisine' before everyone started to laugh.

The group of men then made their way through the garden and park areas, while Norman and Lloyd started to eat their French bread and enjoy their mineral water.

The five men arrived in the centre of the park, where they were ushered into a small shed that was used for storing heavy park equipment in the past. It smelt of oil and dust.

The shed was of a Saltbox design with a high front wall, lower back wall and an off centre pitch inside the shed.

Their opposite numbers in the CIA and French special service had already arrived. Both operatives had set up their stalls inside. Both groups of men looked untrustingly at each other. Old wounds from the past surfaced itself.

As the British approached the shed, the tension was shattered with both sides exchanging news that the two British Agents were approaching under the guardianship of three bodyguards.

In the shed sat three senior American CIA officers. Norman and Lloyd knew them both. Lloyd knew the two French Special Agents. Outside stood the several French security guards who were scanning the area for visitors while a helicopter circled the area above.

The atmosphere felt very formal and correct and was not very friendly. It was obvious to all that the French and American had been talking to each other for quite a considerable time before the meeting had started.

The discussions immediately got down to how to deal with the problem at hand and the details of the possible actions that each side proposed and the consequence of the actions. Norman concentrated upon emphasising the points raised by Tony.

During the discussions, Norman made it known that the Chinese president had a daughter who studies in Edinburgh and was due to graduate in the summer for which the Chinese president would be visiting.

Lloyd took a mental note to congratulate Norman for thinking on his feet so well.

This then became the focus over the next few hours.

Much discussion followed. It was decided that it would be the best to take out the target and that the three services would create a link to some extremist Jihad Islamic group based in and around the Edinburgh or the Northern England area.

With an agreement made all the men shook hands and began to leave the shack one after another. The French guards took up position to the front and back of the column of men.

Each group of men left the building and started to head off at a different angle. Both Lloyd and Norman began to walk back towards where the taxi was.

Ahead of them walked two men who searched the surrounding area for any threats. They looked like two hawks searching the area for their foes. The men put the fear of god in Norman. An officer walked to the back of the men watching everything behind them. He spoke into a mouthpiece propagating instruction to his men.

Lloyd suddenly stopped. He raised his hand

'Norman stop!'

'Something is up, let's wait a minute.'

Ahead of them, a Fiat car pulled up just at the entrance to the park. The driver looked like he was Chinese.

Lloyd knew what was coming next as he watched the tell-tale signs of an attack unwrap before his eyes.

All of a sudden, the vehicle erupted into flames.

Lloyd and Norman as well as their guards dived onto the ground.

The Fiat car which was packed full of explosives erupted into a gigantic ball of flames. A massive column of smoke erupted into the sky. The explosion was so strong that the men could feel the heat from it some 500 metres away. The explosion ripped away the walls of the graveyard and a nearby building as well as setting several trees alight. The car sent shards of glass and debris throughout the area killing everyone that stood in its path.

One of the French Secret Agents stood not far from the vehicle. He had been having a smoke while the meeting was on. When the vehicle erupted into its inferno, he was killed in an instant. His arms and legs were blown off in the blast. The explosion gutted a four-story apartment by the side of the graveyard and shattered windows over the area. Like an orchestra car after car started to come alive as car alarms rocked into life.

Lloyd and Norman realising they had survived the attack were rushed away from the blown up vehicle. The French security officers that survived the bomb attack ran towards their dead friend. Panic ensued.

The American and French teams were also pulled away from the scene and all fled the area with great speed.

Norman immediately suspected that the Chinese knew about the meeting. It was obvious to him that the Chinese must be aware of the plans that the British, French and American's were making. This was a warning to them all.

The men were ushered towards the south of the park. This was the planned escape route and it ran in a complete opposite direction to the fireball that had just erupted.

Both men and their escorts were glad to be away. The speed of their initial walk was good and it gave everyone time to blow away their fears and concerns.

A little while later Lloyd and Norman boarded a black car just to the South of the park. This time three cars escorted them. Once in their car they felt safe. The sides of the vehicle felt strong, thick and both men sensed that the danger was now over.

Twenty minutes later, they were completely away from the area. Norman looked back and could see the massive black cloud still rising up into the sky like a mushroom.

A few turns and they were on the local motorway heading back towards the railway station. Norman now turned his mind to the job at hand.

He had an agreement with the French and Americans and had managed to complete his job as planned. Tony would be happy with the outcome but not the method. There was surly no way of tracing all this back to MI6.

'Norman you did really well there you know'

'I think we should give our coffee a miss and get back to London as soon as possible'

I think head office will be pleased with how you handled this situation'

Just over an hour later, they were dropped off at the station.

As they left the entourage of vehicles, both men walked purposely down a bustling street, a helicopter screamed overhead. Many Pedestrians looked up. They continued walking towards the station undisturbed. Across the street were more pedestrians. None seemed sure what they were supposed to be looking at. One of the cars accelerated away from the men a little too fast. Across the street a young 17 year old the girl in the mini-skirt peeled off into a shop. One man turned and waved at another man across the road. It was not Norman and Lloyd he was waving at. He was greeting another passer-by, who walked over the road and, shakes the man's hands. Normality began to return.

Lloyd seemed very quiet as they walk back into the Railway Station. He began to tell Norman he was off to the toilet and he would see him on the train.

Norman walked into the station. He noticed that there was a very grand arcade at the entrance to the railway station. However many of the shops were now closed for the day. The shops that were open did not have much to sell. In the centre, an American Café occupied the middle space, under the high vaulted ceiling. A young hopeful singer sang songs from the side of the arcade; He was hoping some music mogul would notice him. Men and women sat around tables. Some were playing chess, others drinking coffee, a mother breast-feeds her baby, and was the hum and clatter of chatter in the background.

Norman mutters under his breath 'The ordinary world.' Lloyd looked back at Norman and nodded in agreement. Although Norman knew he has not heard him, he felt that he was in agreement. He watched Norman as he walks off to one of the toilets in the station.

Lloyd walked into the Toilet. He locked himself into one of the toilet cubicles.

Sitting on the toilet, he sat there for a few minutes taking in what had happened. His thoughts turned towards what would be happening in MI6 and GCHQ. It had been a long time since Lloyd had been in the field. The last time, felt like it was such a long time ago. It must have been about Eight years ago.

Lloyd thought about it as though it were yesterday.

He remembered watching a young girl from the window in a house in Berlin. He had approached the house across a snow packed garden. He crossed the garden with stealthy footsteps

that allowed him to approach the window undetected. That was when Lloyd appeared. He stepped into the frame, watching the girl through the window. Her name was....

He paused trying to remember. He looked down at his hands looking for inspirations observing some of the scratches and marks on his hand and then he remembered.

Joan Lacto was her name. She was no more than ten. He remembered her now. Yes, she had appeared in the living room window in her nightdress, she was playing with a toy doll.

He taped on the glass with one hand. Joan looked up and was surprised. Behind his back was a long, bone-handled knife.

Suddenly a man appeared behind Joan. The man was a string bean of a man. It was George Lacto. He stood watching Lloyd, and with a coolness, he stood binding his silk dressing gown as he cautiously approaches the window.

On the other side, Lloyd the intruder stood. He was smoking a very strong Czech cigarette. George looking through the glass called out 'This is private property.'

'Who are you?'

He gave Lloyd a once over taking in the man before him. He was filthy and unshaven. Most would have mistaken him for a tramp. Nevertheless, beneath the grime and dirt, Lloyd was tanned and his eyes had a dangerous, wild and untamed edge to them.

To George, Lloyd had secret service written all over him. He did not know which side he came from but George knew that he and his family had been found.

Without a flicker of doubt, George called him forward and with a smile, he began to speak 'I want to talk to Control. And I want your guarantee that my family will remain safe.'

A few hours later, he was on a plane bound for London. However, that plane never arrived. George and his family died and Lloyd was never able to keep his promise.

Lloyd had always felt a pang guilt for George and his family. Not so much for George he knew what he was getting himself into but for his beautiful and vulnerable autistic daughter.

'How is your mother', came a booming voice in French,

'You know she keeps holding out', came the reply

This brought him back to the present time and the job at hand.

Composing himself, he stuck his fingers in his mouth and he fished out several pieces of plastic prosthetics that changed the shape of his face. He then ripped off his plastic latex nose and actors putty off, transforming his face immediately

He laughed; glad to be himself once more. Lloyd was in fact dead. He had died almost six months ago. The green and naive Norman did not know that of course, he just presumed that Lloyd had been sent to support him.

He left the toilet, walked past Norman who was looking very agitated and concerned that Lloyd had been gone so long. He then walked anonymously through the great swirl of passengers, before he boarded the train for Saint Denis. One stop later, he got off the train. Leaving the station behind him, he walked into the train car park. There he found the perfect non-descript car waiting for him. He climbed into his car and set off for Calais and his escape.

FOUR

64 Victoria Street, the home of the United Kingdom's Secret Intelligence service is a fascinating building. Previously it was the location of the Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens; however, these were brushed away in the 1850s and replaced by large industrial units that included a glass factory, a vinegar works and even a gin distillery.

In 1983, the building was bought by Regal Properties Plc., which formed a cover for MI6 procurement service in the UK. Regal Properties developed and built a large office block scheme for which an 'unknown' government agency occupied.

The building is heavily influenced by the Vauxhall Cross style of architecture from the 1900's which was when MI6 was first formed under the leadership of Captain Cunningham, who is better known as 'C'.

During excavation of the site, the remains of a medieval pub (The Vine) came to light. Within their building, this was re-constructed and formed the main food and drink area for the staff who work in MI6.

Thus, when secret service say they want to meet in 'The vine' they actually mean the pub inside 64 Victoria Street.

On the Fifth floor there stands a room so secret that less than a dozen people have access to it. It is known as 'The Dutchman' and is named after one of the playing fields in Eton School.

At the head of the table sat a woman, Her name is Lady Joan Sawyers. She has a face that has seen it all. She opened the meeting and immediately leaned back against a wall. Surprisingly, she was smoking a cigarette, a Czech cigarette. Health and safety has not yet entered the inner sanctum of the secret service. Joan is a middle-aged woman; she nods at only Tony who is looking sombrely at the rest of the attendees. They are all sat around a long conference table.

Their attention is drawn towards an elderly man at the other end of the table. He is sitting on a rather lavish carving chair; it almost looks like a throne. He looks ill from the years of stress having worked with MI6, MI5 and GCHQ. He is aware the room is looking at him. He likes the power and the position that this gives him. He is a man in control of his own destiny.

He reaches over to a bottle of mineral water, unscrews the bottle and pours out water into a glass. He takes a large sip and then forcefully places the glass down onto the table. The noise reverberates across the room and signals to everyone that the meeting is to begin.

Around him are four other lieutenants - the inner circle of the intelligence service. Joan Sawyers, Paul Almond, James Armstrong, and Robert Tremor. Intermingled amongst the group is Tony Eden, Bill Smiley, Irene Haydon, and Morag O'Brian.

The room is silent and all that everyone can hear is the never-ending ticking of a loud clock.

Tony looks up to find 'C' gaze fixed on him. Then his attention drifts away to the others in the room. Power shifts around the room as his attention floats like a torch in the night.

James Armstrong handsome and urban is frowning with tension as thoughts drift away from the Russian station. He pulls out a pen and begins to scribble notes down into his little black book.

'C' begins the meeting by giving his daily overview of activity. No one interrupts. That would be political suicide. Then each of his lieutenants provide an overview of their areas.

Suddenly there is silence and Paul Almond, introduces Tony Eden. Tony pulls a pen out of his jacket. He hands a copy of a file out to everyone.

He introduces himself.

'I would like to outline our plan to ensure Mr Smith and his friends and our cousins are able to get our visitor returned from his holidays in France as soon as possible.'

Tony goes onto highlight that the planned visit of the Chinese President would be the opportunity to bring China back into our camp and stop their unilateral activity undermining British interests in the Middle East.

He outlines that in order for this mission to be successful the service would have to work closely with MI5 to ensure nothing leaked out and that PC plod did nothing too public.

At this point Joan interrupts Tony.

'I wish we could have done more, to prevent the service having to dirty itself and not get involved in domestic issues,'

The way she said domestic was as if she was saying she had shit on her shoe.

Tony carries on.

'Questions anyone?' Says Paul hoping no will ask questions

'We have done all you could, Joan'. Says 'C'

The audience listen and await 'C' verdict

'We cannot control what Ministers say, think and plan, so I don't think anything could have prevented us being involved

The clock suddenly gave an acrimonious chime as it sounds the hour. A hint of bitter amusement glides across Joan's face as though she has been waiting for this wrong little note to make his move.

'Well if no-one has anything extra to add Tony will get his troops into place.'

'C' nods and the rest of the table nod with him.

Opposition would be fruitless.

As they leave, 'C' calls Paul over. At that signal, Paul signals for Tony to come over too.

When Tony joins them, the two men finish their sentence and there is an awkward silence.

Paul rescues the situation by attempting a few social niceties

'And how are you Tony, are you missing ones usual work, ones friends and cousins?'

'Oh I think I manage pretty well actually reply's Paul'

'That's good to hear'

'C' looks at his watch thus signalling the end of the conversation and prepares to walk away.

At that point his PA enters the room and signals to him that he has another meeting.

'That is my call then'

'Well done everyone, I think we have a cunning plan.'

'C' smiled and so did Tony and Paul

The two men are left in the room

'So how did you feel that went?' enquires Paul?

'Fine except for that bitch's comments, when will she ever learn Paul!

If this works out well we could all do well, and don't forget 'C' is due to retire next year, I don't think there is the appetite for another woman to be in charge of the service do you?'

'Do you fancy a visit to the Vine?'

'It's almost coffee time, and I have a few suggestions to make'.

Tony had little option but to follow his control.

FIVE

Stuart returned from the pub about three o'clock in the afternoon. It was the end of May and summer was finally on its way despite months and months of rain, snow and hail. Scotland was funny that way. A day could start sunny and by lunchtime, it had rained, snowed and turned back to being sunny once more. There was no country in the world like it.

Although the day was warm, Stuart felt cold. Cold to the bone. One of those feelings that you feel no matter how warm it is, you still feel cold and shivery. In fact, Stuart would have felt this way even if he were in the Sub Saharan desert.

Stuart was pretty well sickened with his life. He had been six months in his new job and he was already fed up with it. If anyone had told him a year ago that, he would have been feeling like this, he would have thought they were joking. However, here he was, in the pub having bunked off from one of those dreaded training conferences that was supposed to help you communicate and 'up skill'.

We have all been on those type of courses where some very enthusiastic overly eager trainer outlines how they are going to change the way we work for the better. They use the usual buzzwords thinking they are original and new. Yet we all grown inside ourselves wanting to pretend with our hands that we have just blown our head of each time the "facilitator" stands up and talks. Usually the phrase 'that's a good question' comes out, quickly followed by 'now tell me what the group feel' or 'let's park that till later'.

Why they kept sending him on these useless courses was beyond Stuart. If only they realised that a good boss is differentiated from a bad boss by the way the boss makes their staff feel.

Stuart's boss thought training courses run by HR was the answer to everything. What would really make him interested in his job was if his boss got off her lazy fat arse and contributed something to his work. Instead, she was more interested in looking after herself and taking care of her career.

The other day he heard her use the term 'getting behind the troops'. That was almost too much, which resulted in him losing it. That is why he was on this brain numbing training course on communication and accepting 'diversity in the work place'.

The trainer or "facilitator", was even worse. She had gone on and on. He had to fight the temptation not to fall asleep after just half an hour. By 10 O'clock in the morning, he was ready to leave. All he had to look forward to was the morning coffee and a rather large fruit scone. By lunch, he had lost the will to live and had bunked off early. Instead of going back to the office, he decided to grab a pint or two.

Stuart hated his job and the people he worked with. Half the time he felt like extracting a nasal hair with the garage pliers would be more entertaining than listening to the gossip he had to hear at work. Most of the time the gossip made him sick especially the egotistic, self-important types.

The other day, for example, William who works in Finance, walked up to David who sat a few desks from him. David was drinking his morning cup of tea as he did every

morning at 10:15. As usual, he was dunking his favourite bourbon into his drink while he was opening his post.

William came up to him and said 'Hey David, be careful with that letter opener, or you will give yourself another circumcision'.

David faked a laugh. William however thought he was so funny while the rest of the office just looked at David as though William had just confirmed how much of a prick he was. Then most of the office spent the rest of the day gossiping about poor David and how much of a prick William was, but no one did anything.

Stuart had been brought up in Newcastle upon Tyne, but when the mines closed down his family moved away when he was just four and he had never been home since. So here he was, living in Edinburgh, which had become his new home and he counted on stopping there for the rest of his days working as an account manager in the banking industry.

When he first moved here having left one of the big four accountancy companies in London he had gone out to see the entire tourist sites, drank in the trendy bars and restaurants. After a while, Edinburgh started to become a bit of a disappointment. By the end of his first month of living here Stuart started to get tired of seeing sights, and in less than three months he had had enough of restaurants, theatres and nightlife. He had no real friends to go about with, which probably explained a few things about him.

What annoyed Stuart the most about people was their annoying gestures. For example, the other day Stuart was introduced to Helen a friend of David's from work. Not

only did she talk too much but also she did that annoying thing of pointing at her wrist while asking for the time. In his head, Stuart screamed. I know where my watch is lady, where is yours? Do I point at my crotch when I ask where the toilet is eh!

Despite how much he tried to avoid people plenty invited him out but they did not seem of much interested to him. They seemed more focused on what was going on at work, the trams or X Factor or which political party had gone back on its word. They would ask him a question or two about where he came from or why he moved to Scotland, and then get on their own affairs.

Later that afternoon he sat in the pub having consumed a few too many pints. He left a bit wobbly but still in control of his faculties. On his way home he picked up the Edinburgh Evening News and read the headlines about China was tightening controls on the internet. The Chinese sure knew how to control their people he thought. From all accounts, China seemed to be challenging America and the west for control of jobs and livelihoods.

Stuart remembered reading somewhere in one of those financial magazines which did the circulation from one desk to another that China owned almost 1/3 of American businesses and a consequence America was vulnerable to another double dip recession as China pulled out of America and used cheap labour from Africa and South East Asia to produce good American grown product.

That said, Stuart thought that every nation deserved their turn in the sun. The interesting thing though was that in 1415 China was the most advanced forward thinking

nation in the world. Then it decided to turn in on itself having decided it had discovered everything it needed. This resulted in terminal decline with the west the main benefactor. Now though it was the west that was in decline and China was now the rising star.

It is funny how things change, thought Stuart.

However, what Stuart had been reading is the Chinese seemed to be playing an honest game with the west and the nations of the Middle East. What you saw is what you got. This was more than could be said for most of the G8 nations these days. Since its formation in the 1970's they have set about driving its ruthless neo-liberal agenda, opening up new markets for the Coca Cola's and IBM's of the world and privatizing everything in its path, spreading capitalism across the world under the cover of supporting the developing world.

Another article that Stuart had been reading felt that China was the only barrier between peace and the west's drive to secure the energy reserves of the world using its military. This had been seen in Iraq, Libya, Mali and even Egypt.

Stuart daydreamed with the idea of getting a job in China. It struck him that the Middle East and China would be an exciting place to work and live in.

With his daydream at an end, he finished off his pint and began to head home.

SIX

Stuart arrived at his home a little after six o'clock. His flat was on the first floor in one of those new blocks that sprung up during the last 20 years to take advantage of the property boom as homes were sold at 3 or 4 times their value in the area around Edinburgh Castle.

He climbed up the common staircase that cut each flat off from each other. This was supposed to keep a secluded atmosphere across the whole of the building. Approaching the door of his flat having rapidly climbed the stairs he immediately pulled out his key which had a small sheep tied to it which his niece had given to him last Christmas. He was just fitting his key into the door when he noticed a man at his elbow. Stuart had not seen him approach, and the sudden appearance made him startle.

He was a slim man, with short red hair and small piercing green eyes. He recognized him as the occupant of a flat on the top floor, with whom he had passed the time of day on the stairs.

'Can I speak to you please?' he said. Without pausing, he continued.

'May I please come in for a minute?'

Stuart wondered what did this man wanted. He hoped it was not a call to sign a petition or a complaint about his music.

The man was steadying his voice with an effort, and his hand was pawing at his arm. Stuart opened his door and motioned him in. No sooner was he over the threshold than he

made a dash for the far window, where Stuart usually read his e-reader or used his tablet.

Then he bolted back towards the door they had both just walked through.

'Is the door locked?' he asked anxiously

Without waiting for an answer, he fastened the chain with his own hands.

'I'm very sorry,' he said humbly.

'It's an almighty ask, but you look the kind of man who would understand.'

'I'll listen to you,' Stuart said.

'That's all I'll promise.' The antics of this man were worrying Stuart. He wondered if he had just let some nutter into his house that was going to attack him.

There was a tray of drinks on a table beside him, from which the man filled himself a very large whisky. He drank it down in three large gulps. The glass cracked as he set it down.

'Excuse me,' he said

'I was a little thirsty'.

'I'm a bit rattled tonight. You see, I happen at this moment to be dead.'

Stuart sat down in an armchair and rubbed his chin thinking how I get rid of this nutter.

'What does it feel like?' Stuart asked with a smile on his face.

It was all he could think to say

He was certain that he would to deal with this man if he was to get rid of him. The question was how could he get rid of him? How could he do it without upsetting this

obviously insane and lonely man? Stuart wondered about him. Perhaps he had dementia or some other mental health problem.

A smile flickered over his drawn face. 'I'm not mad. Well, not yet any way'

A nervous laugh came out from both men.

'That's good to hear' responded Stuart.

'I've been watching you, and I reckon you're a good person, someone who can deal with a dangerous proposition.'

He continued now with some confidence.

'I reckon you are an honest man, and not afraid of talking on people. I am going to tell you a secret. I need help more than any man ever needed it, and I want to know if I can count on you.'

'Tell me your story,' Stuart said,

The man seemed to brace himself for a great effort, and then started to tell Stuart a weird story. At first, Stuart did not quite understand everything, stopping and asking him questions.

The man told Stuart he was Irish, from County Down, and after college, he travelled the world. Did the usual 7 day tour of Europe? He wrote a bit, and acted as Newspaper reporter for an English and then an Irish paper. Later he went to university studying English Literature and Greek graduating from Ulster University with a 2:1 before he took up a commission with the Northern Irish Police. He worked there for a few years before he

took a secondment with the Foreign Office. They placed him at the Chinese embassy in Shanghai where he was based there for a two years in the security section.

Stuart quickly gathered that he was a fine linguist, and had to know pretty well the society in those parts as the Chinese moved away from Communism towards Capitalism and its free market. He spoke familiarly of many names that Stuart had seen in the news. He had even entered Chinese politics, at first for the interest of the subject, and then because he could not help himself.

To Stuart this man came across as a sharp, restless man, who always wanted to get down to the roots of cause. He told Stuart that away from all the politicians and diplomats there was a big movement going on, engineered by very dangerous people. He had come on it by accident and this fascinated him. Then he was caught.

He went on to tell him that most of the people in it were the sort of educated anarchists that want to create a revolution, supported by lots of money who were playing for control of the world. A clever person can make big profits on a falling market if they know when to buy and when to sell, and it suited these people to set the world up for war.

Stuart remembered the Libor cases and how key people in the banks of the United Kingdom, Switzerland and United States had used their positions to engineer massive profits. So this all sounded quite plausible.

The man continued. He told Stuart a weird tale that explained a lot that had puzzled him about global politics in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and India. How one regime

suddenly came to power, why alliances were made and broken, why certain men disappeared, and where the sinews of war came from?

The aim of the whole conspiracy was to get Russia, China, Europe and the United States at loggerheads in the Middle East. An attempt to develop and create a new Crusade against Islam and reek the benefits of cheap dependable oil and gas.

