

**WATERLOO**  
Security Novels Series - Episode III



**John M Upton**

***The Episodes of the Security Novels Series:***

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

**Coming Soon:**

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

***Official Website:***

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



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

***Alternatively, you can contact the author at:***

**[jmupton2000@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jmupton2000@yahoo.co.uk)**

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

***Thank you.***

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

## Waterloo

The footsteps of hard soled expensive shoes echoed around the warm dry tube platform of Mornington Crescent Underground Station. The blue and cream tiled walls, still shiny following a recent refurbishment, reflected the light afforded by the neon tubes mounted above from the ceiling as a lone passenger dressed in a long overcoat and carrying a brown leather briefcase walked slowly down the length of the southbound platform, towards the far end where the dark tunnel portal contrasted with the bright surfaces around it.

It was an early morning in late April, Easter had just finished and there was only a couple of days left until the arrival of May but already the weather was beginning to become hot and humid in London, an effect multiplied in the depths of the city's extensive deep level Underground Railway or Tube system.

The orange digits of the next train indicator flashed up a service to Morden in two minutes, another to Kennington in four and a further service to Morden in seven. The waiting passenger watched as the second and third trains expected alternated on the second line of the two-line display as if to pass the time.

The distant echo of further footsteps, probably on the other platform just through the cross passage behind him went by unnoticed as he shuffled his feet and looked on into the distant tunnel portal looking for any signs of the inbound service.

With the display now showing just one minute to the first train, the passenger became more alert and stepped forward in anticipation, standing with his feet just over the yellow safety line painted a foot inside the platform edge.

The build up of forced air through the platform preceded the train's arrival along with the sound of it passing over the point work at Camden Town Junction just a short distance further up the line. Just then the display registered that the next train was approaching, yet there appeared to be no further passengers waiting on the platform so he assumed that today was, at least for the moment, going to be a nice quiet run into work.

As the red painted front end of the 1995 Tube Stock train emerged from the tunnel portal at the opposite end of the platform, the accompanying noise of brakes and electric motors covered the approach of a second person on the platform, it wasn't until too late that the intending passenger realised that he had company.

With the leading end of the train rapidly approaching, the passenger was suddenly aware of a hand being placed firmly to the middle of his back.

"Mind the gap," a mystery voice whispered in the passenger's ear before he felt the sudden force of a strong arm shove him off the edge of the platform directly into the path of the train.

In an instant the driver applied the emergency brakes but it was too late as the loud thud of the passenger hitting the front of the train confirmed, before he vanished beneath the wheels of the train's leading bogie.

The mystery passenger on the platform stared directly at the driver through the shattered window glass, before smiling politely, readjusting his hat and then walking calmly away.

-----

"Chief Superintendent, you seem to think that the British Government has some sort of bottomless chequebook just so that you can enhance your facilities, which must surely be the best in the City by now."

The Chief looked up from his notes with dismay, if there was one thing he really hated it was smart arsed politicians. He had been dreading this Government Commons Committee Meeting on Crime and Crime Funding since he was basically summoned to it a few weeks beforehand.

Still referred to as the Commander despite the fact he was now Chief Superintendent of the London Transport division of the Department of National Security & Civil Defence, the Chief stared the junior Home Office minister in the eyes with one of his trademark glares and opened with the facts.

"Minister let me make a few facts quite clear to you. Since I assumed Command of the London Transport Division in late December when we took over from the old British Transport Police, I inherited all of their resources, however I did not receive anything additional to that except the new head office in Holborn and an old single deck bus for a mobile operations unit that is so old and second hand we had to tie the exhaust pipe back on the other day with bayler twine".

The various officials, observers, MP's and members of the press gathered in the Committee Room in the House of Commons laughed quietly, the Commander's speeches were usually as entertaining as they were accurate and this was no exception, drawing his punches was a skill he never learned.

"As a result..." he continued pointing a biro in the Junior Minister's direction with menace "... I have just two hundred and fifty officers to cover over five hundred rail, bus and tube stations plus all the facilities, garages, depots and other sites that fall under our jurisdiction. In addition we are going to be overstretched next week when we have the Anti-Capitalist March and Demonstration in Central London on the 1st of May, a situation that is also affecting my colleague here".