Stuart asked 'why?'

The man said 'many thought it would give them a chance to make money as the West, China and Russia re-armed. Everything would be in the melting- pot, and if war came they looked to see a new world emerge, and if no war came then they would make a fortune as the 'International Community' rearmed.

'They would rake in the money, and make fortunes by buying up wreckage. Capital, he said, had no conscience and no fatherland'.

'Have you been reading the news?' He asked Stuart

'Yes'.

Stuart sat up at that, for he had been reading about China that very afternoon.

'The Chinese are the ones who are trying to wreck their games. They want peace not war. They are the peacemakers and they happen also to be really good at brokering peace and preventing wars.'

'They have been marked down'.

The man went onto tell Stuart how he had found out this information. That it had not been that it was difficult, for any fool could guess as much. Nevertheless, he had found out the way they were going to get him, and that knowledge was deadly.

'That's why I have had to die.' He said

'Well here's to death' said Stuart lifting up his glass.

Both men had another drink, but Stuart mixed their next drink with water this time, as the story was just getting interesting.

'They can't get the Chinese on their own land but they can pick off their leadership. Soon the Chinese Leadership will be visiting Edinburgh. The Chinese President's daughter is graduating from Edinburgh University this summer.

Now while the President is visiting Edinburgh, the Chinese consulate is to host a party with him as the principal guest at one of the hotels near the Scottish Parliament, and if our friends have their way, he will never return to China.

'That's simple enough, anyhow,' Stuart said.

'You can warn him and keep him at home.'

'And play their game?' he asked sharply.

'If he does not come then terrorism wins and China will have no option but to join the west.

'What about the British Government?'

'They're not going to let their guests be murdered.'

'They want it to happen, there is an agreement between some people within the British government and the French government to kill the Chinese President on UK soil as part of some deal over the terrorist Abdulla Megahit.'

Our friends are not playing this game for fun. They want a big occasion for his death with the eyes of all world on them when it occurs. A Muslim will murder him, and there will be plenty of evidence to show that al-Qaeda committed the act. It will all be a conspiracy of course, but the case will look black enough to the world'.

'I'm not making this up my friend!'

He sat down and stopped talking for a few minutes. All was silent as both men took in what had been said.

However, he soon continued determined to get his story out.

'I happen to know every detail of this act, and I can tell you it will be the most furnished piece of manipulation since the Weapons of Mass Destruction invasion of Iraq in 2003. But it's not going to come off if I get the chance'.

Stuart was getting to like this strange man. There was a fire of battle in his eyes. If he was spinning Stuart a lie, he could act up to it.

'Where did you find out this story?'

'I got the first hint in a lift several months ago when two men were discussing their plan at a party in Canary Wharf.'

'Of course they were not to know that someone was working on the maintenance of the lift above them and could hear everything that was being discussed.'

'That man was not to know that someone was listening to him while he was gossiping to his girlfriend in a pub about what went on'

'That set me inquiring, and I collected my other clues in an internet cafe in Brighton, in a Strip Club in Liverpool, and in a little bookshop in Hay on Wye. I completed my evidence when I hacked into the Defence Information Systems Agency and the British Military of Defence intranet in London. I can't tell you all the details now, for it's something of a history lesson.'

'When I was quite sure in my own mind I judged it my business to disappear and I reached Edinburgh in a roundabout manner. I left for Paris on train in late March and fled to Amsterdam a few days later before I flew to Hong Kong. There I tried through one of my contacts to contact the Chinese President. Despite trying to get my a message to the Chinese Government we both came to the conclusion that the Chinese President had little option but to go along with his visit to his daughter. As I say if he did not go terrorism wins but if he makes the visit then terrorism and the west plot could be foiled.

However before I had a chance to flesh out a strategy my contact was killed in a car accident. So I was forced with little option but to come back to Scotland and try to stop things this end.

After that, I sailed from China to Japan arriving two days later. From Tokyo, I flew to Moscow where I tried to get support from my contacts in the FSC. I then drove to Saint Petersburg before I boarded a cruise ship to Leith Docks. I came here from Leith. Once back

in Scotland I then travelled to Paris. I took a big risk tricking some people into thinking I was one of them before fleeing back here to Scotland.

Since the middle of April, I thought I was safe until four days ago. I thought I had muddied my trail somewhat, and was feeling pretty happy. Then ...'

At this point, the recollection seemed to upset him, and he gulped down some more whisky.

Then I started to see a man standing in the street outside this block. Eventually I narrowed it down to two men and one woman on different shifts. At first, I panicked and stayed within my flat in the day time, and only slipped out after dark for an hour or two. I watched these people for a bit from my window, and I thought I recognized them. Sometimes I would watch them come in and talk to my neighbours, including yourself.'

Stuart could not remember anyone asking him about his neighbour but the man seemed convinced this had happened.

'When I came back from a walk last night I spotted evidence that someone had been snooping around my flat. Only the trained eye could have spotted their search. You see I place tape on my door so if the seal breaks I know someone has been sniffing around. Last night these seals had been broken.'

At this stage, Stuart could see a real change in his eyes, the sheer naked scare on his face.

'What did you do next?' Asked Stuart

'I realized that I was trapped, and that there was only one way out. I had to die. If my pursuers knew I was dead they would leave and that would give me the chance I needed to escape.'

'How did you manage it?'

'I phoned NHS 24 and I got them to order a doctor's visit, and I got myself dressed up to look like death. That was not difficult, for I am very good at disguises. Then I got a corpse. You know you can always get a body if you know where to go for it.'

This intrigued Stuart, who was a little taken back by the man's candid honesty.

The man continued.

'I fetched it back in a trunk on the top of a four-wheeler, and just managed to get the body upstairs, it's amazing how empty the building is at three in the morning. While I was alone I started to fake up that corpse. He was my size, and I judged had perished from too much alcohol, so I put some spirits handy about the place to make it look like I had "a problem". The face was the weak point in the likeness, so I blew it away with a revolver. I daresay there will be somebody tomorrow to swear to having heard a shot, but there are no neighbours on my floor, and I guessed I could risk it. Therefore, I left the body in bed dressed up in my pyjamas, with a revolver lying on the bed-clothes and a considerable mess around. Then I changed into some clothes I had kept waiting for emergencies'.

'After that I had you in my mind all day, and there seemed nothing to do but to make an appeal to you. I watched out for you from my window till I saw you come home, and then slipped down the stair to meet you as you came to your door.'

'So now that I have told you my story.'

He sat blinking like a lost pet, fluttering with nerves and yet desperately determined to get what he wanted. By this time, Stuart was pretty well convinced that he was telling him the truth.

He paused for a few seconds and was silent. Thinking though what had been said he then broke the silence.

'Right. I will trust you for the night. I will lock you into this room once you are asleep. I will keep the key with me overnight. Just one word, I believe you, but if I find out this is a trick or something else then I warn you, you will be thrown out.'

'Sure,' he said, jumping up with some briskness.

'But let me first tidy myself up'.

Stuart took him into his bedroom and left him to rest. An hour later a figure came out that Stuart scarcely recognized. Only his hungry eyes were the same. He was shaved clean, his hair was parted in the middle, and he had cut his eyebrows. Further, he carried himself as if he did not have a worry in the world. He had glasses on and every trace of his Irish accent was gone.

He then turned around and marched himself back to the bedroom.

With the man in the bedroom, Stuart locked him in his room and muttered a good night to him.

He stood outside his room for a few minutes. Hearing the man sit on his bed, Stuart turned around and walked back to his living room.

Now all alone Stuart made up his own bed in his living room and sought his own sofa, more cheerful than he had been for the past few months. Things did happen occasionally, even in Edinburgh he thought.

A few minutes later, he was fast asleep.

SEVEN

The next morning Stuart made breakfast for them both. He felt quite happy how things had turned out and really did not mind making breakfast for his strange new friend. The smell of the breakfast cooking woke his friend up. He seemed in a very positive mood. Both men readily consumed the roll and sausage and a massive mug of coffee.

'A great mug of Coffee and roll and sausage the world was is right' commented Stuart as he went over to pick up the Scotsman and Daily Record from the front door. Picking the papers up he gave John both newspapers to read over, before heading off to work.

'I will see you later tonight John, look after yourself.'

As he shut the door leaving John in his flat he felt surprisingly relaxed about the whole affair and promptly set off for work.

That night when he came home, he bumped into one of his very nosey neighbours. Within seconds, she started to tell me about the 'Nasty business that happened this morning'

She went onto tell him that, 'apparently the man 2F2 had shot himself. They have just took him to the mortuary. The police are up there now.'

Stuart ascended the stairs to the second floor, and found a couple of police officers and an inspector who was trying to look important ordering people around. Stuart asked a few stupid questions, and they soon kicked him out. One of the coppers was grabbing a

sneaky cigarette outside his flat. A quick chat from him confirmed what Stuart hoped would be the conclusion.

The copper said, 'Once this has got to an inquiry they will find it a case of simple suicide of an sad lonely alcoholic of unsound mind who's'

The police officer taped his head as though to let out the next sentence

'Few effects we found will be handed over to Edinburgh Council for them to deal with including the disposal of the body, '

'With a bit of luck this will be resolved by the end of my shift and I can grab a pint.'

Stuart then returned to his flat. Forgetting for a second that John was in the flat he opened the door with his key and was surprised to see John at his desk reading the Scotsman. He was glad that John was still there. It had been interesting hearing about his story and he was quite excited to be part of it.

He hung up his coat and quickly changed out of his work clothes and into a pair of jeans and a purple and blue polo neck t-shirt.

John began to chat about the weather but soon the conversation came around to John's death.

This gave Stuart the chance to give John a full account of the affair, and it interested him greatly. He said he wished he could attend the inquest, for he reckoned it would be interesting to read your own obituary notice in an inquest.

Yet, John seemed very tired and after tea and having watched a film on their TV, both men drifted off to sleep.

The next day while Stuart was at work John opened up his shoulder pack and he took out some of his bulbous latex noses, make up, soft cheek inserts and grey contact lenses. Checking that there was still some left in the bag, he went to Stuart's bathroom where he began to alter his appearance. Within half an hour, he had transformed himself. He had changed himself into an elderly man and promptly left the flat.

After a harrowing hours walk in which he had to maintain the pose and speed of a retired worker from Scottish and Newcastle Brewery, he walked down a hill until he came to Haymarket railway station. Checking that he was not being followed he brought a ticket from Haymarket Station to Glasgow Queen Street. Boarding the train he took up a seat near one of the toilets and sat motionless watching the people sat around him. Watching out for any tell-tail signs that he was been watched he waited and waited until it looked like the coast was clear. Happy that no one was watching him and the CCTV cameras on the train were not following him, he stood up and moved towards one of the toilets on the train. Timing it so that he entered the toilet as the train entered Linlithgow Station he locked the door and set about his transformation. Once inside and in a secure place he quickly changed into a different set of clothes while he took off his make-up and prosthetics which he quickly flushed down the toilet and put his old clothes back into his rucksack.

Having transformed himself he came out of the train toilet, got off at the next station and got the next train to Glasgow.

In Glasgow John, took a taxi out to Maryhill. There he went to 'Smiths Butchers' where he asked if William had his chicken order. William came out, seeing who it was he returned to the stores where he came out with his special chicken.

John then picked up the chicken and left. A few minutes later, he walked across to the local sports centre. In one of the changing rooms, he pulled out his chicken. He smashed it open to reveal a 9mm Browning Hi-power semi-automatic pistol. Tucking it in his pocket, he once more reapplied his make-up and prosthetics using his ruck-sack. Leaving the chicken stuffed under the bench in his changing room, he opened the door and began to walk out as though he was once more an old man. Leaving the leisure centre the harmless old man that he had transformed himself reversed his journey and travelling back into Edinburgh before returning to Stuart's empty flat.

Once back at the flat he took off his make-up and prosthetics. He cleaned and tidied himself up, he hid the gun at the back of the toilet cistern and the rest of his belongings including cash behind the fridge in the kitchen.

For the rest of the day John stayed with Stuart in that back room. John was very peaceful. He read and smoked a bit, and made a heap of jottings in his black notebook. Later on that night, Stuart and John had a game of chess, at which John beat Stuart without trouble.

John gave the impression that he was nursing his nerves back to health, but in fact, he was preparing for his next move.

A few days later John was beginning to get restless. He fixed up a list of the days until the Chinese President was due to arrive, and ticked each off with a red pencil, making remarks in shorthand against them.

With the President's visit, drawing nearer Stuart could see that John began to get edgy again. He started to jump at any sudden noises. Once or twice, he got very peevish, and apologized for it. John did not blame him. He made every allowance for Stuart quite enjoyed his company.

It was not the safety of his own skin that troubled John, but the success of the scheme he had planned that he was worried about. That night he was very solemn.

'Stuart,' he said,

'I have something new to tell you. I should hate to go out without leaving somebody else to carry the fight'.

That is when Stuart realized John expected him to get further involved. Before he had a chance to resist, he began to tell Stuart in detail what he had only heard from him vaguely.

Stuart did not give him very close attention. The fact he was more interested in his adventures than in his politics. Stuart reckoned that the Chinese President and the 'Establishment' affairs were none of his business. He was very clear that the danger to the Chinese President would not begin until he had arrived in Scotland, where there would be no thought of suspicion. He mentioned the name of a woman called Susan Blackburn and Norman Brook as having something to do with the danger. There would be a decoy, Stuart

gathered, to get the Chinese President out of the care of his guards. He spoke a good deal about death, too. He was anxious about beating 'The Establishment' but he did not care for his life.

Next day John was much more cheerful, and read the Sun and even started to watch comedy shows on the internet TV.

That day Stuart went out to dinner with a few friends from work and came back about half-past ten.

He was a wee bit worse for the weather coming home with a cigar in my mouth and holding a half drunk bottle of beer in his hand. As Stuart pushed open the door, the lights were not on. This struck him as being odd. He wondered if John was asleep already.

Putting his bottle of beer down, he snapped the switch on, but there was nobody there. Then he saw something in the far corner that made him drop his cigar and fall into a great dread.

Stuart's guest was lying sprawled on his stomach. There was one of his kitchen knives stuck through his heart that skewered him to the floor.

EIGHT

Stuart sat down on his sofa and felt the bile in his stomach rumbling away. He hated feeling sick. He always had. Even when he had a Cold, he tended to be really thrown out of balance. Right now, though he felt sick. Sick to his stomach. He could feel the gruesome bile inside his stomach build up. He did all that he could to keep it down and not bring up the evening drink and food all over the place. He started to take quick, fast breaths that helped keep his vomit down despite gagging several times. He wanted to go outside but knew he could not. He felt like running and never returning.

That sensation lasted for another five minutes.

With his sickness dissipating, panic came.

The face of his friend was staring into his floor and it was more than he could bear. So he went to the bedroom grabbed a duvet and covered it over him. He wandered across to the kitchen. He reached into his fridge, pulled out an ice-cold bottle of beer, and tried to forget what had happened.

He had never seen a man die violently before. In fact, he had never seen anyone die before in his own home.

This was a cold-blooded, calculated murder.

Unexpectedly and abruptly, Stuart stopped panicking and now felt scared. Scared for his life and scared about what might happen next.

At that moment, he realised that that he could be next. In fact, the murderers might still be in the building right now. What would he do?

He suddenly found himself frozen in the centre of his kitchen not knowing what to do. The room felt like it was spinning around in his head. Conversations he had with John came rushing through his head. Panic and sickness came back.

He knocked his bottle of beer over. It fell from the ledge by the side of the light switch. It bounced on the wooden floor tipping over and releasing the remains of his beer all over the floor. He gazed at the spilt beer for a few seconds as the beer spread across his floor expanding like lava flowing from a volcano consuming up his floor inch by inch.

The sound of the glass falling brought him back to reality. This somehow got him to pull himself together.

He looked at his watch, and saw that it was just after midnight. How long had he been standing there he wondered?

An idea came to him.

He began to search his flat.

He opened the knife draw and drew out a large chopping knife. This gave him some sense security. He then began to search each room. He systematically checked each room one after another.

All the rooms were empty. He was safe. He rushed over to his front door and quickly locked the door with his key. He patted the door and then lent against it with his forearm above his head.

He closed his eyes with the knife still in his hand.

He let out a long winded sigh of relief.

Nobody was here. He looked around the room and could see there was no trace of anybody. He walked over to his kitchen, put the knife down, and started to clear up the spilt beer that had now formed a large puddle by the door to his flat.

With the beer cleared up, he suddenly froze. The windows, he had not checked them. He rushed over to them and set about bolting all the windows closed. He then had an idea. Just to make sure he put a chair on the door preventing the door handle from being lowered.

He was safe.

By this time, his senses were coming back to him, and he started to understand just what had happened.

He went to his bedroom.

It took Stuart all night to figure things out, and he did not need to hurry because unless the murderer came back for him, he had until the next day until he needed to report John's death.

Stuart realised that he was in the shit. That was clear. Crystal clear.

Any doubt he might have had about the truth of John's tale was now gone forever. The proof laid under his king size red and purple Marks and Spencer's duvet. The men who were looking for him had found him, and had taken the best way to make certain of his silence.

'Fuck' he yelled with much venom

Not only had they killed John but they had made Stuart the main suspect and his fingerprints were now all over another knife. They had managed to clear their involvement and make Stuart the main suspect.

It also looked like Stuart would be the next to go. Probably in prison or on the way to court. Stuart bet one of the inmates would kill him before he had the chance to tell anyone his account.

Then suddenly he thought of another possibility. Supposing he went out now and called in the police, or let someone else find the body. What kind of a story was he to tell about John?

If he made a clean breast of it and told the police everything, he had been told they would lock Stuart up. Everything was against Stuart. Stuart would be charged with murder, and the circumstantial evidence was strong enough to send him away for 8 years at least. Few people knew Stuart in Edinburgh. Stuart had no real friends who could come forward and swear to his character. It looked like that was what they were hoping would happen.

Besides, if Stuart told the whole story, and by some miracle was believed by the police. He would be playing straight into their game.

The media would run the story. They would say a terrorist cell had been found to be in Edinburgh ready to assassinate the Chinese President and Al Qaeda were to blame. In fact, this would result in the Chinese President probably staying in China, which was what they wanted.

Somehow or other the image of that dead body excited him and gave Stuart something in life to fight for. He was gone, and now it looked like Stuart had no option but to continue his work.

It took Stuart a few more hours to think this out. As morning came, he had come to a decision. He must vanish somehow, and keep vanished until near to the planned attack on the Chinese President. Then Stuart realised that he must somehow find a way to get in touch with the Government people and tell them what John had learned.

Stuart wished John had told him more, and he had listened a little bit more closely to the little he had been told.

Stuart knew nothing but the barest of facts.

The government might still not do anything, even if he survived but Stuart realised he had nothing to lose. Stuart had to take his chances and hope that something might happen which would confirm this to the Government.

His first job was to keep going for the next couple of weeks and that meant several days of hiding before he could approach the government or the Police. That would mean two groups would be searching for Stuart. The murderers and the Police. Most people that go on the run are picked up within 48 hours so it did not look good for Stuart.

His next thought was whether John had anything to help him. He checked his bedroom again but there was nothing but some money and an empty chocolate wrapper. There was no sign of his little book in which he had seen him making notes. His murderers had no doubt taken the little book.

Nevertheless, as Stuart looked up he saw that some cupboard shelves had been pulled out from the desk. John would never have left them in that state, for he was anal about being tidy. In fact, he was sure John had a mild case of OCD.

His thought started to drift.

He remembered reading somewhere that OCD is the 10th most common mental illness in the world. Living with OCD must be very difficult. He sort of imagined John's home as being immaculate with lists written all across his flat and him constantly cleaning his house from top to bottom.

Then his thought came back to the present.

Someone must have been searching for something. He went round the flat. There was no trace of the book. Most likely, they had found it. Well there would be no point searching for it. It would be long gone.

Then Stuart began to consider where he should go next. He decided that it would be best to remain in Scotland and hide out away from the main cities. He fixed on the West Highland Way as he could pass for a walker and the area was wild and hard to get to in a car.

Yes that would be safe he thought. If he stayed in Edinburgh, he would be spotted and certainly killed or picked up by the police.

He picked up his mobile and clicked open one of the applications that listed train time.

A search on a rail enquiry website informed him that a train left Waverley Station at 10.20, which would land him at Milngavie station by the late morning.

That was well enough, but a more important matter was how he was to get to Waverley Station without being detected. He had watched enough episodes of Taggart to know for certain that the police would be watching the stations. Unsure what to do he went to bed and slept for several troubled hours.

Stuart got up at six in the morning and looked out of the window. In the faint light of a spring morning magpies and swifts begun to chatter. For a few seconds he almost forgot what had happened. Depressed that it was not a dream he closed his curtains.

He then had a shower. A long hot burning shower. One of those showers that you have when you try to wash away a memory. Of course, that did not work but for a few minutes, he felt free.

Having dried himself he got dressed in some jeans, a woolly green jumper and a pair of strong walking boots. He put on a jacket and then stuffed a spare t-shirt, tooth-brush and a flannel into a small rucksack and a few other essentials that he thought he might need. He had drawn a good amount of cash out the other day in case John should want money. As a result, he was able to stuff just over £500 in his pockets. He had a shave and brushed his teeth.

However, at eight o'clock, as Stuart knew from bitter experience, the bin men turned up with a great clatter of bins. Stuart had seen the same bin men each week. They were

young men with Celtic or Rangers tops on and bright aluminous jackets on top. One these men Stuart decided he would stake all his hopes on escaping undetected.

Stuart went into the living room where the rays of morning light were beginning to creep through gaps in his curtain. There he grabbed some cornflakes and a mug that he planned to fill coffee from the cupboard. As he put his cornflakes away, Stuart noticed something hard in the cereal box. He shook the box and heard a thud.

'No it can't be, can it', he thought

He put his hand in the box, searching around the loose cornflakes he found what he was looking for and drew out a black pocket-book.

Putting the book away into his inside jacket Stuart looked at John for the last time.

'Goodbye old friend' he said

'I am going to do my best for you. Wish me well, wherever you are.'

Then Stuart hung about in the hall waiting for the bin men. That was the worst part of it all, for Stuart was desperate to get out of the building and Edinburgh.

Eight-thirty passed, then eight-forty five, but still the bin men did not come. Was it a local holiday? Just typical for the Bin Men to be late.

At Nine AM, Stuart heard the rattle of the bin van outside. He opened the front door, and there were the bin men, singling out his bins. They emptied his bin. As they returned, Stuart asked one of them to come over to the front door.

Stuart asked one of them if he could borrow their bright yellow and Black jacket and hat with the company's logo on it. Stuart offered him a crisp £50 note. The bin man's eyes opened at the sight of the money, and he grinned broadly.

'Ok!' he said cheerily.

Stuart stuck on his woolly hat and his yellow and black jacket with his small rucksack on his back. He picked up one of bins and took it to the Bin Van. Where he left it.

At first Stuart, thought there was nobody in the street. Then he caught sight of a police officer a hundred yards down, and another man on the other side of the road. Some impulse made him raise his eyes towards the window of one of the flats opposite, and there looking out the window was a face. As the man passed he looked up, and it looked like some sort of signal was exchanged.

Stuart walked along the road and then crossed the street. Stuart took the first side street where he came to a hill that passed the Grassmarket Bar. He walked past the pub he regularly went to after work and then went down a left-hand turning.

Stuart quickly took the bin-man's jacket off, placing it in his ruck sack and walked passed some vacant land just down from the castle where they were still building the Edinburgh tram system.

Stuart passed a plot of vacant land and walked past one of those Georgian flats that Edinburgh is famous for when a postal worker came round the corner. At the moment, the clock of an architect's office struck nine thirty. There was not a second to spare if he was to get that train. As soon as he got to the Princesses Gardens, he ran. By the time, he was near

the train station the clock at the Balmorals showed five minutes past the hour. At Waverly he had no time to take a ticket, let alone settling upon his destination. The information board told him it was platform 12, and as he entered the station, he saw the train was ready to go. Stuart leaped over the ticket block and sprinted to the train, jumping on before the doors closed. A few seconds later, the doors locked and the train was off.

Five minutes later, as the train was roaring through the various railway tunnels of Waverley Station an irate inspector asked Stuart for his ticket.

Stuart sat there in his seat looking around him. The well-worn train seats smelt of the morning rush hour. How he was glad that you could not smoke anymore on trains. The smell would have been unbearable. He remembered how when he was a child his father used to drag him around pub after pub and the smoke would hang above his head ingraining his clothes and skin in tobacco.

A few minutes later, the inspector asked him for his ticket. He hoped this one would not be a job worth person. Thankfully, he was not and he just asked him for the fee.

Stuart paid by switch and he was handed his ticket to Milngavie. Single one way.

He went off asking the people around him for their tickets while Stuart mopped his brow and continued to notice that the people sitting on the seats around him. One of them was an old woman with her walking stick firmly positioned between her legs. She looked scary.

Breaking the silence Stuart announced 'it was a great way to get fit almost missing your train'.

There were a few polite smiles but no conversations came from it. Secretly he was thankful; he did not really want to talk to anyone.

NINE

Susan Blackburn stirred without the sense of Tony being close by her. She was still half awake; she rolled out of bed landing on her clothes that had been scattered on the floor following night of passion and far too much red wine.

Sliding across the carpet, she slid open the glass door. Tony was watching her as she joined him on the veranda that overlooked the skyline of London.

Tony was looking out to the blue angle fish skyline silhouetted with the backdrop of the city of London's horizon. The sun light beat down on the veranda bringing out the colours of his garden flowers as though a rainbow was cloaked along his garden.

Opening the door Susan went out into the dark brown wooden veranda. The air was rich with the scent of the garden flowers that flooded around them both. Tony was immediately aware of Susan.

Susan asked in a sleepy voice 'What are you doing?'

She rubbed her eyes and then protected her eyes from the summer sun.

'Thinking about what we shall do next'

She bent down and whispered into his left ear with her lips, 'you worry too much.'

'Come back to bed' she said in a seductive manner.

Susan then walked back into the bedroom and laid waiting for Tony to follow.

Tony's jaw dropped and quick as a flash the morning view of London was long forgotten. A minute later, he climbed onto the bed. Tony started to kiss Susan. First, he

kissed her gently, but soon he started to kiss her more feverishly. He then started to kiss her through her clothes. He bit her nipple and then he took it in his mouth. He then pulled her up onto the bed. There he prised open her legs and then he buried his hands between her legs. Her legs quickly rose up in the air and rested on his shoulders.

Then everything else stopped being important. Time and space seemed to no longer matter to either of them. All that mattered was the where Tony touched Susan.

He started to touch her in places he knew would bring her pleasure. He ran his tongue along her back, He held her tight. He seemed to never let her go. There was no inebriation between both lovers. Nothing now mattered at all.

The world seemed so obscure and distant. It was almost as though the world out there ceased to exist.

Tony came back from her. She pushed him away and started to kiss his chest all the way down to the top of his waist. He moaned and stared down at her. She bent down and gave him a little of what he wanted. He held onto her head for a while before he suddenly grabbed her from under her arms and pulled her away.

They both grabbed each other and they kissed once more. They were now more like animals than people. She knew what he was about to do. He turned her around, mounting her. He bent her over the bed and before long, he was inside her. They moved in tandem like two sides of a perfect circle. They both felt so complete. He penetrated her more and more ripping her open for the entire world to see. He leaned forward and grabbed her breasts. They changed positions and Susan jumped on top. She was bouncing up and down

on him like jockey on a horse. Tony started to come. For him it was like a storm that was never ending. Each thrust was like the crackle of thunder in the mists of a hurricane. As his thrusts abated, he pulled Susan down and buried his face into her. She too started to climax. For her it was like the rush you get from diving out of an airplane at 20,000 feet, diving through the sky free and becoming a great force. Then it was all over...

When they both came around their fix of passion having worn off. Tony walked back to the veranda. Then came the call. Susan answered the call. She left his bedroom walking past the pictures of the children, the memories and long held dreams and ideals. Of course, she wanted those memories too, but they were the memories of his wife.

Susan wondered if Audrey had any idea of what was going on. She suspected not. If only Tony would leave her then she would have everything she wanted. But she knew deep down that that was the dream of the innocent and not the dream of a grown up.

She answered the call with regret. She recognised the voice immediately it was Norman.

'I have just arrived in London from Paris and I need your help!'

He then went onto explain to her what had gone wrong in Paris yesterday. After much patient listening, begging, and pleading from him, she agreed to provide her services.

Susan was a woman from Cheltenham who came from a Russian-American family that had settled in the UK during the last few years of the Cold War.

Although physically strong, she was emotionally focused too. She had been forced to deal with some significant trauma over the years. Trauma's which would have caused most to crack.

At a young age, her fiancé died in a car crash to the North of Cheltenham. She also had to come to terms with her mother's death following a failed hijack of a coach in Jerusalem. This event more than anything else had driven to join MI5 when she graduated from Cheltenham and Gloucester College in 2000.

She joined the Special Intelligence Service internal academy in September 2000. At first, she found the going tough. It was there that she met Norman and with his help, she was able to develop the physical strength to get through the initial training. With the friendship established, she went onto MI5 while Norman went onto MI6.

At MI5, she began to excel in investigative and analytical techniques and covert operational training. She began to earn a reputation as a tough student passing the various tests with ease. Later as her career began to develop she met Tony following a cross MI5/MI6 training session.

'Norman!' she screamed out after putting the phone down

'Why are you such a dick!'

She went back into Tony's room and told him she must leave immediately.

Tony groaned in disappointment.

However, he lay in bed and watched her getting dresses. He liked the way she would always lay her clothes out in neat piles before getting dressed. He could not help think how

much better women looked than men when they got dressed or undressed. There was always that certain elegance that women had over men no matter how much you tried.

A few minutes later, she was dressed and shortly after that, the front door slammed shut and he could hear her rushing off to where ever she was going.

Tony pulled his duvet over his head. Glad to have the bed back he stretched out consuming the whole of the bed. A few minutes later, he was fast asleep.

Back at her apartment her attention quickly drifted away from Tony and onto her new problem. Very quickly, her attention was totally focused on how she was going to sort out this mess.

'A shower is needed' Susan mumbled to herself.

She knew that the hot jets of the shower and the force of the water would blast away everything and help her focus on the problem she had now inherited. She especially wanted to wash away any thoughts of Tony from her mind. She needed to get focussing on the job in hand.

After a long shower where the steam from the shower turned her small bathroom into a Turkish bath she started to brainstorm some ideas on the shutters of the shower that helped her focus.

With the shower finished and a few ideas installed in her mind, she got dressed. Once dressed she grabbed something quick and tasteless from her cupboards. She slung it in the microwave and her gloopy meal was eaten. She was too hungry to taste the food. She quickly shovelled the food down her mouth before she headed off to her office.

When she arrived at her office less than an hour later Susan prepared to hand it over to the car park attendant. It was one of those many benefits of the job that MI5 paid for. Officers had their cars parked and retrieved by a special team. To Susan this seemed like a needless luxury that was more to do with status than security. She hoped her car would not be scratched like it had been a few weeks ago.

'Take my car, chum,' said Susan to the buildings car park attendant, as she climbed out of her sports car.

The young man who was her attendant looked very young perhaps no more than 20. She just hoped that her car would come back in one piece and he did not go joy riding with it around London while the streets were clear of traffic.

As her car drove away, she walked towards her office doors attaching her ID to her breast pocket and plunged into the chaos of MI5.

TEN

A few hours after Norman had phoned, Susan, was finally able to begin to make a few enquires to help her investigation. Quite quickly, she started to spot the undertones that something important was happening. If it was going to be important and Norman was involved than she wanted to be part of this too.

That morning Susan Blackburn arrived at the office at six in the morning. As usual, she was sitting behind her sparking chrome and glass desk, in the offices of MI5. She was on the phone with one of her contacts from the Transport Police in Paris Nord Station. She was trying to get access to CCTV coverage from the day Norman was sent to Paris with Lloyd.

On her desk were two computer screens with her laptop plugged into the mainframe computer system at MI5. Apart from a large mug of coffee, her desk was devoid of anything personal or precious to her. The mug stood out. It was white with a red dotted box painted across it. In the centre of the mug were the words SPIES ROCK. It was a present from her first boss who thought it would be a good way to lighten up the day. She looked at it as she did each day and a smile spread across her face. He had been a good person, one of the few that had managed to survive the various purges of the service over the last 10 years.

Then her smile fell away as her thought went back to work. Her brown eyes with the stud in her left eyebrow were wide apart and were focusing in on her computer screen as she continued to milk her contact for information.

Five minutes of sweet talking the French Information attaché got Susan and her team access.

Straight away, she logged into the CCTV system and began to search through the files up until it was 18.00. Using the wheel on her mouse, she zoomed back and forward until she found Norman and Lloyd entering the station. She watched as both men separate from each other. Lloyd walked off to one of the toilets in the station.

She then waited and waited for Lloyd to leave the toilet. When no one appeared, she began to wonder what she could do.

She then thought about logging each face that left the men's toilet in the new facial recognition system. She spent the next half hour logging every face that entered and left the toilet into the facial recognition system. Susan started to do a check using the computer application to automatically identify each person from his or her digital image. She instructed the computer to do a search based on comparing selected facial features from the images and the facial database. She was still amazed at how effective this system was.

She remembered back to her training and while on an exchange exercise with the Florida Police Service she helped set up a system at Super Bowl XXXV in January 2001. There the police in Tampa Bay, Florida used facial recognition software to search for potential criminals and terrorists in attendance at the event. Nineteen people with minor criminal records were identified and by the end of the match, they were being taken off to prison.

Realising that the scan would take a while she popped off to get a coffee.

When she came back, the system had sprung up with a confirmed possible ID. It was Simon Dunbar

She looked up Simon's file. That was right, she remembered him now from her training days.

Simon joined the Royal Ulster Constabulary as a special agent on 12 January 1996 and was transferred to the field office in Knock, Belfast. In 1998, Simon moved to Londonderry to its field office there.

The next year, Simon was moved into counter-intelligence and given the task of compiling a database of intelligence for the RUC. It was then, in 1999, only three years after taking up his post that Simon began to leak documents to Wiki leaks and the some of the red top newspapers in Northern Ireland.

That year, Simon told Wiki leaks a significant amount, including information on bugging activities and lists of suspected terrorists in Northern Ireland and mainland Britain. His most important leak of information was the betrayal of Roland Cajun, code named 'The Bear' to the Real IRA.

In 2000, Simon was transferred to the London office where he became Police Force of Northern Ireland – MI5 liaison officer. His new job in the MI5 office gave him access to all kinds of information involving many different MI5 activities. This included all the activities related to wiretapping and electronic surveillance of Terrorist suspects. He became known in the MI5 as an expert on computers.

In late 2001, Simon was transferred to the Middle East analytical unit, which was directly responsible for studying, identifying, and capturing Terrorist spies and intelligence operatives in mainland Britain. Simon's section was in charge of evaluating Middle East contacts who volunteered to give intelligence to the British Government, to determine if they were weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East following the first Gulf War.

On 1 October 2002, he leaked the names of three Spy Masters operating in Baghdad. The Iraq Government executed all three.

In 2003, Simon leaked extensive information about the joint European/American planning for Measurement and Signature Intelligence (MASINT), an umbrella term for intelligence collected by a wide array of electronic means, such as radar, underwater hydrophones for naval intelligence, spy satellites, and signal intercepts.

However, by late 2005 his good luck was beginning to run out. IT personnel from the IIS Unit were sent to investigate Simon's desktop computer following a reported failure. The IIS Unit Chief ordered the computer impounded after it appeared to have been tampered with. A digital investigation by the unit chief and his IT staff found that an attempted hacking had taken place using a password cracking program installed by Simon that caused a security alert and lockup. The IIS Unit Chief filed a report with Office of Professional Responsibility requesting further investigation of Simon's attempted penetration of MI5's high-security network. Realising the game was up Simon fled and he was still at large.

She wondered why he had done all this damage to the UK Government, maybe it was for money or perhaps his upbringing in Northern Ireland during the troubled had damaged him.

She thought she would find out for sure once her team captured him, because it was just a matter of time before he was tracked down and captured.

Realising that she had the first positive contact of Simon Susan since 2005, she began to follow her lead.

She followed him using various surveillance. She watched him board a train for Saint Denis. Logging into the train CCTV records she tracked him as he boarded the train and then left at the next station of Saint Denis. At St Denis, the Car park CCTV trailed him to a car.

She immediately logged the car registration number. A quick report came back with the unsurprising news that the car was stolen. It had been found several days later set alight and burned out in Calais.

Tired and hungry Susan left the office for her empty home.

The next day Susan arrived early at her desk and immediately began to conduct her search once more. She was actually on the trail of the illusive Simon Dunbar. That was something worth getting up for in the morning for. She realised his capture would launch her career into the stratosphere of importance within MI5, she would defiantly get that promotion now and nothing was going to stop her getting that illusive directorship.

After several hours of work, she started to hit a series of dead ends.

Realising a break was needed she popped down to the staff canteen. She came back with a freshly filled mug of coffee and sat down at her desk. Then she thought she would access the UK government Sky net 5 Satellite system for that day and started to zone in on the site of the burned out car. Eventually she spotted the car arriving at its destination in the early hours of the next day. The car lay there for several hours before a man left the vehicle. A few minutes later, it exploded into flames. She was able to follow him as he walked from his car to board a ferry towards Dover.

That meant that he was back in the UK and MI5 had complete jurisdiction over everything in the UK.

A determined smile came across her face.

Susan sat up right. She leant over her desk with her elbows supporting her head and her hands crawling through her hair.

Then the smile fell away only to be replaced with a determined expression. The type of expression you see when people are stuck on a difficult crossword or Sudoku puzzle on the train.

'Now how am I going to track you down'?

What was she going to do next?

She just did not have a clue.

Outside the sun was just dipping below the London skyline. She could see Tony's flat in the horizon, while a blanket of fog passed over the river Thames and the Tower of London.

'Hello' came a voice,

'How has your day been? Fancy catching up sometime?'

'I have been so busy, you would not believe it.'

Oh no, it was Helen, the directorate gossip. She was the last person Susan needed to speak too. Fearing she would be locked into a half hour discussion about her kids, Susan decided to make a run for it.

She slammed her fist on the table, spilling a cold cup of coffee, grabbed her coat and stormed out of out of the room.

'Fuck' she said

It was the last word Helen heard her say before she stormed off.

ELEVEN

Susan mulled over a glass of red wine. She felt sorry for herself. What was she going to do? She was so close to tracking him down. She picked up her half-drunk bottle of wine. She then placed it down and started to look at her mobile. It flashed to life with Tony's name on it. She went over to answer it. Then she decided against it, switching it off. She picked the bottle back up and poured herself another large glass of wine. To be honest she wanted to be left alone. She was no longer sure she wanted to continue the charade she had been having with Tony. After all what did she get out of it? Not love anyway. She was certain it would not be long before a younger model replaced her. That was the track record of Tony anyway. Get them young build them up and then drop them. He was a first class prick she knew it, he knew it and most of the office knew too.

A few more mouthfuls of wine and she drifted off to sleep on her couch in front of her real flame fire. The heat and three quarters of a bottle of red wine proved too much and soon she was fast asleep curled up on her sofa. Once asleep she began to dream about a black and white dog. The dog was her pet dog she had when she was little. Ben was a great dog it's was very loyal to her, it was generous and always stood by her side protecting her from the evils that lay out in the world. But in her dream, her dog was vicious and growling. This was something unknown to her why had her dog changed so much.

As her dream continued, she watched as her dog bite her on the leg. Later her dog started to happily bark in her dream and then pictures of her friends from University and

time of great pleasure and nights out flashed before her eyes. Even that long forgotten dream of travelling around the world and backpacking around the globe came back. How she longed to be back to that time when life was free and she had no worries.

Several hours later Susan woke with a groggy head. She felt awful. Her head was throbbing and she felt like she was going to be sick. As she started to gather her thoughts and realise where she was and what she had been doing a thought entered her mind. It was one of those eureka moments you read which would prove a catalyst to solving her problem for Norman. It so obvious really she was just surprised it had taken her so long to realise.

Her first words of the day were 'Susan Blackburn you are so stupid'.

She went off to have a shower to wash away her hangover and get ready for the day's work. After a long satisfying shower, she came out of the bathroom in her favourite dressing gown. It was one of those dressing gowns that provided comfort as well as safety. Fully dried she dropped it onto the floor by the side of her bed selected the day's outfit that she had placed on the side of her bed and changed into a fresh change of clothes. 15 minutes later, she was off back to the office.

Once at her desk she cleaned up the now dried coffee and tied up her desk. A few minutes later, she was into her systems. A few minutes later, she had blanked out the rest of the world and was busy concentrating on the task at hand. Susan found it really easy to blank out the rest of the world and focus on all that was important for the task in hand.

Now in the MIS classified system she started to run a photo ID from the Border Police Force records and synchronised this with her own face recognition ID software. After two day's work, she was able to identify the passport photograph and new alias of Simon. It was a John Falster.

She did a run on property owned or rented by a John Falster. A few minutes later, the computer popped up with one result. It was small flat purchased in 2005 in Edinburgh Scotland. She had her man.

A few days later Susan was given permission to conduct a surveillance operation of John's flat. A small team was ordered north into Scotland. Once in Edinburgh her small team prepared to head straight to John Falster's address. With the target identified, they then set up round the clock surveillance of his building.

Having personally identified the target, Susan felt confident that could now phone Norman and give him the good news.

A few minutes later, she was connected to Norman on his direct phone.

'Norman, it's me, we have found Lloyd'

'Excellent' said Norman,

'Glad that the only breach to this plan had now been addressed'.

'What do you want us to do?'

Norman had been thinking this over and realised that Lloyd would be more beneficial left alive than dead. He could be the only lead they had with the Chinese and the more they knew what he was doing the quicker they could limit any damage until after the

Chinese President had been terminated. There was still the question as to how they Chinese knew about the meeting between the secret services of France, the United States and the United Kingdom and how they would react following their failed attack.

‘I want your team to take over and monitor movements and prevent Lloyd stopping our little Chinese operation’.

‘OK this is now a Section 5 operation’

‘You complete your side of the operation then’.

For the next month Susan’s team watched and scrutinised the movement of Simon across the city of Edinburgh.

A base was set up in a flat opposite Simon’s flat. It was small and well hidden from outsiders while providing Susan’s team with the perfect base to strike if required. It also gave them the perfect listening and observation post. From their base, they could watch everyone coming and going with immunity from detection.

During that month as her team tracked Simon nothing exciting or interesting happened. Daily reports which were uploaded to Norman and Tony. These recorded that most of his movement appeared to be around the Edinburgh University and the Scottish Parliament areas. He was spotted taking photos of the parliament from Arthur’s Seat but that was the only unique event over the month. They also followed him around the Mosques of Edinburgh, Motherwell and Glasgow. Despite close surveillance, he appeared to show no signs of being aware of his shadows.

Finally, towards the end of the month Susan authorised a break in by the MI5 officers to look around Simon's flat and to plant cameras and listening devices in his room.

That night as the team listened and watched Simon come into his flat they suddenly heard a high pitched noise then a bright flash that knocked out all the listening devices and cameras in one quick ostentatious blaze.

What they did not realise was Simon always released an electromagnetic pulse device each time he entered his flat. He always fired a small burst of electromagnetic radiation. This pulse of electromagnetic radiation quickly altered the magnetic field within his flat for a second or two. The resulting rapidly changing electric fields and magnetic fields made all electrical and electronic systems to produce damaging current and voltage surges. Unless your electronic devices were protected, they became useless little more than dead devices.

That day having fired the device Simon also noticed the tell-tale signs that someone had entered his flat.

A few hours later on as the night approached the surveillance team picked up a call on Simon's phone asking for a doctor to visit. The team immediately cancelled the doctor's visit.

Once this had been done one of the surveillance team, who was a trained medical officer was ordered to impersonate a doctor and make the visit.

Agent Williams turned up at the target's flat just over an hour later. He knocked the door and was quickly invited in.

'Good evening Mr Falster' he said smiling.

'I'm Doctor Ronald.'

'Welcome, please come in'

Williams shook Simon's hand and kept good eye contact with him. He was trying to give the impression that he was confident and knowledgeable.

He sat down, maybe four feet across from Simon maintaining eye contact at the same level as Simon.

Simon started to look Williams over. Immediately Williams leant towards Smith and began to small talk.

'How do you like this hot weather, we have been having lately Mr Falster?'

This seemed to settle Simon.

'So Mr Falster, How can I help you today?'

'I've been feeling sick all day. I have been vomiting all night and its coming out both ends now. I think it's something I have eaten'

Williams looked around the flat with its three good-sized cupboards. There was a smallish living room with a space where a small dining table stood. He noticed the coal effect electric stove and the unclean kitchen littered with last night pizza and the mornings dirty plates and cooking utensils.

'Fine. Tell me what you have been eating'

Quickly Williams realised Simon had been drinking quite heavily and that was probably the cause of his illness.

Williams began to think that if this was the notorious Simon Dunbar, then he was well past his best days and was probably drinking himself to death. His boss Susan would be lucky if he survived the month let alone being taken in to be interrogated and pumped for information.

He quickly finished the diagnosis and proscribed some basic antibiotics before leaving. As he left the bland coloured flat that was now in poor decorative order he noticed the bottles of drink littering in the bin by the door as he started to walk down the stone spiral staircase towards the street level. He was now convinced that his prognosis was correct.

Once out he reported back to Susan that the target was in bad shape, alcoholic and would be hospital bound within the next six months. He also explained that he could see no signs of any surveillance equipment or special equipment in the flat. He also confirmed that he was the same person as the passport photo.

Having completed his task Williams decided to head to bed as he would be on an early shift the next day and he wanted to make sure he was alert and awake for his next shift.

Within a few minutes Williams was asleep while his colleague Lewis was monitoring the flat throughout the night.

Lewis waved at Williams as he past and turned back to his binoculars.

'I wouldn't worry too much at him Lewis, the way he looked tonight I wouldn't be surprised if he survived the night' said Williams.

Several hours later Williams who was fast asleep was woken up by his partner Lewis, who had come to the end of his night shift.

'William wake up!'

'You had better get a look at this'

Looking through his high powered binoculars Lewis watched as several police vans pulled up and forensic team began to enter the building.

It was the next day and Lothian and Borders Police had begun their investigation of Simon's flat.

Williams and Lewis quickly hacked into the police radio system and were able to hear that a death had been reported in Simon's flat. Suspecting the worse, the team began to prepare to step down.

Lewis made the call to Susan as to what had happened and began to prepare a closing report to her ready for the closing of the operations and their planned withdrawal from the site.

Susan who was now operating from G Division's headquarters also picked up a report of a man from Simon's flat who had committed suicide. He had blown his face away; the flat stunk of drink an obvious case of suicide. She too began to prepare to redeploy back down to London.

A few hours later, Susan made the decision to stay in Edinburgh until the autopsy was completed. She planned to finish off her closing report to her boss and Norman. At

least she had tracked him down and made sure that he was no longer any threat to either the UK or the covert operation that MI6 were about to undertake.

The autopsy did not begin until a few days later, three days after the death of Simon was reported. The autopsy was conducted by the local pathologist to determine the cause of death, the state of health of Simon before he died, and whether any medical diagnosis and treatment before death was appropriate.

With the body laid out in a body bag the pathologist with the evidence sheet covering his face and hands. The body of Simon lay in a body bag to ensure that as much of the evidence from that body was contained within the body bag. The evidence sheet was removed which the pathologist used to examine the body further.

He examined the external body checking over the body for signs of death. He took the usual photographs of the body ensuring all evidence was recorded and then got his assistant to upload them to the central database in Greenock. He then noted the cheap and low quality clothing he wore and their position on the body before they were removed. Next, he searched the body for any evidence of residue, flakes of paint or other material and then he searched the body using ultraviolet light for any other evidence of death. He then recorded the syringe marks and tattoo on his arm and left leg. He then undertook an internal examination. Toxicology, biochemical tests and genetic testing were conducted helping him confirm the cause of death.

The pathologist quickly determined the time of death as 23:40, the exact cause of death as suicide, and that the man had been a heavy drinker and drug addict and was aged approximately 30 to 35, and was male.

By late afternoon, Susan received the Autopsy report. As a routine, she began to check a few details off between Simon's MI5 records and the Autopsy. Very quickly, she noticed something odd. The profile was wrong, as were the tattoo's and marks on his face. Within a matter of minutes, she was able to work out that this was not Simon at all.

She immediately phoned her team who were on the train down to London to get back round to the flat and recommence the search for Simon.

Later that night the team were back in place and were working out how Simon had left the apartment without anyone of the team noticing.

In the early hours of the next morning Gary Ardent one of the surveillance team started to run over some of the recordings of the last few days' activities. Watching recordings of the flats using the heat sensitive camera he noticed a man leaving Simon's flat and walk down to the flat on the floor below. He then watched as two men walked back and forward in the room and then stayed in the room.

Gary realised he had found the illusive Simon and the trail was once more live. He immediately phoned through to Susan ready to give her the good news.

'I think I have found him, I am just uploading infra-red film to you now'

A few seconds later, the film arrived via fast broadband to Susan's computer.

'As you can see Simon leaves his flat leaving the dead body in his flat. He then walks down to Mr Stuart Pages flat'.

Before he spoke to her, he checked off the map of the tenement and spotted that the flat belonged to a Mr Stuart Page.

'It looks like he stayed there and has been staying there for the last few days'.

'What are your instructions?'

'Thanks Gary, keeps a watch on the flat, I need to think this one through.'

The next day as their systems once more became fully operations the attention moved from Simons flat and began to centre on Stuart's flat. This was just as Stuart left his flat for Milngavie.

TWELVE

Stuart sat comfortably in his train seat as the train pulled past Haymarket station and began to travel West towards Glasgow and his destination of Milngavie.

He was confused. How could life have done this to him? A few days ago, he was a lonely and unhappy man stuck in a rut with nowhere to go. Now he was on the run from the police. A man had been murdered and he had been thrown into a world of cloak and dagger. He was so scared. He had never felt as scared as this before. What was he to do? Turn himself in or run for the hills and hope it would all blow over.

For Stuart that was the ultimate questions. In his mind he wondered if would be safer to suffer whatever the courts and police threw at him or should he take on the police and the unknown cloak and dagger world that had been catapulted into his life just a few days before. The question for him was either going to lead to some form of resurrection or sudden and a never ending demise.

As he sat there in his seat, the weight of this decision consumed him. He pondered the ideas of running perhaps once he fled Scotland he would be free. Free. Yes free to escape this world he had been forced into. Moreover, with that freedom there would come a life. Life without heartache and the misery that he would have to endure if the police caught him. But Stuart knew that eventually he would be tracked down. So that freedom would never come. He would always be looking over his shoulder. It would be a life, but a life in while he would be dead. Could he carry this worry, sweating and grunting under the

burden of a new life in which he could never settle down and would always be looking around checking to see if he was safe from capture. Then if he did manage to settle down who would he put in danger. Love ones, children friend's even enemies. He knew deep down that this would be too much. But he could not turn to the police they would lock him up and they certainly would not believe his story either. In actual fact, Stuart was not too sure if he believed it either.

What to do eh?

He hoped he now had time to relax and take in his thoughts and plan his actions.

Within a few minutes, his train left the tenements' and streets with their cosmopolitan hustle and bustle of life. His train passed under the motorway with the never ending streams of cars and vehicles that circumnavigated the city. Then it was all gone, the roads, the buildings and the chaos were replaced with the tranquillity and quietness of the mountains and hills of the West Lothian countryside.

The day was fine, and all around him was the yellow hawthorn flowering that consumed the railway edges and paths. Stuart began to ask himself why he had insisted on living in the city when all around him was the most beautiful countryside in the world.

Once he felt comfortable, Stuart got out Simon's (aka John) little black pocketbook and began to study it. It was filled with jottings, and figures. Now and then, a name was scribbled down either circled or underlined. He noticed a series of numbers and letters and symbols.

Stuart was certain that Simon never did anything without a reason, and he was pretty sure that there was a cipher in all this. Conundrums and brainteaser was a subject that had always interested him. When he was young, he used to try to impress friends with his ability to crack puzzles quickly. Of course, it never really impressed them he just looked like a geek but it was an attempt anyway.

Stuart had always had a head for things like chess and brainteaser, and he always felt that if required he would be pretty good at deciphering ciphers. This one looked like the numerical kind where sets of figures matched to the letters of the alphabet, but anyone with a basic knowledge of metadata can find a clue to any problem after an hour or two's work. Stuart was sure that Simon would not have been content with anything so easy. Therefore, Stuart focused in on the printed words to break down the sequence of the letters.

During the whole train journey, he tried to break the cipher but none of the words answered.

The train arrived in Glasgow underground, remaining there, as people got off and on ready to go to the shops or work in the Glasgow area. A few minutes later, the train left Glasgow underground and just over half an hour later, he arrived at Milngavie.

Stuart got off the very long purple and white train with the letters SPT engraved in the side of the train. He opened the door to the train and was welcomed with a computerised voice asking him to remember his belongings. Stuart could not help but laugh

inside because all his belongings would soon be lost once the police found the dead body in his flat.

People of various ages wondered off the train and began to walk with him down the platform towards a white bridge across which the whole of Milngavie seemed to pass over each day.

He noticed a sign. It said Attention 24hr CCTV in operation. Great he thought if this is switched on, they have my picture now. That meant the police would be hear soon. Howe soon though would they be here in a few minutes of several hours days later. Who knows he thought but he did realise he needed to be out of here soon.

Coming down from Milngavie Railway Station, he was met with a map of the town and a small green arrow that pointed towards the West Highland Way.

He walked under an underpass surrounded with murals of walkers and famous landmarks between Glasgow and Fort William. A few young men past him and one of them wolf whistled at a young girl with little more than a short skirt and a revealing top on. She reacted as he thought she would with a mouthful of venom to which the young men reacted by muttering to each other that she must be a lesbian.

Walking through the 1930's designed town centre Stuart entered one of those large supermarkets and brought a small rucksack, a tent and a sleeping bag as well as some basic food and water and a Swiss army knife before he charged away towards the walk.

A few minutes later, he came to a great gushing river that he crossed before heading down a small path and onto a wood, where he was welcomed with a sign telling him it was the start of the West Highland way.

Before him was a wood as brown as a fox and littered with leaves and bracken that had fallen and became entombed into the ground during the previous season. A few hours later, he emerged out of the woods and was facing with a great expansive moor.

It was a gorgeous spring evening, with every hill showing as clear as a freshly cut amethyst. The air had the clean, with the smell of boglands around him. The air was as fresh as mid-ocean, and it had the strangest effect on his state of mind. Stuart actually free. He felt like a boy out for a spring holiday walk, instead of a man in his thirties who would soon be wanted by the police.

At that moment, Stuart realised that turning himself in would be useless and the vast and open space before him offered his best path to freedom and working out a way to solve this mystery.

Stuart walked along the empty track whistling away to 'The barber of Seville'. There was no plan in his head, only just to go on and on in this desolate hill country. Every mile walked by Stuart made him feel better and more at ease with what had been going on.

He broke off a branch quickly turning it into a walking stick and he followed a roaring stream by the side of a glen.

Stuart reckoned he was now free from any pursuit by either the police or Simon's murders. Night was quickly approaching. It had been some hours since he had eaten. So he

suddenly felt very hungry. A mile or so up the path he came to a small campsite set in a nook beside a waterfall. A young woman with her attention focused on her iPod tapping away at some comment in face book or twitter told him it was £10 to stay the night and that the small shop served hot food up to nine. He quickly paid the fee and then set about pitching his small tent. Just before nine, he ordered some food and was greeted with a hearty meal of ham and eggs, chips, and a bottle of Iron brew.

Having eaten his food and drink, he walked off to his tent. As he climbed into his tent, he noticed a weather worn man coming down from the hills. To Stuart he looked like a giant, who in one step covered as much ground as three of his paces.

He made himself comfortable in his tent and climbed into his sleeping bag. A few minutes later Stuart was fast asleep.

The next morning Stuart awoke. By eight, he had eaten his breakfast from the shop and was striding north once again. Stuart's notion was to make his way north to Fort William avoiding any contact with the police on the way.

Stuart thought he had still a good bit of a start, for it would take some hours to fix the blame on him and several hours more to identify the men who got on board the train at Waverley station.

Despite all that had gone on Stuart felt surprisingly happy. Indeed, he was in better spirits than he had been for months. He crossed over a long ridge of moorland skirting the side of a high hill. Nesting curlews and magpies were crying everywhere, and green pasture by streams were dotted with young lambs and the occasional fluttering rabbit. All the

tension and trauma of the past months was slipping from his bones, and he stepped out like a four year old boy. He then continued to walk north coming to a gorge of moorland that dipped to the valley of a little river, and a mile away in the heather he saw the smoke of several mountain bikes rushing down a hill.

A few hours later Stuart came to a small village. There three men were chatting to each other in their cars. Stuart watched them carefully as he approached. One of them had a book, and looked like he was taking down notes.

All three men looked out across the moor where the white road departed. Stuart hoped they were not going follow him.

Stuart walked past the cars that the men sat in and soon realised that one of them was a police car. Avoiding attention, he turned a side street and walked down a garden path completely unobserved. He then crossed several gardens climbing their fences before he was parallel to where the men in their cars were. He then walked up a small track back towards the West Highland Way and his escape. It was at this point that a small black and white Jack Russell started to bark away at him. The dog thinking that Stuart was about to leave with its master's belongings, started to bark, and all but got Stuart by the trousers. This drew attention towards him. A few people stood looking out at their kitchen windows or front doors gawping at the dog and the man.

Stuart broke away from the dog and passed into a large thicket of tangled trees and bushes, he then reached down to the edge of the stream, and in cover of the bushes put a

hundred yards or so behind him. Then from his shelter, he peered back, and saw the police officer and several people look out in his direction.

Happily, the dog that was attached to a rope broke free and was suddenly cascaded out of his den. Freeing himself the dog ran down the road where a car suddenly slammed his breaks on narrowly missing the dog. The horn of the car going off was enough to scare the dog off and turn everyone's attention away from Stuart.

Stuart carried on walking for a quarter of a mile before we looked back. By then the police car was gone and everything in the village looked like it was back to normal.

Stuart was now in a wide semicircle of moorland, with a brown peaty river running down towards a massive lake as radius, and the high hills forming the northern circumference. There was not a sign or sound of a human being, only the splashing water and the interminable crying of birds and the endless shrieks from sheep and horses. Yet, oddly enough, for the first time Stuart felt the terror of the hunt on him. It was not the police that he thought of, but the unknown folk, who knew that he knew Simon's secret and dared not let him live. He was certain that they would pursue him and hunt him down like a dog until he was found him. They were certain to want to silence him forever. Once their grip closed on him he knew he would find no mercy.

Well he was certain now that he was going to spoil their plans. He just needed to work out how he was going to do that.

He looked back, but there was nothing in the landscape. The sun glinted on the metals of the farm gates and the wet boulders in the stream, and you could not have found

a more peaceful sight in the world. Nevertheless, Stuart started to run. Crouching low in the runnels of the bog, he ran until the sweat blinded his eyes. The mood did not leave him until he had reached the edge of mountain and flung himself panting on a ridge high above the waters of the brown river. He then turned around and could see the whole moor right away to the village and the small road that ran through it to the south of it where green fields took the place of heather.

Stuart who had the eyes of a hawk could see nothing moving in the countryside. Then he looked beyond the ridge and saw a new kind of landscape a shallow green valley with plentiful fir plantations and the faint lines of dust that rose from people enjoying themselves along the banks of Loch Lomond.

Last of all Stuart looked into the blue sky, and there he saw that which set his pulse racing. Low down in the south a military aircraft was climbing into the heavens. For an hour or two, he watched it from a pit of heather. It flew low along the hill-tops, and then in narrow circle over the valley up along the path that Stuart had come. Then it seemed to suddenly alter its course and rose to a great height, and flew away back to the south.

Stuart was not happy. He never expected this level of sophistication, and he began to think less well of the countryside he had chosen for a refuge. The heather hills were no sort of cover if his enemies were in the sky. Therefore, he decided to find a different kind of sanctuary. He looked to the Northern banks of Loch Lomond. Beyond the ridge was the odd occasional house and hotel.

It was about five in the evening and Stuart was now coming out of the moorland towards a white stretch of road that wound up the narrow vale of a lowland stream. As he followed it, fields started to appear and soon the mountains and glens became a plateau, and presently Stuart had reached a kind of pass half way up the East bank of Loch Lomond where a solitary plume smoked in the twilight. A path swung over a small bridge, and leaning on the walls was a young man.

He was smoking a cigarette and was studying the water with his eyes. In his left hand, was a small book with a finger marking the place?

'Good evening to you,' Stuart said sombrely.

'It's really beautiful here isn't it'

The smell of peat smoke and of the smell of sausages and burgers cooking away floated to him from a camp fire.

'Is this a camp site?' Stuart asked.

'No, just an empty field' he said politely.

'Are you planning to camp the night. I hope so, because to tell you the truth I have had no company for a few days.'

Stuart pulled himself up on the wall of the bridge and began to detect an ally.

'You're a bit young for camping' he said.

'My father before he died a year ago used to come up here camping with me, so I sort of like camping here as it makes me feel a bit closer to him. I seem to spend most of my time here.'

'Sadly the only people that come here now are cars full of fat kids and fatter parents who stop for lunch, and a fisherman or two'.

'Ok I'll camp here too. It's getting late and I too could do with the company'

Soon Stuart's tent was pitched and they both shared the food as well as a can or two of larger.

A few minutes later as Stuart entered his tent, he heard from far off the beat of an aircraft engine.

There silhouetted against the dusky West was the military Raptor unmanned aircraft hovering over the path. When the Raptor passed and left to the north Stuart came out and finished off his food and drink. Both men chatted about walking, climbing, and some of the many walks and Bens they had climbed across Scotland.

The next day the young man was gone. The weather was great and all was calm. This gave Stuart the time to sit down and go through Simon's book.

Stuart spent some time trying to break Simon's code. It looked like one of those one time pads which he had read sometime in the past that the Russians had used for their communications. He remembered that the one-time pad had been created by an American officer during the First World War and had been widely adopted by the Allies. When he was at school, he and his friends had used a similar system to e-mail messages to each other. It involved using a sheet of random numbers taken from a sheet on the one time pad. The result was a sheet of text that consisted simply of groups of five numbers one after another. Those that received the message could decode the message if they possessed the same

sheet from the same one time pad. If the sheet were used only once and for a single message, the lack of repetition would prevent decryption. So to break the code he would need to one time pad. Could it really be somewhere within the book?

He now had to find the key word that formed the one time pad. So when he thought of the odd million words he might have used Stuart felt pretty hopeless. But about three o'clock he had a sudden inspiration.

The name Norman flashed across my memory. Simon had said it was the key to the whole operation, and it occurred to Stuart to try it on his cipher.

It worked. The six letters of 'Norman' gave him the position of the vowels.

A was N, the fourteen letter of the alphabet, and so represented by XIV in the cipher. E was O was XV, and so on.

The next word that stood for the constantans was the next bit of the puzzle to work out. Then he remembered that he had been to Paris. That might be the word. He tried it out but it just did not seem to work, and then he remembered Simon telling him about his friends in Moscow. Perhaps Moscow might work. It did and it gave him the consonants that he needed.

Quickly Stuart scribbled that scheme on a bit of paper and sat down to read Simon's pages.

In half an hour, he was reading with a whitish face and fingers that drummed away.

A few minutes later, he glanced out of his tent and saw a big black Range Rover coming up the track towards where he was camped. It drew up to the Loch, and there was the sound of people alighting.

Two men got out of the car. One of the men, was a dark-eyed thin fellow with bushy eyebrows, he had several gold teeth and a burn scar on the back of his right hand and a small tattoos on both forearms. The other man with short hair had various tribal style tattoos including the name of the band 'Slipknot' on his inner left forearm.

Stuart watched from his tent that was hidden from their view as they stopped a walker on their way south.

They asked if the walker had seen Stuart to the North. They gave a very good description of him even down to the clothes he had been wearing.

Three minutes later Stuart heard the men get back into the car. He heard the engine start up and driving away.

'That was close' muttered Stuart.

A mixed set of feelings came over him. He felt relieved that the men had gone but concerned that they had almost tracked him down.

Stuart then packed his tent up and started to walk north. About twenty minutes later as he came to another road. Stuart saw the same car come across some farmland from the opposite direction.

It passed Stuart and then stopped two hundred yards off in a shelter below a patch of wood. Stuart noticed that its occupants carefully reversed it before leaving it. A minute or two later he heard their steps on the gravel.

Stuart crossed a dyke, crawled down the side of a small stream, and quickly circumnavigated a small hill before he entered a trail on the far side of the patch of trees. There stood a cycle. A few yards to the side, was a man urinating in a wood? Without a second thought, Stuart jumped on the bike and quickly cycled the bike away. He gathered speed looking back at the man shouting at him with his fist raised up in the air. Within a few minutes, he was far away from the men in the car and into safety.

THIRTEEN

Mohammed Ali Gee put a glass of orange juice on Norman's table.

'I thought I had asked you for a pint,' said Norman

'You should stay off the drink for a while mate' said Mohammed.

Mohammed had a reputation for being a vicious killer. While serving in Afghanistan he brutally murdered a young family in the middle of a street in Kandahar one Sunday morning. One of the family was only 15-year-old. She suffered multiple stab wounds and died a short time after the attack.

That day Mohammed had spent the most of the day at home. He was half way through a game of football with two friends and his younger brother when he received the call from Norman

On another occasion while serving in Iraq, Mohammed while on a patrol was heading towards a local park. His team route took them down a small road when the small squad of four infantry soldiers were confronted by a gang of seven youths on bikes. The gang were dressed in hoody's and balaclavas and when they saw the Squad they shouted, "Get them".

The Squad were brutally killed by Mohammed stood his ground. He unleashed a barrage of gunfire before he slashed each and every member of the gang.

One unlucky survivor he attacked with a metal pole and a knife. He killed the last survivor stabbing him multiple times. The knife was used with such force that the blade came off inside his body.

Mohammed took a large sip of his drink and glanced through the windows of this back street London bar towards the river front. He could sense that a storm was near. Birds were flying around in circles and the trees that littered the local park were beginning to sway back and forth like masts in the wind.

‘So who are we meeting this time?’ asked Mohammed.

Both Norman and Mohammed looked up to the TV screen as the News Programme flashed up a newsflash in red. Three British soldiers from some Infantry Regiment had been killed in Afghanistan.

Both men looked at each other. Both said nothing but their eyes were full of pain and sorrow. Both men thought back to their military days and the bond they still had with their colleagues. A bond that could never be broken come what may.

Suddenly a man approach their table

‘Mr Brooks, I’m Hussein Selah, I’ve heard all about you’.

Both Norman and Mohammed glanced up. Hussein was dressed in a brown leather jacket and blue denim jeans. He had a thin beard that covered his mouth and chin. Norman had read his file but he had never met him before.

‘Well I hope you have only heard the good bits Hussein’.

He nodded at Mohammed but both men preferred not to speak to each other in front of Norman their handler.

Hussein had served in the Republican Guard during the Gulf war. Hussein had turned to the west towards the start of the Gulf War and fled across the lines to his British captives where he was welcomed with open hands. He had quickly found a role for himself with the military. First of all as a translator and then a gather of information and local knowledge.

Unfortunately, the Republican Guard had not so understood. They murdered his family including his 16-year-old sister while walking home from a night out with friends in a small town to the West of Iraq.

Several years on and he was still no wiser as to who had killed his family or his baby sister. His family's murder shocked his small hometown. Her semi-naked body was discovered in a lane, just 50 yards from her front door. She had been strangled with some kind of ligature that was a sexually motivated murder.

With the two men sat down Norman got straight onto business.

'Men I have invited you both here today as I need you both to do a bit of...'

Norman hesitated on purpose trying to build up a bit of tension and urgency in the air. 'Shall we say freelance work?' 'I need to put a team together to do a very important job and I want you two to form the main part of this small but important cell.'

'I think you two would be perfect for my little team'.

'What is the job' said Hussein.

'First I need two good men. Men who can work together, men who are willing to trust each other. Guys who are willing to keep an eye on each other'.

'What type of men' said Mohammed?

'Men who are desperate and determined and are willing to be paid handsomely for one job.'

'And you will not tell us what the job is'

'Not until the team is formed and ready to go' said Norman.

'But at the end of it there will be half a million pounds for each survivor.'

Both men in harmony said 'When do we start'

'Tomorrow' said Norman.

Ahmed Ismail sat upright in his bed. He could smell the woman's perfume all over his bed and on the pile of clothes that lay tossed on the ground. They had had sex several times that night. She had been more than obliging in satisfying his needs. He had met her in a pub, they had chatted for several hours and drunk copious amounts of alcohol. Then one thing had led to another and they had found themselves in a hotel room. It was now early morning and she was now in the bathroom getting dressed after her shower.

Suddenly the door opened and in walked Norman.

'Who are you' protested Ahmed.

'Shut up and listen'

He then slammed down an envelope. In walked the women. He handed over to her £200.

'Thanks see you around big boy'

She blew him a kiss and left the room.

'I want you to do a little job for me. If you want to stop you wife and friends seeing these pictures then I would agree to my demands.'

Immediately Ahmed knew he had no option but to agree. If his wife left him, he would be ruined and excluded by his family.

'Ok, what do you want me to do?'

Meet me at this address tomorrow at 10am and do not be late.

Ahmed Ismail was a former mercenary, military expert and author from Bolton. A native of Dixons City Academy and graduate of Bradford College, he began travelling the world at the age of 19 and participated in various regional conflicts and provided protection to the 14th Maharaja of Patiala where he learned Sniping, Vehicle operating skills and explosive skills. Later he went freelance and was involved in several operations in the Kashmir and Jammu areas. Later he moved back to the UK settling down with his wife and family in the West End of London. There he set up a Hauling and Dry Bulk firm that operated between China and Western Europe.

A few hours later, the fourth member of the team was brought on board.

Akbar Nassau was six foot four tall and still a lean fifteen stone despite being almost forty-three years old. He had earned medals while serving for both I Para and the SAS. He

and his wife Sheba had been living in South London now for just over six year when the knock on the door came.

It had started to rain and when he opened the front door, he found Norman waiting with an outstretched umbrella holding a brown double handle holdall in his other hand. As they went down their stairs to Norman's car Akbar knew that whatever Norman wanted him to do he would be powerless to resist. One way or the other Norman would get what he wanted. Therefore, with the walk of a condemned man, Akbar walked down with Norman towards his white Ford Focus that was waiting on the kerb below his house.

Norman opened the front door to the car.

'You'd better get in'

Akbar had just about enough time to wave goodbye to his wife before the car turned away from the house and drove off in the direction of the motorway.

FOURTEEN

Susan and her team began to activate their systems once more observing, and watching Simon, and the new person that lived in the flat below from where Simon lived.

One of her team began to run a trace on the ownership of the flat from his laptop. Logging into the MI5 database he began his search. Within minutes, his search came back with a Stuart Page, owner of the property since 2011. No known criminal activity or political activity. He also ran a search on his military history but this only came back blank.

With the listening and recording devices in place, the team were confused to see just one person lying down in the main room of the flat. He had obviously been there for quite a few hours and was probably asleep or just lazing around.

'Mike pass us over the flask' asked one of the team.

'Has he moved yet?'

'Well it looks like nothing is going to happen this morning. He will probably not make a move until later today. You had better report that to Susan'.

Mike opened the flask and passed over to John a cup of tea.

'What's that sound' enquired Mike

Suddenly all around them there could be heard a large high pitch sound. It was almost as high pitched as a dog whistle.

A second later, there was silent and then an almighty eruption. From a small spark a titanic explosion erupted across the flat and the four men that were in the building where disintegrated within a second. In an instant, all four men were dead.

A great ball of orange and yellow fire erupted through the flat shattering windows, and bringing the walls of the flat crashing down. Smoke bulged out of every window rolling up into the sky like a volcano erupting.

A short distance away Susan was walking from Princess Gardens towards her team. All was looked normal. Susan did not detect anything out of the ordinary. She was quite happy as her team was back on the trail of the allusive Mr Dunbar and she was getting ready for her next move.

As she walked closer to her team, she glanced at herself in a shop window. She noticed that her face this morning was like a dome, pale white and somehow wavering. She looked at her figure and started to think about Tony. No matter how much she tried, she would never mean anything more to him than his astonishing beautiful lover.

She missed him. He had not called for a few days that meant he was with his family that milestone that stopped him leaving his wife and spending his life with her. She was sure once the kids grew up that he would be off just him and her.

She started to think about his short hair that floated around him like black smoke. His great long jacket that he always wore that shifted as if it was part of an unfelt wind.

Her attention was brought back to the present as the sound of traffic and people chatting as they walked past her drew her away from her daydreams.

As she looked back at her face a second time she could not help notice a madness still lurked in her face, but it was a quieter madness now, not the savagery of before now that she was back on the trail of Simon.

As she approached the flat from where her team was watching Simon and his new friend Mr Page she noticed a police van parked on a street corner. Susan did not think anything significant about this after all there had been a murder there a few days before and the Police would want to establish a presence to keep the locals happy.

The day was very hot day and the area round the flat was busy as people drifted in and out of the pub that stood opposite the flats that she was walking towards.

A short time later, there was a strange and weird noise. It was a dull thud, like something very heavy being dropped. It reminded Susan the noise you hear in the gym when someone drops a heavy weight on the ground. At the same time, a blast of air blew into her face. Not enough to blow anyone off their feet, but it did make a lot of dust from the bushes and trees that lined the road. It filled the air with dust. It was like the air blast you get from being on an underground station when a train is just about to arrive.

Next to Susan, a woman burst into tears and buried her face in her partner's shoulder. At first, this all seemed surreal and Susan could not understand why she reacted like that.

Her first thought was that one of the billboards that littered the street had had fallen over. Susan did not feel afraid at all. She felt more a mixture of confusion and perhaps a bit of curiosity.

The first thing Susan noticed was that all the windows around her had blown in. The trees and bushes around her had in fact acted as shields. None of them had blown over and they had stopped most of the glass from slashing her body. One man was injured. He was wearing shorts and had a small cut across his leg. He seemed embarrassed about it and did not really want any help. In spite of his protests, one of his neighbours phoned for an ambulance, but the message came back that they could not send any ambulances because more bombs were expected to go off.

The main sound she heard was that of burglar alarms erupting into actions. All around here there was a lot of debris raining down.

People were in no sense of panic. No one was talking much. People just stood around in a circle dazed from the explosion. A couple of people had mobile phones and they offered them around to anyone who wanted to call friends and relatives.

At some point, this sense of calm was broken when a man came sprinting into the chaos. He was a bit hysterical and kept going on about seeing lots of dead bodies in a bar and how a woman had been blown off her feet and her head had been smashed into a concrete wall.

As Susan wondered through the chaos of the destroyed buildings, a fire engine drove past. The crew were craning their necks outside the cab, looking upwards checking for signs of buildings about to collapse. The vehicle was moving very slowly, only a bit more than walking pace.

Now that she had come to her senses, she suddenly started to think about her team. Her training began to kick in. She needed to secure her team and its base and ensure that all were safe. As she looked towards the lookout post, all she could see was a great hole where the flat had been ripped out of the building. The remains of her team lay in pieces. All four had died instantly bringing the flat crashing down to the ground.

Resisting the temptation to search the debris for survivors Susan turned around and headed back to her base in the Lothian and Borders Police Head Quarters.

Using her training she pulled herself together ascertain the situation and realised that the base and the team had been fully compromised. What she needed to do was work out what to do and formulate a plan, a plan of action and sort out this mess before all leads were lost.

She stopped. She realised going back to the Police Station would be useless. Therefore, she walked a few hundred yards, then turned around, and walked back to her hotel room where she was going to work out what next to do. However, right now she needed a drink, a strong drink to wash away the anger and fury that was raging inside her.

The walk seemed to last forever as she wondered what to do next and how she was going to get Simon back for the death of her team.

A few hours later Susan had finished the last of her vodka, she was drunk, very drunk, and decided to hit her bed. She might not have been close to her team but she was right to feel the pain of their loss and their death. She would have to draft a letter to their families and children and attend the various funerals and services as the representative of

the service as well as deal with those awkward questions as well as justify why she had survived and they were now dead.

The families would later receive notification of their deaths and the media would camp outside their houses, read their e-mails and listen to their phone messages printing stories about them before they moved onto their next victim the following day. Years later the men's names would be recorded as having died in duty and a respectful log would be recorded for all to see. However at this stage chaos reigned.

The last thought she had before she fell into her drunken sleep was revenge. She would hunt this Stuart page down like a dog and use him to get to Simon....

The next day, Susan was at work looking over the evidence from the previous day. It was now worse than she thought. The reports she was reading identified that bomb had exploded in three places. A bomb had been planted in the coffee flask of her team that emitted an electronic signal that set alight the apartments of both Simon and Stuart gutting both flats. All evidence of either Stuart or Simon had been destroyed in the blast.

As more reports and information began to come in during the day, the situation began to look worse and worse. Thankfully, by some miracle, only three people had died in the explosion in addition to her team. At least their deaths had been quick and therefore relatively painless. Susan would soon have a new team in place and this time they would be ready for Simon and his many schemes. She still did not know how he managed to get a coffee flask into the flat and how he knew that they were still watching him.

Susan let out a fresh sigh. How was she going to find her teams murder again. He was a very tricky agent and had managed to escape detection and capture several times before despite being on the wanted list by both MI5 and the rest of the secret service establishment.

She really did not know what she was going to do. After much thinking, she decided she needed to do something. She knew that she needed to do something. It was far more productive than giving up. Therefore, she reluctantly began to look at the evidence that she had started to piece together.

Susan stood before a glass evidence wall. It was full of pictures stuck to the glass wall with a variety of arrows and triangles and squares linking pictures to diagrams. Names were written at key points on the glass wall with arrows and dotted lines linking names to pictures and to places. Terms like Run GSR analysis and identify and compare samples of glass were written in bold underlined handwriting.

That's when she had an idea. She walked back to her computer and did a run on credit card payments by Stuart. Within minutes, his bank fired off a series of cash withdrawals until on one of his statements came up a train fare from Edinburgh to Milngavie.

What was more he only paid for the train early yesterday morning. Immediately she logged into the stations CCTV camera until she finally caught him running to catch his train. She logged the train leaving entered the trains CCTV recorder and watch him travel all the way to Milngavie on the train.

A few hours later, she had authorisation for a RAF Reaper to take off from RAF Waddington in Leicester. Knowing she would have use for 28 hours, she ordered it to circumnavigate the Milngavie area in search of Stuart.

Back in Waddington, a three-man team piloted its Reaper aircraft. The crew watched as the small aircraft erupted into action. Purring like a well fed cat the aircraft took off and headed north towards the North Glasgow area. Supporting the crew was a team of intelligence specialists, signallers, and meteorologists that guided the unmanned aircraft in and around Milngavie in search of Stuart.

As the new born sunrise rose in utter silence and the trees, all leafy and dowsed in the early morning mist and the air lay soft and unruffled the Reaper continued to roam along the banks of Loch Lomond the reports started to flood to Susan that there had been several sightings of Stuart along the West Highland Way.

With this news, Susan looked up at her new team, and smiled with a warmth she did not feel glad to know that her new team would be hunting Stuart down. Her face, which was now strong and intimidating, focused in on her team.

With her team ready she stood with her them in front of three large Range Rover vehicles and felt that a pep talk was needed

'Right lets go, we are going to track this murdering bastard down. We are not going to fail this time; there is no room for failure this time. Do we all understand?'

It was more of a statement than a question and they all understood. Each man and woman knew what happened if they dropped, their guard the death of four colleagues was

enough of a threat to motivate her team but the pep talk just ensured her team all knew about the dangers of failure.

With her speech finished, the team mounted into three black Range Rovers and they set off for the area around Loch Lomond from where they would begin their hunt for Stuart and the missing Simon Dunbar.

FIFTEEN

Stuart continued to ride his red and black bike as fast as he could. He roared down a great mighty slope that was covered in row after row of bush and yellow and white shrubs. As he rolled down the hill cycling as fast as he could he started to gain speed at an incredible rate. He quickly made distance between himself and the two men in the Range Rover. His bike cascaded like a steep waterfall down the hill towards a trail that took him off the road. Above the trail stood a row of trees that acted like a Chrysalis providing a protective covering for Stuart and blocking the two men's view of him.

He briefly stopped. He looked back to see if he was being followed by the bike rider or men in the Range Rover. He briefly smelt the sweet dulcet smell of flowers that were intermingled between the trees. Taking in the moment and his short-lived rest he quickly pushed his bike off and began to flee west along the trail.

Once more, he felt carefree. He was glowing with hope and radiance. Despite this, he knew he would have to keep going riding further and further along this trail and away from danger. Each peddle got him nearer and near to safety.

Across the moors ran several flocks of red deer roaming the moors and mountain slopes of the glens. One or two pine marten swept across the cliffs and steep slopes. Amongst the heather and the wild flowers roamed a family of wildcats, the mountain hare and the marsh fritillary butterfly.

After a few hours of cycling, he entered a great mist. It was an enormous cloudy haze. As he entered the mist, it surrounded him like the darkness of the night. He was forced to slow down. Unexpectedly, Stuart felt afraid to move forward. He was not so sure he could make it through the mist without crashing his bike and harming himself. He knew he could not go back because behind him was the men trying to capture him. He knew that he still had a long journey to travel before he was free from danger.

As his bike slowed down his eyes began to wander through the gaps in the mist. High above him he could hear a rare corncrake making its rasping call. He looked up to catch a glimpse of this elusive bird.

As he looked downwards, Stuart could just make out a vast field of wheat. He found himself daydreaming as he searched for a sign or an answer about what he should do but found nothing. He looked up to the sky. It was no longer blue and silent but full of a constant grey cloud.

He decided that he would have to just risk it and hope he did not hit anything in the mist. He picked up speed and cycled through the field. As he moved forward, he could feel the wheat bushes hissing along with the breeze of the wind. His bike whizzed through the fields until he came to a small stream that he crossed before cycling up a hill into a long diluted mountain range.

A few hours later Stuart took a rest by the side of a roadside cafe. He stood next to his bike under the watchful gaze of a group of people hiking down the side of a Monroe. He walked to the café and brought large bottle of water and a sandwich. He quickly ate both

the sandwich and then drank the water before he set off down a steep incline wrapped in purple and blue heather. It did not take long before he arrived at a small town. There he crossed a stream where he decided to ditch the bike by the side of a small bridge. Feeling safe, he walked on for a few hundred yards before he arrived in the town.

As he entered the town, he noticed a man with two teenagers was chopping up wood while a woman was busy taking clothes down from a clothesline. In another house, two small dogs were barking away at each other. He then went on to pass an empty football pitch and a deserted outdoor bowling green. Within half an hour, he was into the centre of the town.

The town was one of those ex-mining towns that you see littered across the central belt in Scotland. It was beset with dilapidated houses that looked like they were past their best days. They were the typical 1960's style buildings all grey and dull. Litter was scattered across the roads. Broken bottles of cider and empty chip shop packets with the smell of last night take away was all around him.

He stopped in the centre of the village and began to search for a sign for a train station or bus stop. In the centre stood a large Norman church with a graveyard littered with graves from centuries long ago. A Pictish standing stone with a great design stood in the middle of a common green.

As he looked around, he could feel a harsh wind blowing. It was one of those cold wet Scottish winds that come down through the mountain passes. It was one of those winds

that made your hair curl and made your nerves leap and your skin prickle. On days like this, you could feel the cold on your spine. It felt like anything can happen.

He turned around and noticed another black Range Rover was parked by the side of a pub and two men were at watching Stuart.

They both got out of the vehicle and began to walk towards Stuart. Both men had the type of builds and faces that made you want to cross over the road to avoid rather than risk being squashed by them. Stuart looked at these two huge men in horror they were like gorillas. They both looked like they could squat Stuart down in a single punch. A bit like how you would squash a fly with a ruler.

Stuart knew that the game was up and he needed to either fight or flight.

The two men walked towards him in a menacing manner. Their look on their faces was one, which told Stuart that they were relentless in their pursuit of him. These men looked like they would rather die than return empty without Stuart.

Stuart stood still looking at the approaching men. He suddenly felt paralysed. He did not know where to run to or which direction. Stuart started to run as fast as he could. The two men turned and ran back to their vehicle. One of the men screamed orders into a small electronic gadget that was tied to his arm wrist and looked like a watch.

Both men jumped into their vehicle and began to drive towards Stuart. As the car gathered speed, it made its way down a street. A huge truck turned so that it was adjacent to the oncoming vehicle blocking the road. Without a split seconds hesitation, the driver of the car pitched the vehicle into a sudden turn and stepped on his accelerator. With a

screech of the car's tires, the Range Rover shot backwards away from the truck. At that sound, Stuart looked up.

One of the vehicles windows wound down and out of it reaches an unnaturally long barrel. A second later, a rocket-launched grenade crushed a bus shelter bringing debris crashing around Stuart. The bus shelter erupted into flames bringing a red and orange fireball crashing down onto Stuart. Stuart was flattened in an instant and was knocked unconscious.

The man that fired the weapon un-cocked the weapons with a satisfied smile. The car then pulled up to the almost dead Stuart. There both men got out of the car and flung Stuart into the back of their Range Rover.

Susan was sitting in a small coffee house in Milngavie drinking the remains of her coffee listening to the droning sound of bagpipes in the background. People around her were texting message after message of to their friends when she got the phone call telling her that they had captured Stuart.

At receiving the news, Susan looked up and smiled with warmth she had not felt for a few weeks. Her brown eyes wide apart and inquiring could not hide her joy at having captured Stuart.

'Tell me your position'

As it came over her phone, she logged it down in her Phone and pressed the Navigate to. A few minutes later she was in her Black Range Rover and was heading North towards where her team were holding Stuart.

As she drove away, Susan began to think about what to do next. Perhaps this Stuart was an agent or plant that had been put in place by the elusive Simon Dunbar. Perhaps Simon had found another way to infiltrate her organisation or MI6. Maybe this was part of a much bigger plot that was being hatched right before her eyes.

SIXTEEN

The house looked as if it had seen better days. It was a large Edwardian building. The front garden was filled with weeds and rubbish and the path was littered with cracks and more wild plants.

Hussein rang the doorbell. However, it did not ring, so he banged the letterbox a few times. He started to fish out his mobile when the door suddenly opened up. There stood Norman who barked out his order telling Hussein to go into the living room.

He walked into the living room. It was completely bare with the exception of five seats and a table with various documents and files on it.

'You had better sit and join the others. You're late!'

Each of the men said hello in various levels of grunts before Norman stood up.

The men then followed this up with a few short introductions to each other followed by a few light-hearted jokes and one-liners.

A few minutes later, there was that awkward moment of silence when everyone had run out of anything superficial to say.

At that point, Hussein sat down noticing that everyone was facing a very large TV in the centre of the room.

With the team in place, Norman clicked on the large TV with his black and grey remote control. The red light just below the on button sparked up. A few seconds later, it went green and then the TV came on.

The men watched as a young dark haired women came around. She was very tall and slim. She had blue eyes, high cheekbones and her hair ran down her neck and along her shoulders. She was wearing a figure hugging charcoal top with her sleeves rolled up. She had to look of a sophisticated model that would be at home living and working along the French Riviera.

She was gorgeous. She was the type of woman that when she walked into a room all men would turn their head to gape a look at her, hoping she would notice them.

Around her mouth was a large pad taped to her face. Her eyes opened and the four men could see the fear in her eyes.

Her hands were hand cuffed to a metal chair. She immediately started to wriggle her hands up and down. At first in short spasms. Then the spasms became faster and faster as panic set in. They could see her long legs trying to kick herself free. All five men knew that escape was impossible.

They could hear the muffled screams calling out for help.

All around her was dark. A powerful light shone down on her. In the background, the men could be see shelves filled with bars of soap.

Then a man walked across to her and punched her in the face. Blood could be seen oozing out of her mouth and splatting blood onto the floor. Then there was a rip as the mouthpiece was ripped of her face.

'Ugh that hurt'

Before she had a chance to make another sound, he grabbed her forcefully tearing away her clothing. She tried to resist but her clothes were torn away so quickly that her flesh was quickly exposed. Exposing her nakedness to all around her. She knew what was coming next.

The man kicked the chair onto the floor. She collapsed onto the floor in a heap. He then leant down, ripped her hand cups away from the broken chair, and tore off the remains of her clothes throwing them away in a heap. His fist grabbed her head pinning her down.

Then his erect penis was forced into her face. A knife was held at her neck. A small trickle of blood dripped down from the small indent.

Then the voice said 'suck it until I come, bitch'. A look of horror came across her face. Then she opened her mouth and she began. The tell-tale sound of oral sex could be heard as she moved her mouth up and down his penis. She tried every so often to break free but she was trapped and had no option but to do what he asked. A few minutes later, it was finished and she was thrown onto the floor like a disused piece of food.

She then started to cry. Spitted out the remains of him onto the floor.

The film then fast-forwarded to a later period. This time he was having sex with her. She seemed to be enjoying herself now. She was screaming out in pleasure at each thrust from him. Then it all turned nasty once more. At the moment she seemed to climax, the man pulled out a knife and slit her throat. She fell down dead while he carried on having

sex. He looked like he was striving to fulfil some fantasy of killing a woman during sex and feeling her vaginal contractions during the death spasms.

Norman stood up and turned off the TV.

'Gentlemen I hope you all enjoyed that'

Norman could see the passion and arousal in each of the men's eyes. He knew that each man had been aroused and awakened by the film, followed by shock and horror at the woman's sudden and final demise.

He then threw the men the remains of the woman's clothes at the men. Each man could smell the woman's perfume clinging to the neckline of the charcoal top, it was an opaque mixture of honey and vanilla that he knew would linger in his minds much longer than the woman that wore it.

'Just to let you know. Mohammed and Hussein we have taken saliva from your glasses last night to put your DNA on the woman and her clothing. Furthermore Ahmed, we have put some of your sperm and injected a specimen from your used condom into her Virginia. Oh yes Akbar, we have not forgotten about you either. We have made sure that the bulk videos will found in one of your trucks. We have already hacked into your IT systems setting up an order with your personal signature on.'

'So gentlemen, I guess if you don't do what I tell you today, then you and your families are going to be completely and utterly fucked.'

'Oh yes and so are you'.

With the smell of the woman's, perfume still fresh each man realised that her rape and death must have happened just a few hours ago and so the evidence would be fresh and primed ready for the Police to find.

Norman's news had hit the men like a hurricane smashing apart the foundations of a town. Most of the men felt like they wanted to bury themselves into a sleeping bag and wait for the storm to pass. Nevertheless, they all knew that Norman had them by their balls and they were now at his disposal.

'So this is what I want you fucking pricks to do and trust me you do not want to fuck this up.'

Norman could see from the look of all four men that they knew they were completely under his control. Norman knew that a desperate team would get the result he wanted.

At this point Norman pulled out a small hand sized notepad. He flipped open the front-page and began to dish out his orders.

One by one, each of the team was given their orders as he outlined the four targets in Birmingham, Bradford, Manchester and finally Edinburgh.

He then started to hand out hand written orders to each of the team asking each on to memorise their orders before throwing each piece of paper into a burning metal bin.

Then there was silence. Each man was now lost alone in his thoughts, pondering the task ahead and assessing the risks, and weighing options in their head. Nobody was

thinking about leaving but everyone was thinking about how they were going to kill Norman once this all ended.

The life of these mercenaries was nothing like the life of those in the military or the secret service. In those services, you accepted your orders and got on with it. Out here in the real world, you needed to weigh up the risks against the rewards. Every job you made a decision. Some you did some you did not. If Norman were not blackmailing each of the men then they would all turn and walk away. However, he was and so each man was left with no option but to find a way to get the job done and survive.

This silence lasted a few minutes, until Akbar finally broke it.

'OK, this is the way I see it' Akbar said.

'Mohammed, can cover transportation and camouflage. I will take care of logistics, planning and tactics for each of these jobs, and Hussein will give us communication and long range sniping and Ahmed can cover explosives and weapons delivery.'

'We will improvise the rest as we get this mission up and running'

'Improvising is no good if you do not have the right men in place' said Mohammad.

Hussein shrugged his shoulders.

'Listen guys, when I was on active service we always went in fast with maximum aggression and then we ran like hell, so as long as if we all know what we are doing we can make this work, and then we can be free from this prick.'

'Right guys you know what to do so let's get it done.' Said Norman.

'by the way of any one of you gets word out about this then I have orders here to execute every one of you and your nearest and dearest'.

'But look at this as a positive you guys are going to be paid handsomely for this mission and you are going to rid this world of some nasty bastards and give them a beating at the same time'.

'What worries me' said Akbar is how we are going to get this job done and survive without getting caught afterwards. We will have half of the police, secret service and Chinese mafia on the hunt for us. They will be chasing us all the way out of Scotland and back to London.

'Our best plan is to make this a massacre. If there is no one left alive, then no one will raise the alarm or to say what happened. That will give us a few hours lead. And if we run like hell for London and get out of this country we will be well away before anyone has any idea who has done it.' Said Mohammed

'He's right' said Ahmed, 'it's not pretty, but it's the best plan we have and the most likely to succeed'.

'They do the same thing in Afghanistan. If you take out a whole village, you finished the last of them, massacring everyone or there was not any point in bothering'

Norman was swallowing hard as he heard the word massacre but realised that the men were right.

With that said the team left the house and prepared to action Norman's plan.

SEVENTEEN

A few hours later Norman made up his mind to leave the house. His last thought was to leave the gas on and a row of candles lit in one of the rooms. As he left, he could hear the hissing sound of the escaping gas engulfing the building.

By the time he was gone there would be a massive explosion in which all evidence would be buried and lost forever that even the most gifted forensic team would find hard to report on. The mutilated body of the woman would never be found, as would any of the evidence from the rape and attack.

Norman left the large Edwardian building and had soon frogmarched himself across to the local underground station and was quickly safe and away from the danger area.

As he entered the station in the far distance, he heard the sound of the building erupting into flames and the thundering explosion of the building being ripped apart. Glad that his part of the operations had been a success he tapped the memory stick that contained the incriminating evidence and slung his laptop over his shoulder.

As he went down the escalator towards the underground tube, he heard the indicative sound of fire engines rushing past the station towards the Edwardian house.

Back in the London Fire Brigade Headquarters, a call came in that there had been an explosion off Newton Green at 14.20. A few minutes later, the fire station roared into actions as fire fighters left in two vehicles. Half an hour later just less than 100 people were

being evacuated from the area and a further four vehicles were extinguishing the fire and preparing to make the area safe once more.

An hour later, the Fire Brigade made a press release in which they said not everyone was accounted for but their colleagues in the police were not aware of any casualties.

That night when all was the activity of the day was finished Norman would switch on the TV and watch a BBC reporter interviewed a witness who reported the smell of gas before the blast.

The news reporter would state that 'It was so powerful it demolished the whole house and the whole road shook. People were running into the street to see what was going on and they were absolutely terrified'

However, that was in the future. Right now Norman had just boarded a train and was heading west into London.

He sat down on his train seat and began to scan the carriage for danger. He watched a woman deep in concentration as she read an article on page three of the newspaper. A youth was nodding his heads to some muffled techno music that was more annoying than pleasant to listen too.

The journey was short and fast. It gave Norman just enough time to clear his mind. In a matter of a few weeks, he had managed to negotiate a deal with the French and US secret service. He had almost had the operation destroyed by some plant that had infiltrated his mission. Somehow he had managed to get away with it although the kicking he got from Tony had been severe and painful.

Despite this, he had managed to enlist some friends from MI5 to try to track this fugitive down and once Tony had found out whom it was he seemed to accept that Norman was lucky to have got away with the limited damage. His MI5 colleagues had hunted Simon Dunbar down tracking his journey to Scotland before they had lost him. They had then tracked down one of his accomplices and were now holding him in a safe hold somewhere in the North West of Scotland.

He had a very good plan in place now and was focused on getting this mission finished and the Chinese President and his daughter killed in a blood bath that would rival 9/11 or 7/7. His team that were going to do this were dead not matter if they survived the missions that he had laid before them. It was a simple plan. All the best plans were. This is what his training had taught him and experience had now confirmed.

His team were going to stir up a series of incidents across the UK and entice chaos and mayhem over the next few weeks before he struck at the Chinese President killing him in Edinburgh. By the time, all was in place Birmingham, Manchester, Bradford, and London would be reeling from a series of riots and racial attacks. Everyone's attention would be on the chaos caused between the British Islamic groups and the white English League Groups providing Norman with the right environment to launch his attack on the Chinese President and present obvious links between Abdulla Megahit and the attackers...

He got off the train at the next station. He then stood perfectly still as he waited for the crowds to pass him. Everyone seemed to be getting off and rushing a way to somewhere important in too much of a hurry for him. A great tide of people were busy clicking away on

their blackberry's or iPod busy making calls telling them what they were doing or telling the world what they were thinking through the my space or Facebook accounts.

With the crowds, having died down, Norman turned away and began to walk towards a small door. Stamped on it was the words 'STAFF ONLY'

He thought it is amazing how something so subtle can stop people. He opened the door and thread into a small man size life. A minute later, the lift came to a halt. Norman lifted up the steel cage and began to walk forward onto a dark drenched concrete expanse of a garage. He stepped out, his torch in his hand. He hated this dark and menacing walk through the deserted passes of the London underground. Great smears of oil and gas were everywhere as was the stench of the fumes from the trains running above and below him while the echoes of the trains rattled through the silence of the expansion. He could hear the echo of his footsteps as he made his way across the expanse to another solid metal door.

White and yellow lines were painted in a crosswise pattern along the walls pointing towards the solid door. He banged it several times. A camera swivelled in his direction. A few seconds later the door opened and in walked Norman.

As Norman entered Tony's control post, he heard his all familiar voice.

'Bring your laptop and memory stick over to my office'.

It was only then that Norman felt the aches and pains of the last few days spring out along his body. He started to feel a headache come on. Digging into his wool cashmere

jacket he pulled out two pills and tossed them down his throat hoping it would take the pain away.

He then looked down at his text message. It said Norman come to room 105 immediately LOL.

Norman realised now that he would have to explain his plan in detail to Tony justifying his decisions and choices that he had made ready for the planned attacks.

He walked down a long corridor that was surrounded by white walls with pictures mounted on the walls at regular intervals. Passing a sea of cubicles clustered together along an open plan office Norman was forced to walk across the rows of PC's and Laptops towards the three numbers nailed onto the door which read '105' and his meeting with Tony.

He knocked the door and heard Tony's familiar voice say enter. As he walked into the room, he could see Tony answering another phone call on his blackberry. Tony waved him in.

Norman quickly composing himself. He was annoyed that Tony was paying more attention to his blackberry than him. He took a big deep sign and then walked towards Tony's large 1950 oak desk.

As he did, a large 72in TV screen switched on and before him was the face of Paul Almond the architect of both Tony and Norman's plan and overlord to both men. The power was firmly in the Directors hands now.

'So who was to blame for the mission screwing up in Paris' shouted the Director

'Norman what the hell was going on in Paris. You almost destroyed the mission and embarrassed our government and the service'

'It's OK we have sorted that early problem'

It was now that Norman wished that Tony had placed him on permanent gardening leave and not given him the chance to redeem himself.

Both Tony and the Paul could see right away that Norman was on the back foot. His shoulders were hunched up around and his red ears were now as bright as a blushing bride. He had started to face away from Tony and towards the Director who showed no sign of compassion or forgiveness.

'Not a Happy day for you is it?' he said with anger in his voice and eyes.

'It seems Director that young Norman here walked into a great steaming pile of searing horse shit in France.'

He then flipped closed his report which was on the oak desk. He sat there looking like one of those old school headmasters from the Victorian era.

'And no one wants to be contaminated by that stench do they'.

'Yes Director....'

Nevertheless, Paul Almond did not want to hear it from Norman.

Instead, Tony came back to his rescue at his moment of greatest need.

He went onto explain how the mission had been locked down. All loose ends had now been closed or immobilised. He then went onto explain how Norman had blackmailed a ruthless team of killers into making a few adjustments to the original plan. They were

going to attack several mosques in Birmingham, Manchester, Bradford, and London followed up by attacks on Conservative regional offices and known BMP and English League offices. This would create a period of chaos and religious hatred across the UK. This would then be used and painted as the reason for extremist British Muslims attacked and killing the President of China to strike at atrocities conducted by the Chinese and British governments in the Middle East and Central Asia.

‘Excellent’ replied the minister.

Then the TV switched off.

‘Well Norman you have a plan to put in place. Keep me updated.’

Norman stood up and began to walk towards the door and exit. He could feel the tension of the room leave immediately after he left the room.

Tony was right. He did have a plan and this plan would catapult him up amongst the stars. He would do everything he could to deliver. He had already past the point of no return so he had nothing to lose.

EIGHTEEN

They put him in handcuffs and shackles. He began to wriggle almost immediately once he came around. At first in panic but later, it turned into defiance. Dragging him along by his feet, his body scrapped along the tarmac towards the large concrete warehouse. They were dragging him as you would drag a heavy bag of potatoes. Too heavy to carry easier to drag.

The men knew from their training that the more you kept your distance from your captive the easier it was to control them. Each of the guards had been grilled over and over again about the Stockholm syndrome.

Bill Tender was one of the men dragging Stuart across the tarmac. He could remember one of the training sessions as though it was yesterday. He remembered how the 'Stockholm Syndrome', or to give it its proper title 'capture-bonding' was described. This is a psychological phenomenon in which captors express empathy and feelings towards their hostages. There were even cases in which they would defend the hostages themselves.

Everyone knew that these feelings were considered completely irrational in light of the danger or risk, which essentially created a situation in which the captor is no longer able to abuse their hostage and begin to turn from violence to irrational acts of kindness and compassion.

He could even remember the case studies. In one example Mary McElroy was kidnapped and held for ransom in 1933 and released by her captors unharmed. One of her

four captors were apprehended and given maximum sentences. However the guilt he experienced and rational for letting her free resulted in him suffering from feelings of guilt concerning the case which compromised his mental and physical health resulting in him taking his own life in 1942.

So treating him as badly as possible and remaining unattached to him was their goal. This allowed Bill and one of the other guards to feel fine about throwing him on the ground that resulted in his face arms and legs shattering upon impact on the concrete floor.

They picked him up letting his blood spat onto to the ground as if it was sweat. The two large men then lifted him up and placed him inside a box. A large and heavy wooden box with a large black cross on the top. However, it felt tiny inside. So tiny that Stuart was unable to move his body at all. The shackles were very tight and the pain was overwhelming.

All this did not matter much as he was out cold and would soon need to be taken to the nearest A&E ward if he was to survive the day.

A few hours later Stuart was pulled out of the box. By now, he had lost all feelings in his arms and legs and could barely breathe under the weight of his pain. He was dragged across to a single metal chair that stood in the middle of a large majestic storage facility.

'Right let us begin and get this out of the way' Bill said.

The other man, whose name was Fred Williams pulled off Stuart's dark coloured blind exposing him to the light.

Stuart had no idea where he was or what was going to happen next.

'OK the time is now 4.15 on June 5th 2012. My name is Williams. I am attached to the Joint Counter Terrorism team MI5, I have with me Stuart Page and this interview is being conducted in Army Communication Office Highland Region at the bequest of MI6. Stuart just for the purpose of this tape and for voice identification could you state your full name please.

'Stuart Page'

He spat out a mouth full of blood that splattered onto the floor, a last act of defiance.

A few seconds later a powerful blow caught him squarely in the jaw sending him reeling into his chair. Stuart had barely enough time to brace his body before a second blow hit him that buried itself into his stomach forcing Stuart to vomit up the remains of his breakfast onto the blood stained floor making him breathless and gagging for air.

Stuart looked up through his bloodied and watering eyes. He looked up at a William's who was a huge gigantic man. In another world, he could have been your stereotypical bouncer or parade Sergeant Major.

Williams wore a black suit and a black shirt with no tie. His face was covered in stubble and from his expression, he took neither pity nor compassion for Stuart. On one side of his arm was a red scar that looked like a stamp you would put on a cow or pig.

'Where is this man?'

He handed over a picture of Simon to Stuart.

Stuart began to laugh.

Another smash of the man fist ended the laugh.

That was enough for Stuart. He passed out having been knocked out by the force of William's punch.

'Try not to kill him, we have been told to keep him alive remember!' said Bill

'Where do they get these animals from' thought Bill

Bill felt that there was an art to interrogation. He had at least read a few books including the quote from the Roman jurist Ulpian 'anyone will tell you what you want to hear eventually as they would rather lie than suffer'. But he guessed that William's had missed that class.

Bill picked up a bucket of water and threw it over Stuart. The cold icy water did the job required bringing him back around.

Coughing Stuart started to explain that he was dead and how he had found him on the floor of his flat that fateful evening. He then went onto explain how he had fled his flat and was going to work out how the attack on the Chinese president was going to take place and stop it.

'Tell me what he told you before he died'.

'I have told you already'

Stuarts attempt at denying anything turned into a grunt of pain as William's lifted up his right arm and began to twist it around by his thumb

'Stop lying'

He hit him again, causing Stuart to pass out. The pain of the attacks and being cramped in a small box for several hours proving too much.

Williams, another guard called Smith and Bill picked him up of his chair and dragged Stuart back to his cell placing him again in the box where he would be left to recover.

The men then sat down to play a round of cards. Bill was quickly kicked out losing in the first round and with his exit went £20 pounds.

Leaving the table, he decided to phone Susan to give her an update.

Susan who was travelling as quickly as she could heard her phone ring. She ordered her driver to continue. She let it ring for a few more seconds. She answered it.

'We have interviewed him. He does not know anything. He thinks Simon is dead'

'What do you want us to do with him?'

'Dump him in the cairngorms!'

'Great' thought Bill Williams and his meathead colleague Smith would enjoy this. Such a waste of everyone's time.

A few minutes later Bills Phone rang again, it was Susan

'Bill, are you sure he knows nothing.'

'Yes he was simply the wrong man in the wrong place at the wrong time'.

'Carry on interrogating him, but keep him alive'.

Susan began to wonder if Simon was dead, perhaps he had been killed in the bomb explosion in Edinburgh or perhaps Stuart had killed him.

Susan driver continued to drive the vehicle north. Drifting away, she noticed some of the trees turning brown in the sun light.

As the vehicle drove north towards her team, she could not help but notice the first rain of the day coming down from the great glens like a tsunami rushing down towards the road that lay ahead.

The large vehicle drove through the rain storm, which lashed her vehicle, and the road around her as it weaved around the curves and bends of the highland roads.

She surveyed the shambles of the road ahead.

'Driver, slow down!'

'Stuart will still be there even if it takes another hour to get there.'

She then took her eyes off the road and looking up through the great grey weather beaten skyline she spotted two RAF Tornado aircraft that seemed to almost collide into the glen as they swooped across the mountain range.

'That was close', she whispered

Bringing her attention back to her driver she watched as he carried on driving North towards the army base where the now battered and bruised Stuart lay passed out.

She looked at her GPS and could see that she would be there in just over 1 hour.

'Excellent, in just over one hour I will have my answers', she whispered to herself.

She would know one way or another if Stuart was saying the truth and then they would dump his body in some desolate mountain range and make it look like he had been lost on one of the moors and died from hyperthermia.

A few minutes later the three men prepared to pick up Stuart from his now blood stained box. His tomb was covered in urine and excrement from the previous attack.

As they prepared to move his almost dead body across to his death chamber Smith spotted something in his bloodied clothes.

He reached over to prize out a small black book no more than a few inches long.

It was the black book that Simon had hidden in the cornflake packet and had been previously translated by Stuart using the code on the West Highland Way.

'What is this' said one of the men

'Give it me let me take a look' ordered Bill in a strong voice, which told the others not to fuck around with him.

'It nothing, it's just full of numbers and meaningless jargon'.

Smith threw it over his shoulder and it landed amongst a pile of rubble and dirt.

The three men lifted up Stuart's almost dead body.

In the background, a man watched as they lifted up his body. He stood motionless watching the three continue their work. Unobserved he slowly approached from the corner of the warehouse.

A smile came over his face as he picked up the black book.

'So you did manage to hold onto it Stuart', he said under his breath.

'Really guys you should appreciate books a lot better' he said.

The other men all laughed in quick succession as they turned to see who was cracking the joke.

None saw Simon lift up a small pistol.

He picked up his 9mm Browning high powered semi-automatic pistol from the inside of his jacket. In quick succession, he rattled off 9mm bullets. One by one each of the guards were struck as volley after volley of bullets rained through the air. His arm moving from left to right as he picked each of the interrogators off. No remorse or regret. Each round of bullets was fired of in quick succession.

One guard had his chest ripped open as two bullets punctured his lungs and heart killing him instantly.

Another guard was brought crashing to the ground. His body spinning him around bringing him hurtling to the floor with his legs blown off the ground and thrown into the air. Finally, the last guard Bill who was faced with his back to Simon had his stomach ripped open and his brain blown off as bullets shattered away from Simon's gun.

Simon watched as one by one each men fell. His revenge satisfied.

Checking that no one else was in the large warehouse, he stood motionless and listened for the tell-tale sounds of movement. All remained silent as the smoke from the gun settled.

He dropped his gun and walked over to Stuart.

'I am sorry old friend that I had to do this'

Simon walked over to Stuart's trunk. He tried to open the door but realised it was locked. Before the gun battle broke out, one of the men must have somehow locked his cage. He walked over to the guards. Checking the first man's pockets, he found a set of cell keys, car keys and a swipe card of some sort. He also took his wallet that contained some

cash and several credit cards. Walking back over to Stuart's trunk, he unlocked the door with the swipe card.

As he Pulled Stuart out the box, he could smell the stench of death rolling into his nostrils. Realising his comrade was dead; he lifted his dead body off his coffin of death. Carrying his body, he lay it down on the ground.

He quickly checked his pulse confirming what he feared Stuart was dead. Not knowing why he started to cry. Another life wasted and for what. He could feel the venom and anger inside him build up. He sat down on the floor and let the tears flow. Great sobs came out as he mourned and wept for poor Stuart. At the end, he rubbed his eyes scrapping away his tears to the left and right of his eyes. He rubbed his nose and sat there motionless.

He remembered a poem he had learned at school in Northern Ireland. It was a poem by Laurence Binyon.

At first he felt a silly regurgitating the poem but then it realised it was a fitting epitaph to his friend, who had simply fallen into this battle he had begun.

Simon began to read the poem from his memory.

'They shall grow not old,

As we that are left grow old.

Age shall not weary them,

Nor do the years contemn.

At the going down of the sun

And in the morning we will remember them.'

Simon paused. There was silence. No sound, no voices, just silence. The silence seemed to last forever and it was his way of not just remembering Stuart but those who had lost their lives defending what they believed in. It gave him time for reflection, and also created a sense of solidarity. Boundaries of age, sex, class, and religion, are set aside for us all when we think of the dead helping us feel bonded to each other in remembrance. He also mourned for the death of the interrogators who he knew were only acting on their orders. He felt mixed emotions. He was glad they were dead, as they had conducted cruel acts on Stuart. He was also sorry for their death. Needless and wasted lives.

'I am sorry old friend that I could not save you, but your death will not be wasted'.

With a sigh, he turned away and began to walk to the bodies of the dead guards.

He quickly searched the bodies of the two other guards prizing out several hundred pounds of cash, two credit cards, car keys and a swipe card.

He then remembered seeing a laptop in one of the break off rooms. He walked over to the laptop. He turned on the laptop and it asked for finger identification. Therefore, he walked over to one of the guards that had been using the laptop. Cutting the dead man's finger off with his Swiss army knife, he placed the top of the dead finger on the laptop.

The laptop sprang into action. He quickly moved the mouse to the Start logo and then opening up the drop down screen set the mouse above the recent items logo. A few seconds later a series of documents flashed up. Searching through a series of transport orders Simon quickly identified that Norman Brook and Tony Eden had authorised and counter signed the movement of L72A9 Light Anti-Structure Missiles, 81mm Mortars, and

Sharpshooter Rifles from this base to a series of addresses in Birmingham, Edinburgh, Manchester, Bradford, and London.

'Got you!' said Simon. He then e-mailed the evidence to a few contacts and then picked up the laptop in his arms.

Outside Susan pulled up to the front of the deserted army base. As with most Army bases in mainland Britain security was managed through an IT consortium that only allowed access upon production of a swipe card. This had saved millions of pounds over the last few years as soldiers had been made redundant leaving security to automated systems.

She drove her car towards the main warehouse that stood to the east of the barracks. She passed building after building that was deserted of men and was now full of mothballed equipment no longer required. She wondered how much money had been wasted building up these vast armouries only to find them replaced with drone aircraft and 24 hours surveillance.

Finally, she got to the building where her team was holding Stuart. She jumped out of her vehicle and keeping herself in check walked over to the entrance. She felt like young teenage girl getting ready to rush off to the shops during the January sales with her Christmas money.

She opened the door and entered the building. She called out to her team expecting them to come immediately to her. She was stunned to hear only silence. She called out again, but there was still silence.

This immediately sparked off her defences and she immediately drew her weapon.

She stepped out of the building to check she was in the right building. Seeing it was, she cocked her gun and stepped back into the building. A few feet behind her, the driver followed.

Simon heard her call. He took one last look around him to see if there was nothing else to incriminate all parties. He then walked with the laptop in his arms out of the room.

To anyone looking in he looked like he was casually walking away. But in reality, he was in a panic. His training had kicked in and he knew he had to prevent any attention being drawn towards him. He noticed a fire extinguisher on the wall. He carefully picked it up. He then set it off and threw it in the opposite direction. A great mist erupted in the air as CO² gas was set off. Two bullets were fired at the extinguisher and Susan and her guards attention was drawn away. This allowed him to leave the building and enter into a large green Pinzgauer 6x6 All-Terrain Vehicle. Unobserved he got into his vehicle closing the door quietly avoiding detection. He then prepared to drive away. He placed the laptop on one of the passenger seats. Using the keys from one of the dead guards, he turned the ignition on. The vehicle started first time.

'Great' he said.

Very slowly, the vehicle pulled away.

As the vehicle left the compound, Susan came out of the building leaving the death and mayhem behind her.

She looked up taking in the face of the man driving the vehicle away.

She ran over to the Black Range Rover, she radioed her driver to get back in the vehicle. Both ran with great speed towards the vehicle. The Driver leapt in and started the vehicle up. Once Susan was in the vehicle and her door was shut, he accelerated away. The vehicle now headed in the direction of the green army vehicle which had left a few minutes before.

NINETEEN

Aadi Jordan was the most popular kid in his class. Everybody liked Aadi. Aadi liked everybody he met and very quickly everyone got to know him. He was the type of person that made friends wherever he went. He had green eyes, dark skin, and dark hair and he was as thin as a mast. Best of all, Aadi was a smiler. His smile was infectious. Nobody had a bigger smile or used it more often than Aadi. That is what made him the easy target for Mohammad and Hussein as they picked him up as he walked home from school that day.

Calling him across to their car, the two men asked him if he knew where the local post office was. Being a friendly kid, he walked over to their car to give directions.

In an instant, one of the men grabbed him. Yanking him off the street, he was thrown into the back seat of the car. A cloth, which was covered in anaesthetic, was placed on his mouth and nose. Within seconds, Aadi was out cold.

Making sure no one had noticed what had gone on, Hussein started the car up, indicated and started to drive the vehicle away with Aadi trapped in their car.

When he came back round a mere thirty minutes of family pressure and blackmail had him agree to go to the offices of the BNP on Corporation Street in Birmingham with explosives strapped around his waist.

A few hours later, all four men stood looking down at Aadi as he walked towards the offices of the BNP in Birmingham. They could see even from this distance that Aadi was frightened. They could see his face staring out and looking for help. A hat was pulled low over the young man's forehead. Strands of greasy-looking hair sheltered his ears and cheeks.

He walked up a great flight of Victorian white brick steps and into the building. He walked towards the front desk like a child who had lost his parents in a museum but did not know who to ask for help from. At the counter was Mark Griffin. Mark was in his late-20s. Mark had been brought up in the Handsworth area of Birmingham and had been scared by years of racial abuse and the stigma of parents. He had also been involved in various street gangs that vied for control of the no-go areas in Birmingham. Furthermore, his life was damaged by the fact that his parents had never worked or were likely to work.

Mark had a wild look upon himself, a look that had been born out of the gang wars of Newtown and Handsworth that he was brought up in. It was a life where you were forced to fight or die and he chose to fight.

Mark had been selling drugs his entire adult life. He had never had a day job, never paid any tax and has never been arrested. He wore a White shirt over a "Nike" tee shirt.

'So my overseas friend what can I do for you'

That was the last thing he said as a ball of fire erupted from the jacket that was wrapped around Aadi. A small amount of Semtex erupted into flames ripping apart the front office and bringing the roof crashing down on the now dead Aadi and Mark.

The exploding materials produced a large almost cinematic dust cloud.

The powerful explosion ripped through the building. A deadly fire having ignited instantly killed everyone in the building. A hot gas quickly spread through the building. The firestorm killed everyone in its path causing great plumes of fire to rip out of the windows and into the surrounding streets. Large supporting pillars came crashing down to the ground as their metal innards melted bringing walls and divides crashing to the ground.

Far away, the four men watched as the building was brought to its knees and the explosion erupted across the streets of Birmingham. Everyone in the streets turned and looked in horror as they watched the explosion erupt before their eyes.

Then panic kicked in and the four men watched as men and women rushed away from the dust-filled streets fearing for their lives. Alarms crackled away as chaos spread throughout the streets of Birmingham.

A few minutes later four fire engines from Aston Fire Station came rushing out of their station. Blue light flashed in the air as vehicle after vehicle rushed towards the destroyed building. As the vehicles neared closer to the buildings the fire crews and police began to receive, word of the possibility of an explosive device had caused the damage.

Once the Fire Engines arrived, they could see the chaos that was all around them all. Fighting their way through the crowds who were moving in the opposite direction the crews and their vehicles finally got to the destroyed buildings.

The crews assembled in the square outside the remains of the burning building. The commanding officer immediately took control. Realising this was a bomb attack he

immediately radioed for police and fire support. As he walked around dishing out his orders he almost tripped over and fell on the floor. Looking down he could see what had caused him to trip. It was the hand of someone burnt beyond all recognition.

He was frozen for a few seconds. Then his training kicked in and he began to scream out his orders.

However, that did not stop his fire crew asking themselves what the hell was going on here?

Their training pull them back into action the crews then went straight into the building. From there on the crews made their way to one of the lobbies at the entrance to the buildings.

One of the fire fighters screamed to his pal, 'It looks like a bomb went off.'

The crew then started making their way through the blackened remains of the building to rescue as many people as we could.

As the fire crews were making their way through the burning rubble searching for survivors, they began to receive news that another attack had taken place to the east of the city centre.

Believing that another attack could hit the area, the fire commander immediately ordered his crews to evacuate.

As they moved back to their vehicles the crews could hear the Police radio's crackle open with reports that a bloody and violent attack had been made in the central Mosque less than a mile away.

The Birmingham central Mosque stood a few hundred yards from their vehicle. They all sat in their vehicle building up the strength to complete their task. All four men knew that what they were about to do would be classed as an abomination in the eyes of their fellow Muslims. However with Norman forcing their hand they had little option but to do what he asked.

Having sat there for almost 30 minutes, they drew the attention of one of the clergy who was curious as to why four men were sat outside his mosque.

The man walked over to the driver's seat and began to enquire as to why the men were waiting in their large black BMW vehicle.

Akbar killed the man instantly before everyone's eyes. He fired a bullet at the face of the man at close range. The silencer on the gun prevented anyone more than a few feet away from hearing the shot being fired and the man falling to the ground. He then pulled him into the vehicles and began to butcher the man with a large kitchen knife.

With the remains of the man scattered across the floor of the BMW X6 vehicle the four men opened their doors and began to walk towards the Mosque. Within minutes, their reign of terror commenced.

The four men kicked open the door to the Mosque. They grabbed one of the Imam's, tied him up and then forced him to watch as his building was desecrated and his flock butchered and killed.

When they had finished, they dragged the Imam on the floor where they went to work on him. Using a fire reddened tip from a figurine they grabbed from one of the candles by the side of the worship area. One by one they carved PAKI OUT and BNP on his body. They mutilated his body before blowing his brains out with one of their guns.

20 minutes later the four men were finished. They left the Imam in his own pool of blood and several dozen dead worships dead across the Mosque.

They then fled the area.

Arriving in the Sparkhill area, the four men changed vehicles driving off in the direction of Coventry. A few hours later the vehicle erupted into flames as a small incendiary device ripped the vehicles apart destroying all evidence that the men had been in the car or at the Mosque.

Meanwhile every police vehicle in the area arrived at the Central Mosque and began the slow process of cording off the area and collecting valuable evidence while rescue crews tried to take care of the bloody survivors and prevent as many deaths as possible.

The Police though could not help notice the racist signs and graffiti sprawled across the floor of the Mosque.

This made the police immediately think it must have been one of those 'white supremacist' that made the attack on the mosque. This would be the information leaked to the Media a few hours later for £100 by one of the Police Officers.

However, most of the Police were more worried about the repercussions because of both attacks. They all knew that this would not go down well with the vast majority of people from Birmingham. Once it was in the news, the rest of the UK would react too.

God help us thought the police. This is all we need, there will be a blood bath on the streets of Birmingham now. They knew that every nutter would want to seek revenge and the police and the innocent would be the main victims of this attack.

The police also knew that they would have to look like they were doing something. It would be a repeat of the IRA bombing of Birmingham in the 1970's. The innocent would be rounded up and someone would be made to pay for the attack whether they were innocent or not.

Therefore, over the next few days as the media attention swamped in on Birmingham the police started to bring in several known racists, all of which helped fuel the anti-Muslim agenda that Norman and Tony were so desperate to create as a result of the attacks.

Nevertheless, the four men who were now in Coventry parked their vehicle in the NEC Car Park and surrounded by thousands of cars the four men separated their way where they all independently headed south to London where they would begin their next attack in 48 Hours as per plan set out by Norman.

TWENTY

Susan and her driver started to catch up on Simon as they raced down the single lane track past several deserted farms. Driving at break neck speeds Susan came up to a large slow moving tractor. It blocked her way. This allowing Simon to pull further away from her pursuing car.

'Fuck'. Her driver screamed and then hit his steering wheel with his fists.

'Get that fucking vehicle out of the way and get Simon now'. Ordered Susan

Her driver was going to lose it in a minute if this bitch kept on speaking to him this way.

Ahead of her, she could see Simon drive towards a main road. She watched as he crossed from the small track that was now blocked by the tractor onto the main road. She watches as Simon floored his green Pinzgauer Vehicle. His Pinzgauer swerved out onto the road across a row of vehicles narrowly missing contact.

As he shot across the road, Simon cut off several blameless drivers and careered along a grassy bank bumping the side of the vehicle along the edge of a speed barrier. A few seconds later, he regained control.

Once back in control of his vehicle he began to race south towards Edinburgh using a map of the area he had memorised the previous day to the sound of horns rigging away sounding of their annoyance at him.

He began to pull away. He looked back in his mirror to see no sign of Susan's vehicle following him. All he saw was a small motor bike less than 100 yards behind him and the darkened skies that looked like they are bringing an almighty storm his way.

As the bike closed in on him, he could hear the roar of its engine as it fastened in on him like a tornado rushing through an American plain.

Then Simon spotted a flash of light in one of his wing mirrors. A smallish man sat on the motorcycle. He wore a black helmet, with back protective gear. A bullet ricocheted off the roof narrowly missing him.

Another wave of pistol fire struck the crash barrier narrowly missing him and the vehicle. Simon was worried.

He knew that his large vehicle could not outrun a motorcycle. Realising this he immediately decided to do something about the motorbike. Steering his vehicle with subtlety, calculating ground speed solely from the engine noise frequency and never sparing a look at the speedometer he took action.

Simon took a long expanding curve around the almost diamond-cross-sectioned hill which the road wrapped around and decided this was the moment to strike.

The bike closed in on him for another shot at Simon. But this time Simon slammed on his breaks.

He reached over to his door handle and opened his door in a quick flash. As the door swung open, it smacked into the driver of the bike bringing him crashing to the ground killing him in an instant.

'Yes' screamed Simon. He lifted up his hand in victory. Having survived the attack Simon continued along the road reaching further into the Glen. The road wiggled around large hilltops and then arrowed out along a moor where the road turned on a curve worthy of a traditional Roman Road.

A short time later, Simon grunted, and then cursed before applying his breaks as he began to hit traffic caught behind a Caravan. He immediately switched gear clumsily. The engine protested under the strain and for the slightest fraction of a second, a fatal red light lit up its fatal red sign on the dashboard.

Simon then spotted a side road to his left. He turn his wheel and slid off down the road assured that Susan was not following him.

'I must get away from all this'. He whispers to himself as he begins to search for somewhere to stop and gather his thoughts.

He taped his shirt pocket happy that his book of notes is still with him. He slowed his car down and finding a hidden forest car park, he drew his vehicle into the pebble ridden car park.

He turning off his engine and sat motionless taking in all that had happened. The sadness of causing Stuart to die consumed him. He stretched his arms in the air and gave out a great moan. Then he started to cry again, sobbing at the loss of his innocent. As he stopped crying, he thought it was strange that you never see spies cry in the films at the loss of their friends or foe. However, he knew that bottling it up only would make it worse and so he let the tears and pair come and go.

He noticed it was getting dark. He must have been crying for hours.

Realising he had drifted away while mourning the loss of Stuart he pulled out his mobile device and began to play with it. Zooming his camera in and out. He looked into his lens looking at the surrounding countryside as he began to pull his thoughts together. It was then that he noticed something in the lens. It was a recording of his face. It stared out from the camera. It was brusque and dark. His straw-blond and wiry hair stood out, and his skin was nut-brown from the sun. The expression on his face was intent and serious.

Realising that his real face was still hidden he began to pull off the prosthetics and the remains of his make-up off his face. Within a few minutes his hair was back to his real colour, his face thinned and his nose returned to its true shape. He then flicked off his brown contact lenses returning his eyes to his real colour.

Half an hour later, he pulled his vehicle out of the car park and back onto the road. His large vehicle rolled down a large hill towards the coastal road.

A few hours later, he dumped the vehicle in a large car park just outside a large town. He then walked towards a small hotel where he booked himself into the hotel. Once booked in his room he collapsed sleeping a deep sleep until the next morning.

Early in the morning, he walked out of the hotel to the staff car park. On his way, he forced open the hotel's maintenance room. Once in he searched for anything that resembled the hotel's maintenance car. Finding the keys he calmly walked over to a small white van.

He jump into the vehicle. He sat looking around to see if anyone in the hotel noticed. They never. He placed the keys in the key hole. The vehicle started up and he slowly drove the car away from the hotel.

Pulling out of the car park, he turned left passing several buildings and moved up a blind summit. He decided that he would have to now get to Edinburgh and somehow stop the attack that was going to come in a few days' time. He drove a few miles further up the road and there he saw the blue and white sign with the statement 'EDINBURGH 42 Miles'.

As he pulled away from the hotel, a black Range Rover pulled out from its parking spot almost directly across from the hotel.

Seeing the vehicle pull away, he realised that he had been spotted

'How did you find me' muttered Simon under his breath.

Unknown to him Susan had directed the airborne Reaper into the area. This aircraft had searched the area following the demise of the motorbike attack under the direction of Susan. It was able to find his vehicle and then follow him all the way to the Hotel he had been staying at. Consequently, the next day she and a small team were in a position to follow him.

As he drove away, Susan and her driver were on watch. Unable to wait for her team to follow she began to follow him towards Edinburgh.

Her vehicle began to follow Simon taking up position several car lengths behind him.

Simon smiled to himself as he spotted her vehicle moving behind him.

Simon decided that he would have to get rid of this danger. He immediately pulled off the Edinburgh road and began to drive up and down a series of countryside roads. After several hours, he drove down a dirt track that became narrower and narrower. At the bottom of the track was a large river.

He wheeled around a hedge and took a small road over the river and then made a left and then right turn before breaking to a halt.

This gave him just enough time to watch the Range Rover pass him by allowing him to catch a glimpse of Susan and her driver driving past his position.

Realising there were only two in the vehicle and no support he set about doing something about his tail.

As Susan turned, her vehicle came under a small tunnel that ran under the river. As she came through the tunnel her vehicle was suddenly hit by the van as, it came crashing down from above onto her Range Rover. In an instant, she was knocked out and the vehicle skewed off the road and into a deserted hedge.

When Susan came around, she was covered in debris. Her arms and legs ached under the pain of the crash.

Her arms and legs felt like there were weights on them. She was battered, bruised, and looked like she was in an A&E ward. However, she managed to unclip her safety belt. She screamed out in pain but was glad to see that the pain was not life threatening.

She pushed herself out of her seat and out of her written off vehicle.

She sat down on the verge and began to draw her thought together and work out what had happened.

A few minutes later Susan took the phone from her inside jacket pocket.

At that, instant Simon pressed the muzzle of a Heckler and Koch P30 semi-automatic pistol to the left of Susan's right skull. She was wide-eyes and sat agonizingly erect at the edge of her vehicle.

'Susan I want you to tell me the truth, and then you may live.' He said with sincerity

'Now listen and shut up, because I do not want to kill you, I am tired, so tired of causing death and mayhem, I want to be the creator of peace not war.'

'I know you are want to do the right thing too. So I am going to give you a chance to redeem yourself and honour everything that your dead mother stood for. I need your help and this war between you and me is only going to result in both of us loosing. What our government is doing is too important to be allowed'

'Your government has agreed to assassinate the Chinese President in three days' time and we are going to stop it happening.'

He then went on to tell her about the plan that the UK government with the support of her lover Tony and Norman were going to undertake.

What he realised was that he needed her help if he was to stop the Chinese President being killed and the fragile peace that existed between the west and the warlords of the middle east to stand any chance of surviving.

What Susan did not know is that Simon had hacked into her files and could tell from her past that she would support him. He knew that her love and memory of her mom who had been a great supporter of CND and other similar activities of the 80's would help convince her that she should support him.

Although she was a loyalist he knew that she had a clear understanding of right and wrong and somewhere she knew that Governments were not there to create war but to maintain peace and order and to allow the people to live in peace with each other. He also noticed in her file that she had written her dissertation on Rawls the kingpin in political equality and justice. Anyone that was convinced by Rawls that we were all equal in life would need to honour justice and equality. Therefore he knew she was going to support his moves to stop the British government undermining peace and equality.

He then went onto to tell her his plan to stop the attack and save the world from almost certain war and destruction.

'So I am going to take my gun away from your head'.

'I am going to trust someone for the first time in a long time, because I need your help to stop those bastards from destroying our world'

'So can I count on your support?'

Her head nodded and he knew then that she was on his side.

TWENTY ONE

News of the bloody and grisly attacks in Birmingham, London, Bradford, Manchester and Edinburgh was being discussed by several academics on the morning TV. The TV had come on to wake up Akbar and the rest of the team.

Some professor from a well-respected institution started a 5 minute seminar on how this was a classic example of Al Qaida led attack and how white-Anglo working class reaction which was disengaged by mainstream politics was reacting to these attacks. Akbar could see the joy in the interviewers eyes as she outlined how this was creating a great security risk to the United Kingdom Government and whether the Prime Minister should consider increasing stop and search powers by the police.

'Great' thought Akbar they are playing right into Norman's hands.

Less than an hour later, the four men were dressed in military order. All four met and then set about their tasks for the day ahead. Helping each other, they set about loading a series of bags into two vans parked in the car park outside their hotel. Led by Hussein the four men pair up and got into each of the vehicles. Each was full of enough weapons to arm a small army.

Hussein and Ahmed got into one vehicle and drove off towards the centre of Edinburgh. A few hours later, they drifted with their bags into the set of tents that had been set up by the 'Occupy Edinburgh' campaigners that had been protesting for the last few weeks outside the Scottish Office building. The crowd of protesters had chosen monolithic,

symmetrical building as the site to make their protest. The buildings that featured a number of sculpted decorations, in an Art Deco style, had been designed by the notable British sculptor: Sir William Reid Dick were designed to be symbolic figures including heraldic devices and large bronze doors that were supposed to represent the journey from earth to heaven. However, the building really looked like something that had been built to house a Nazi war-rally during the mid-20th Century.

Oblivious to this Hussein and Ahmed Set up their tent and got ready for the next day. With the tent set up both men began to mingle with the protesters making sure they looked part of the protest.

At seven AM the next morning, both men awoke.

Peering out of their tent they could see the sun had just risen and it was masking Carlton Hill with its rays.

A lone jogger sored down Waterloo Place passed the rows of silent tents that constitute Occupy Edinburgh. "Wake up," the man, shouted "Wake up and get a job."

Most occupiers were not yet awake, but both men could not sleep for the cold from the night. They dressed, and were up ready for the day's action.

One of the protesters unzipped his tent and shouted out "Twat". He then zipped his tent back up and went back to sleep.

Hussein and Ahmed nodded to each other and begin their preparations for the day's activity inside their tents.

Hussein thought back to the previous evening's conversation about the protesters. Both men agreed that felt that their protest was little more than insipid thinking. Some sort of vague thinking in which the protests wanted to remonstrance about something but they did not know what they really were protesting about.

Hussein and Ahmed felt it was no longer their problem really.

Hussein and Ahmed arrived on the sixth day of the occupation. The protesters were mostly students and the odd hippy. Hussein and Ahmed were amazed at how the place seems staggeringly well organised and was growing fast.

They estimated that there were 100 tents lining the steps of Scottish Office and it was growing by the hour.

The camp looked like it had the means to last until the winter. It even had a kitchen that was even compliant with health and safety regulations and had been there since day one. Portable toilets were even in place, and the Council even supplied a full gamut of recycling bins. There was even a tech tent – filled with enough hardware to host a TV station.

That evening both men even visited the university tent where there were 24-hour lectures on China and the demise of the capitalist model.

The team of course knew all about this as they had been monitoring the build-up of the camp via Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites. This had even allowed them to make a few connections providing an easy trail for the police afterwards to link it to a Middle East terrorism cell in Edinburgh.

A few hours later, the two men even joined in a kick about with a football.

The players called themselves Occupy FC. Hussein and Ahmed found it funny that the players were not even occupiers. Two of the men wore suits; obviously, executives on their way back from a day's work at the Scottish Office and had decided to join in on their way home.

During that evening as they tried to spread the word of their views, providing more evidence for the police to link their attack to their terrorist groups both men began started to spark up friends. They even met a 29-year-old community arts worker. She started a great debate about how you can only go to the ballot box every five years and how politicians do not actually represent your view and highlighting the importance of this kind of protest and how it brings together people to build an alternative.

However, to Hussein and Ahmed they thought it was funny how the vast majority of the protesters were all young, white and students. The various groups of people fell into a spawn of three or four competing actions called by several different groups, which had merged plans. Predictably, there was several Socialist Workers in the camp. In one clump of tents, there was half a dozen Anonymous campaigners, frequently clad in crumpled suits and shiny masks.

That night until 11 PM, an orchestra of occupiers banged drums on the steps to the Scottish Office while others danced manically around.

By Mid-morning, a reporter from the BBC's convened a debate between the occupation and representatives from the local Chinese Embassy and one of the many

Scottish Banking institutions that supported the IMF. Packed across the steps, the occupiers surround them and took it in turns to lambast the financial system and the Chinese government support of the developing nations.

The debates centred on blaming the bankers, and the Tory Government. The conclusion was that the system was wrong and nothing could really be attributable to a single group or individual. The problem was with capitalism and people's greed.

Later Hussein and Ahmed dressed in jeans and t-shirt joined about 20 buses from across Edinburgh as they brought protesters to a march that set about making its way towards an Exhibition Centre and the Scottish Parliament buildings.

Around 25,000 people started to take part in the march, which started outside the council's Waverley Court headquarters on East Market Street and was due to finish at the Ross Bandstand in Princes Street Gardens, where there was to be a series of speakers.

The protesters all started to form into one vast column of marchers. Messages began to spread across the crowds that the Scottish Police Force had begun to tell people not to come and join the protest march. They had told people that Edinburgh was closed, you cannot get out of Edinburgh, the march was cancelled, the march was postponed, and there was civil disorder across Scotland all to break down the numbers.

Eventually as the protest built up the Police started harassing the assembly point where buses and the campers had made their base. Several vanloads of police from the London Met arrived at just before 10 AM, cordoned off the assembly point, and tried to

prevent unsuccessfully people joining the march. At this stage, all was still well with most of the crowds still in good humour.

As the protesters marched through the city, they started to form into lines some as long as ten abreast. Their arms were linked as they marched towards Princes Street. The Scottish Police quickly formed a line in front of the marchers and started to negotiate to try to break the numbers up. However, the sheer numbers were too much and they had little option but to let the protesters march down through the city passed the burnt out flats that Stuart and Simon had once lived in and towards the exhibition centre where the Chinese President was guest of the UK and Scottish Governments.

As was always the protesters wished to stay in full view of the public. This was the best way of preventing the Police from attacking the demonstration as they had done so many times in previous demonstrations across the world.

The march continues relatively peaceful until the masses began to march down the Cowgate and Holyrood Roads. As they approached the start of Holyrood Road, more protesters joined from the South. The march was now some 30,000 strong as they marched towards the centre of Holyrood Road and were opposite the BBC offices and The Scotsman offices. At this point, the police formed a line with vans preventing the marchers from passing the exhibition centre. They wanted the protesters to turn away and march around Holyrood Park and away from the main event.

Hussein and Ahmed were now in their planned positioned.

Hussein and Ahmed started to shout out at the police trying hard to cause a reaction from the police or the crowd. It worked. Soon many of the crowd started their attempts to go through the police line and continue along Holyrood Road. At first, they achieved some success. With considerable ease they moved forward about one hundred metres. As they reached the entrance to the Exhibition Centre, the back of the march became uneasy about moving off the main road. At this stage, the police then formed a new line at the entrance to the Exhibition Centre.

At this point, the march had swelled to over 45,000 about the same population as a small town.

The local police reinforced by the riot squads from London and Glasgow prepared to stand their ground. They started their attempts to break up the march by arresting isolated people that had broken away from the crowds.

By now, Hussein and Ahmed had been crammed in Holyrood Road for several hours. Hussein and Ahmed separated away from each. At the agreed time, they both pulled out two small coke sized bottles from their pockets. Each bottle was filled with a highly explosive liquid that filled each bottle of coke. Inside the bottle was several nails and ball bearings. In quick succession, each man threw their devises at the police. One after another each bottle span through the air passing over the crowds towards the Police.

A few seconds later, all hell broke loose.

Violent blasts erupted in the crowds and amongst the police.

Flying shrapnel from each bomb erupted through the crowd decimating and injuring everyone in their path. Several hundred people were injured with each explosion as they erupted. Each blast brought out a blast of swirling debris that had been carefully planted the previous day by Hussein and Ahmed. The shockwaves that erupted brought more and more people down. Finally the crowds and the police started to panic. Crowds started to charge towards the police bringing many people falling onto the ground who were trampled to death in the chaos.

Immediately the police commander reported this to the security in the Exhibition Centre. He then ordered all doors locked, they brought down anti-riot shields effectively locking down the Chinese government and the UK and Scottish Governments, and all the various dignitaries in the exhibition centre exactly as the plan specified.

TWENTY TWO

In the midst of the chaos that reined from the crowds and the police Hussein and Ahmed managed to escape from the panic that was around them. Hussein and Ahmed watched as panic spread.

Hussein watched as one of his explosions erupted and exploding debris ripped apart one of the protesters left arm sending blood gushing everywhere. He collapsed to the floor in agony. The groans from him were heartrending.

Another man at the front of the crowd just a few yards from Akbar had his faced smashed in as a panicking police officer battered him with his truncheon bringing the man crashing onto his knees. He was battered about three feet into the crowd by the police officer. He died a few minutes later. This signalled to Hussein and Ahmed that they had better get out of the crowds and away from the chaos before it was too late.

Consequently, Hussein and Ahmed turned away and battled through the crowds thrusting and pushing their way past protester after protester. As they moved through the crowds, they could see some small groups starting to organise some order in the chaos that was around them. Other groups were grabbing whatever they could find around them to defend against the Police that were angry and fighting to gain control of the day's events.

They were able to dodge and weave their way through the crowds and finally got out of the chaos in one piece. Once away from the main area both men casually and calmly

walked down from the riots escaping before the police had a chance to react and close the area off and everyone in it.

A few minutes later Hussein and Ahmed jumped onto bikes, which had been paced, by Mohammed and Akbar the previous day. The two men quickly took their clothes off revealing cycling shorts and t-shirts and cycled off as though they were on a leisurely cycle around Arthur's Seat.

To any observer they looked like two friends cycling around Arthurs Seat as many of the tourists did each day. A few minutes later, they were at the bottom on Salisbury's Craig's. There they dumped their bikes on the ground. A few minutes later, both men were sprinting up to the middle of the cliffs. The sheer drop would kill any man if he fell over the edge. The caves had been formed out of some primeval earthquake that rocked the area several million years ago. A few minutes later, they were at the top of the cliffs. For a brief moment, they looked down at the skyline of the city with its great architecture and stood there in sheer wonder at the view before them.

Hussein pulled out his iPhone. He then selected a saved number. A second later the mobile phone number he had been given was connected too. The two men search around the Craig's until they could hear the sound of a phone ring. They rushed over to the source of the sound of the ringing phone that came from the ground. Standing above the vibrating sound both men began to pull away at turf on the ground. A few minutes later both Hussein and Ahmed were able to lift up a Russian shoulder launched anti-tank rocket propelled grenade launcher.

Placing four rounds of ammunition on the ground Hussein and Ahmed quickly got into the loader/launcher position.

Hussein loaded the first rocket. Ahmed then switched his target onto the police helicopter flying over the crowds. He fired the first rocket. A great plume of smoke erupted from their launcher. A small baseball bat sized rocket shot out of the launcher hurtling itself up into the sky. A few seconds later, it smashed into the cabin of the helicopter flying above them. It erupted into a great ball of fire and flames bringing the helicopter and its crew crashing down onto the Scottish Parliament below.

Hussein loaded another rocket. This time Ahmed fired a rocket at the rear of the Exhibition Centre where the Chinese President was celebrating his daughter's graduation. The rocket ripping open the rear delivery doors. Another rocket was fired at the roof of the building bringing glass and debris crashing down on the trapped dignitaries.

The last rocket was fired at the police control tower just to the right of the Scottish Parliament. The rocket reduced the tower into a ball of fire killing all in the building.

Dropping the weapon both men fled along the Salisbury Craig's and away towards their escape vehicle in the car park below Arthurs Seat car park.

As they approached the vehicle, both men changed from their run to a walk. Neither wanted to attract too much attention because they were sure that the police would be all over the area following the second attack. As they approached, their car Hussein pressed the remote key unlocking the car. All indicators flashed off and told both men where their escape car was. They then jumped into their car. A few minutes later, both men were

driving away. They unceremoniously drove out of Arthur's seat car park and towards the Commonwealth pool before driving south towards the Edinburgh by-pass and the park and drive car park that stood to the South of Edinburgh.

Hussein and Ahmed were relieved that Norman had arranged for the car to be in the car park and was sticking to his word.

A few metres from the car park the two men then parked their car in a small lay-by. There they covered the front of the engine in petrol and pushed the vehicle with the engine still running down a cliff. The vehicle rolled off the cliff and smashed down onto the ravine erupting into flames upon impact.

Hussein and Ahmed then walked off to the local car park on the other side of the road. In the centre of the car park, they found their car. Seeing the car Hussein and Ahmed walked across the park. Happy to have survived. They smiled at each other for the first time in hours.

'Well I cannot believe we got away with that' said Hussein.

'Do you think the other two got in alright' said Ahmed.

'Who cares, as long as I get my money from Norman? That's all I care about!'

Ahmed nodded his head in agreement.

'I just want to get out of this hell hole '.

He turned the key to start the engine. They both looked at each other with a knowing smile. It was the last thing both men saw. That second a bomb exploded erupting the car and both men in a great ball of flames.

Norman and Tony had decided that this was the best way to silence the men and ensure no one knew their involvement in the attack.

TWENTY THREE

Akbar and Muhammad watched as their compatriots departed from them and walked towards their vehicle. Little did all four men know but that would be the last time they would see each other.

Half hour later both men set off for work. Muhammad had been given the job as a dishwasher in the Exhibition Centre kitchens and Akbar was given the job of cloakroom assistant. Having secured work through an agency both men had managed to get access to the building on that fateful day.

Akbar went into work wearing his distinctive polo shirt which he covered his denim jacket over and Muhammad wore a red neck jumper and a sued jacket.

Once in the cloakroom and kitchen they began their day's work and waited for the fireworks to erupt. Both men looked like they were busy working away but in reality that were waiting for a sign that Norman's plan was working.

A few hours later, their patience was rewarded.

One of the staff while looking out of the kitchen windows spotted the first explosion. He quickly told his colleagues. The kitchen staff laid down their tools, drifted towards the windows, and watched as the chaos erupted. Gossip spread around the building and within a few minutes, all staff knew what was going on.

News reached Akbar and Muhammad in their separate manner. Akbar and Muhammad though were aware of the increased tension on the faces of the Police and Security Guards that guarded the Chinese President and his family.

As the chaos erupted, the dignitaries and guests of the Chinese President sat down for lunch. They started to talk through the politics and affairs of state that existed between the two nations of China and the United Kingdom. Some were just simply engaged in chit chat while others were using the event for wheeling and dealing. It was at this stage that everyone heard a powerful blast followed a succession of loud explosions sounding off one after another.

'In my country they would crush this sort of thing immediately' whispered one of the Chinese dignitaries.

His colleague rolled his eyes in agreement.

The audience watched as police officers posted to keep an eye on things moved towards the disturbances and explosions. Several important looking Policemen looked quite shaken.

One of the police officers reported that there had been several explosions. His commanding officer immediately ordered the blast shutters closed. The Bomb Blast window system, which had been installed in the build-up to the visit, could resist any explosion or fire. With the bomb blast doors down it immediately blocked the building off sealing off the audience in a safe cocoon of metal and heat resistant glass.

Over the loudspeakers a series of instructions were barked out. A monotone voice instructed the staff and guest that there was no need for panic and that this was just a precaution to deal with the excessive protests that were being encountered at the bottom of Holyrood Road and festivities would re-commence shortly once the situation outside was stabilised.

A period of peace continued as the lunch and festivities continued. Several people stood up and started to work through speeches about the President's daughter and how it was a great day for the President and his family. The President addressed these followed a little while later by his daughter.

This was all brought to an end when the rocket fire began. Unexpectedly the building came under a hail of fire from the rear as an armoured piercing rocket was heard exploding to the rear.

A few seconds later, everyone watch in horror, as a helicopter was seen coming crashing down a short distance away from the building.

At this point, the staff and guest started were told to move into the basement. Table by table the VIP's were rushed towards the basement of the building. In the chaos, no one noticed two men who were preparing to retrieve their special weapons. These weapons had been stored in a concealed compartment hidden behind one of the radiators in the cloakroom.

Around them, everyone could hear the tell-tale characteristics of rockets smashing into the walls of the building.

Akbar and Muhammad watched as those who had been wounded from the force and shock of each rocket hitting the building were pulled away to safety.

They could see the panic written over everyone's face.

It was painted across their faces like a birthmark and could not be missed by anyone observing the panic that was around them. Akbar and Muhammad knew everything was playing straight into their hands and that Norman's plan was going to pay off.

Thinking nothing of the harm that was being created around them both men demeanour changed from one of subservience to one of terror as they prepared for their attack on the Chinese President.

The men calmly watched as the police at all the entrances began to barricade themselves in from inside with desks, chairs and all sorts of debris they could gather in the minutes following the rocket attack.

Unknown to both men Susan and Simon were also in the building.

Both had agreed to work together to stop the attack. They both knew with great reluctance that they would be unable to report the planned attack. All they had was a collection of circumstantial evidence. Susan knew that MI5 and the Police would throw her out of the building and disregard any concerns that Susan had about the visit and the planned attack out as soon as they heard that Simon was involved.

His name was poison.

Furthermore, that would also want to know why she had not arrested Simon or killed him immediately.

Therefore, this meant that that both Susan and Simon would have to intervene on the day of the attack. But right now with riots and explosions erupting outside and rocket attacks smashing apart the building things did not look promising at all. In actual fact it looked more like the attack would be a success.

Susan felt completely powerless at this stage. How could a junior member of MI5 ever save the day?

How could she get that collection of old guard ever take her serious?

She could almost hear them saying 'now, now dear don't get yourself into a fluster'.

Her fortitude was Simon. He seemed to be completely convinced that they could make a difference and was going to save the day.

However, events took control and following the explosions and attacks erupting around them both followed everyone into the safe area. As they moved through the safe area they realised that had nowhere to tread on the floor. There were too many men women and children cocooned in the safe area.

Realising all were safe Susan and Simon both ran up the stairs in search of the two gunmen in the building. They both realised that the explosions and reaction of the police was all part of the build up for the attack on Chinese President and his Chinese entourage.

Simon led Susan back up away from the people safely hidden in the basement of the building.

As Simon came to the top of the stairs on the ground floor, he dived to the ground for cover as he watched one of the gunman jump out from a small utility room, which was a

dead end. He raised his gun into the face of one of the waiters trying to break out. The scene was one of panic and with the male waiter terrified and attempting to run away from his killer. The result was what Simon expected, he watched helpless as the gunman shot the waiter in the back at point-blank range.

He was dead in an instant.

The gunman then threw a powerful grenade towards the people held in the cocoon below.

It missed. It landed on the second step and did not roll down the stairs.

The grenade exploded throwing Simon back down the stairs into Susan. For a few seconds both lay crumpled up at the bottom of the stairs.

With the grenade, having exploded some people began crying in the basement. People were screaming. Someone shouted 'Down everyone Down' in Chinese. Others ran away from the stairs and huddled from the scene in panic. The sobbing of people could be heard. Everyone was scared.

Akbar and Muhammad were not afraid to die, that was clear to everyone from the outset of the attack. As the hostages lay in the basement both Akbar and Muhammad rushed around in a hive of activity as they searched feverishly for the Chinese President.

As they searched around the conference area, the men found their second victim. They walked up to a Chinese dignitary.

Akbar turned on the man; put a bullet through one ear at close range. He then turned in quick succession and shot four people. A bullet hit one man in the head killing

him instantly. Another hit a woman in the heart. Her prolonged death lasted a few minutes before she died. Another bullet stuck a cook in the neck. It severed his windpipe. The result saw him drowning in his own blood. The last remaining victim was shot in the chest and he died a few minutes later.

Akbar then pulled out a sword from his back that he had retrieved from behind a pipe at the rear of one of the radiators. He then severed one of the dead victims' head off. Picking it up in his hand he threw it down the stairs. Panic ensued below.

A few minutes later Akbar and Muhammad lifted one of the dead bodies and threw it down the stairs causing further panic in the basement.

The police team watched in horror as this unfolded before their eyes.

Muhammad chose another victim. This time it was one of the Policemen. Muhammad shot him with a single bullet shattering the bone in his knee that brought him crashing down to the ground. He then lifted up a rock from one of the displays bringing it crashing down onto his head killing him immediately.

There then followed a series of brutal murders. Several Policemen were killed in a horrific and brutal manner. Akbar and Muhammad were merciless. One after another, the unarmed police were killed. Unable to prevent the gunmen from gaining control all looked doomed.

Many reading about what happened in the press over the following days and weeks would be aghast at the brutality of the killings.

With great speed, the gunmen grabbed several police officers tying up four men on a bench. Muhammad then lifted up a sword and one by one, he hacked the heads of each police officer one after another.

Meanwhile Akbar set about shooting every single last remaining survivor as he ransacked the floor with bullets and small incendiary devices. Within twenty minutes, the remains of twenty police officers were killed and murdered.

In the basement behind a fallen down table lay the President, his wife and his daughter surrounded by at least ten guards armed with small weapons. All of his guards knew that they would have to defend their president to the death and would ensure that these maniacs would be taken out before anyone attacked the president of China.

The President whispered to his wife 'God in heaven, what madness is this?'

'How could this have happened, I thought these were peace loving people not war mongering savages'

The President began to panic, but a stroke of his hand from his daughter soon calmed him down.

Although he was safe, the President was unsure that he could really trust his guards to save his life and his family's life.

He was determined that whoever was making this attack was going to pay for this with their life. They would be taken back to China where his military would torture them to death. But that was the future. All that the President could think of was those awful pictures from the prisons in the west and the memos floating around his office about

justifying torture but he knew in his heart he could justify his revenge to himself and that is what he would do if he survived the attack.

TWENTY FOUR

Akbar and Muhammad had complete control of the ground floor. Anyone that was left in the conference room was either dead or dying. Below them, there was panic and mayhem. Both men could hear screams of panic and terror that was taking place below them.

Rumours began to spread around that the mob had broken through upstairs and it was only a matter of time before they were all lynched and killed.

Akbar and Muhammad set about checking that no-one had survived the ground floor as they set about preparing to advance down into the basement.

At the bottom of the stairs, Susan started to come round from the explosion that had knocked her out.

Opening her eyes she started to recollect what had happened.

Clearing the haze, she immediately reached down her jacket until she found her mobile. Within a few seconds she text to MI5 emergency line that the Chinese President was in imminent danger.

Within a few moments the local Scottish SAS were notified that a terrorist incident had taken place in Edinburgh and members of the counter revolutionary warfare wing (CRW) were taxed with '999' telling them that a real incident had taken place and that this was no exercise.

36 SAS troopers loaded into their converted white Land Rovers with their tactical CQB gear and set off for Edinburgh immediately.

Meanwhile Akbar and Muhammad unaware of this picked up one of the dead police officers' radio's and demanded to speak to 'Whoever is in charge'.

There words were spoken with a strong Asian accent to give the impression that they were Muslim's in an effort to further create linkages with extremists.

A few minutes later they started to speak to Chief Inspector Grant. The two men informed him that they were part of the Islam Liberation Army and began to spout out a series of demands.

Explaining the situation they demanded, their human and legitimate rights, freedom, autonomy and recognition of the Arab people within the UK, the release of all seventy five Arab prisoners in Guantanamo Bay detention camp and the realise of the 7/7 terrorist from Wormwood Prison. If no demands were met by six that evening, the Chinese President and his guests would be blown up.

In London, the PM was immediately informed and a few minutes later Cobra met chaired by the Prime Minister.

This small group of key players including the Minister of Defence and the Home Office Minister, a Civil Service Director and the Chief of Staff sat around a table, surrounded by various TV screen, which showed the latest pictures from Edinburgh, and various other places in and around Edinburgh. The meeting had been quickly set-up to discuss the situation and investigate their demands.

One the SAS troopers arrived in Edinburgh they began to prepare themselves. Driving to Carlton Hill, they immediately started to kit themselves out and ready for a fight. As they drove towards Edinburgh, the men began to mount their body armour on, prepare their Heckler & Koch MP5, and put on their lightweight boots that would be good for running and kicking in doors, S6 respirator so they could breathe through the CS gas and their NBC suit, to be worn under the body armour.

Anyone looking at the men getting ready would immediately have reacted with fear something that the SAS purposely wanted to achieve when attacking terrorist, which the SAS operative hoped could buy them just a few valuable seconds in battle.

Meanwhile as the SAS prepared themselves the Prime Minister announced that there was no way he was going to meet the demands of the terrorists.

Unaware of the agreement between his Foreign Office Minister and the French Minister of Foreign and European Affairs the call came through that the terrorists had changed their demands and were now only requesting a car to Edinburgh Airport and a plane ready to take them and the hostages out of the UK.

With the SAS moved into 'immediate action area' the commanding officer commenced his target appreciation work.

A small operational group of four men and one female officer began to go over all the intelligence on the building and compile a plan for a full on tactical assault on their tablets. All the troopers were now fully kited out meaning they wore all their assault gear

all the time, they had their primary and secondary weapons loaded and were ready for battle with bullets in the barrel and safety on.

Ten minutes later all of the troopers went through a full briefing of the assault plan so that everyone knew exactly what they were doing and could carry out the mission without any further orders.

At this point the wounded and injured Susan sent an e-mail to MI5, this time it was a low quality film of the Chinese entourage and guests huddled in a darkened room in the basement of the building. Having received this e-mail the commanding officer started to ping off a series of e-mails back to Susan who was able to a good account of the situation inside the building, and the number of hostages being held as well as their location. The best information the SAS got out of Susan was that the building was fitted with armour plated glass, which meant they would need to be blown in instead of beaten by sledgehammers as had been originally planned.

A message was passed onto the SAS that there had been an explosion in the service entrance and may well be forced open. A few minutes later, the Police Liaison Group set up a reconnaissance team who went down to the service entrance to investigate the battered door. They found that the garage door had been ripped apart by the rocket and was riddled with torn pieces of metal and concrete with lead lining cracked and locked doors damaged.

One police officer sneaked into the burned out entrance throwing a small camera devise that the command team immediately got access to.

Consequently, they found their entry point, which was quickly included into their plan, and the plan was changed for the strike team to attack.

At 3 PM, a window opened from the roof and two bodies are thrown out onto the crowd below. Akbar then phoned the police to tell them that somebody will be shot in thirty minutes if the terrorist demands are not met.

Meanwhile Akbar and Muhammad started to take several bodies upstairs to the roof having blocked off the hostages in the basement with three doors they had blasted off with their weapons earlier effectively sealing everyone off from escape.

At this point, the Prime Minister gave permission for the SAS to be used and sent in to resolve the situation; the SAS were already out of the door and moving into position.

The two men who had a constant supply of grenades in their pockets knew from their own training that if the police came they would come in hard and fast and would. However, they were not expecting the SAS to come.

They expected the police to make an attempt. They knew when the police hit they would come in hard. However, the Police would not aim to kill Akbar and Muhammad and they hoped to use this to their advantage. As it had been decades since the military had been involved Akbar and Muhammad did not expect or prepare for the SAS to come in.

While the negotiators talking to Akbar, the SAS moved into their final assault positions. Explosive charges were placed against the back door and silently pressed against the wreckage. The resulting explosion would signal the assault and confuse Akbar and Muhammad. Men would rush through the exploded entrance and rush up to the first floor

balcony, their job, to clear the floor. Another team would move in from ground level, and use an explosive entry charge to blow in the back door, their job was to follow the explosion in, 'flash bang' the room, clear the ground floor and free the captives in the cellar. Another team would use frame charges to enter the from the roof.

The attack began as planned with a massive explosion erupting from the basement. When the troopers rushed in they quickly charged up a narrow staircase towards the ground floor where Akbar stood preparing to meet the SAS troopers. As the troopers came up the stairs, Akbar opened fire with his assault rifle spaying the stairs with gunfire.

The troopers coming up the stairs immediately dropped to the ground avoiding the volley of gunfire. One of the troopers in the rear immediately threw a small hand grenade up the stairs forcing Akbar back into cover. This allowed each of the troopers to shoot up the stairs engulfing the area in gunfire.

Whilst clearing the entrance Akbar ran past some SAS troopers. One trooper fired at him but missed and he ran off into a room. Several bullets ripped apart a wall covering it with small holes. Two troopers immediately flash banged the room and went in after him however, they did not have torches and could not see him so they called for two more men with flashlights to search the room. They found him hiding on a sofa with his gun in his hand. Entering the room a smoke grenade was hurled into the room quickly followed by the four troopers. Targeting Akbar one of the troops blasted away at Akbar. A volley of bullets peppered his chest killing him instantly.

'First Terrorist down, repeat first terrorist down' was the call that came across the radio.

Muhammad who was guarding the entrance to the captives in the basement turned around and quickly realised that this was not a police raid but a full scale military assault.

In the panic and confusion of the explosions, Muhammad quickly lifted one of the doors blocking the captives below and started to pull out his grenades ready to hurl them on the trapped people below. He was able to throw one grenade down the stairs before one of the troopers shot him with two bullets that threw him across the staircase. A second later, another grenade fell out of his hand exploding. The resultant explosion threw parts of his body across the room.

Below them, the captives watched in horror as a grenade came down the stairs. It sounded like a football falling down the stairs.

Everyone looked towards the stairs and time seemed to freeze.

Susan was the first to see the grenade

She screaming out 'grenade!'

Simon reacted faster by jumping on the grenade when it landed at the base of the stairs. Sacrificing himself, he saved the Chinese entourage and the other dignitaries trapped in the basement.

A few minutes later the doors were lifted off the entrance and several troopers came down the stairs.

The Lead trooper screamed out 'move, move, and move!'

One after another, the captives were rushed out of the building and to safety.

A few minutes later, a message came through to the COBRA meeting announcing that the terrorists had been killed and the Chinese President had been saved.

Two terrorists had been killed but over a dozen police officers had been killed.

EPILOGUE

'I will get this' said Adrian Smith in an assuming manner. He called over the waitress in the airport lounge.

He pointed to the four drinks on the table and a few seconds later four drinks were ushered over to him. He gave the young girl twenty pounds and then quickly dismissed her.

A few minutes later, there was a call for their flight and all four men escorted by several mean looking men walked off to their private entrance where their small jet lay waiting for them to fly back to London.

Adrian Smith beckoned Tony and Norman forward while a 'personal assistant' followed laden with files jammed into a large black folder.

As they neared the door all four men stopped as news came on reporting on the latest developments in Chinese – European relationships. All four men smiled in knowledge that the plan had worked out.

They were happy that Chinese forces had withdrawn the hand of friendship in the Middle East and Chinese and NATO forces were now activity involved in routing out Islamic groups across Afghanistan, Iraq, Tibet and North West Pakistan.

Furthermore, draconian legislation had been passed outlawing several groups in England and Wales, increasing stop and search provisions and the ability to lock people up for up to 80 days if they were suspected of any terrorism links.

'Well done everyone' said Adrian in a tone that made Tony and Norman feel as though his team had discovered the cure for cancer.

Norman made some sort of confused noise that sounded as though he was thanking Adrian for passing him the water at a dining table.

Then as they walked out across the runway all four men grimaced as a North Atlantic breeze blew across their faces.

For some reason Tony started to think about Susan and her sudden departure. She had left a note to say this life was not for her as neither of them could be happy living a life of pretence. She was off to discover tranquillity and serenity helping run food kitchens in Malawi. She knew it would be tough but she wanted to give something back to help those who were less fortunate.

Tony though thought this was more of an irritant and could think of nothing more than having to wait on a bunch of crude harsh people riddled with the after-effects of poverty. He thought her life would not only now be mediocre it would be a massive upheaval in his life too.

He decided when he got back to London he would hitch up with one of the new generation of young women joining MI6 and take his picking from there.

Leaving the crowds behind, the four men walked across the runway towards their aircraft that was preparing to take off. The men could see the captain preparing the aircraft as they boarded the aircraft.

Once inside a very tall blond airhostess welcomed them. Each man began to walk through the interior of aircraft. Selecting a seat each they all sat down in four tan leather seats.

Adrian was the first to sit down and made himself comfortable in one of the seats. With its beige sidewalls, Cream headliner and Beige carpet he immediately pulled out one of those dual fold-down executive tables with its leather inserts covered in high gloss veneer. It looked like something out of Dallas or Dynasty. With all men seated, the tall leggy blond hostess took everyone's order and then moved off towards mirrored aft dividers and sliding doors. A few minutes later the engines increased their speed and the captain announced over the radio that they were taking off.

Once airborne Adrian pulled out the Washington Post. Reading the headline a great smile spread across his face as he read about Abdulla Megahit was being transferred from Clairvaux Prison to the UK. At last, they had the bastard.

He looked at his watch closed his eyes and fell asleep dreaming of the great plaudits he would achieve from the Prime Minister once he got home.

A few hours later Adrian woke from his slumber feeling sick. Really sick. A fit of coughing was followed by a multitude of aches and pains. As he came around he realised that he was no longer on the airplane sat in his comfortable seat but he was strapped to a chair next to Norman and Tony. Both men looked in a sorry state.

“Welcome Mr Smith, did you enjoy your little nap”

Before his eyes stood Susan.

“I would like you to watch this TV programme, I think you will find this very interesting. As will your two friends Norman and Tony.”

The TV programme started.

Martin Brooks smiled at the camera sat next to the Prime Minister.

‘Prime Minister Freeman could I start by going back to that extraordinary moment a yesterday when you knew that you had found out that MI5 and MI6 had been colluding together to assassinate the premier of China. ...’

A few minutes later Susan walked up to the three men and told them that they would be leaving here dead or they would be going to prison. The question they needed to answer was would they want to die honourable or be castrated by the legal system and the media.

She then placed the gun in Adrian’s hand.

‘It’s your call minister’ she said.....

And then she left

A few seconds later three shots echoed through the deserted warehouse where the three men were being held.