He indicated his opposite number from the Metropolitan Division, Chief Superintendent Tandy who was trying to emulate the Commander's stare at the Junior Minister without much effect.

"It is not possible to supply any further funds from existing budgets" the Junior Minister insisted but the Commander knew lies when he saw them, especially from politicians.

"Can I quote you on that when it all goes up the swanney on May 1st?" the Commander asked with slight suggested menace.

The junior Minister looked slightly nervous and shuffled his papers equally nervously whilst the Commander maintained his stare upon him, however the Minister's discomfort proved to be short lived when a new voice interrupted the proceedings.

"What do you need Commander?" Everyone in the room turned towards the source, a distinguished gentleman in his late fifties who had been sitting back in a quiet darker corner of the room almost unnoticed by those present, as he leaned forward to speak, his moustached face came into the light proper.

"Well its resources basically, manpower and to a certain extent equipment". The Commander knew this gentleman well but as yet hadn't noticed his presence and raised an eyebrow in surprise as he replied.

"Then you shall have it" came the reply.

"But Sir..." the Junior Minister started to splutter in protest despite the gentleman being his superior and having more power in his little finger than the Junior Minister had in his entire body.

"Lad, this gentleman here" he indicated the Commander who was now looking slightly more relaxed "is probably one of the best Security Officers in the country and when he says he needs extra resources, as far as I am concerned he is going to get them all right?"

The Junior Minister still looked confused but he soon capitulated when the gentleman issued a little threat in order to assure compliance.

"Of course you could always apply for that transfer to the Falkland Islands Bureau".

Acting quickly the Junior Minister turned to the Commander and quickly negotiated the situation, "Extra officers will take time to train but you can have the extra funding today".

"That's a relief" the Commander replied "because the new bus I ordered for the Mobile Unit is being delivered next week".

-----

Divisional Superintendent Tracy Caverner, the Deputy Commanding Officer of the London Transport Division of the Department of National Security & Civil Defence leaned forward and peered underneath the front of the tube train which had stopped a few yards shy of the end of Mornington Crescent's southbound Northern Line platform.

"Oooo nasty....." she commented seeing the entangled mess of human flesh and heavily bloodstained clothing that was strewn throughout the lower front and underside of the train, blood dripping into a pool in the suicide pit trench located beneath the centre of the running rails.

She had seen blood and gore before in her job, she had been doing this for over twelve years now, it was her soon to be husband and Commanding Officer, the Commander who was the squeamish one but he wasn't here although Tracy was to soon discover that he would probably wish he was when he discovered who it was entangled under there.

"Has he got any i.d. on him?" Tracy asked the London Fire Brigade officer who was trying to extricate the mess.

"His wallet is stuck up behind the leading traction motor, I'll try and lever it out" he replied.

Tracy jumped down onto the track to watch the operation in progress, a necessary procedure in case of any criminal proceedings that could arise if this turned out to be the result of fowl play, however not wanting to get her official Security Service dark blue uniform ruined, she stood back and let the Fire Brigade officers get on with their job.

"Here you go love" the fire officer announced handing her the badly scrumpled, torn and oil stained leather wallet which she opened not really expecting to find anything interesting, however she was in for a surprise.

The Commander switched his personal radio back on and called the control room "Lima Tango One to control receiving over?"

"Lima Tango Control, go ahead Sir".

"Anything happening whilst I was off air?"

"Person under a train at Mornington Crescent, the Deputy Chief is on site with that one and a fight at Euston probably football supporters".

"Right thank you". The Commander walked into the front entrance of Westminster Underground Station, recently extensively extended and rebuilt with the construction of the Jubilee Line Extension there.

While passing down the successive escalators that interweaved down through the main tall hallway to the lower platforms of the Jubilee Line, the Commander called Tracy.

"Lima Tango One to Lima Tango Two receiving over".

"Go ahead" Tracy responded as she clambered back up onto the platform, where behind her the Fire Brigade Officers were just preparing to remove the body.

"Heard you have a person under a train, what's occurring".

"Yes and you won't believe who it is".

The officer guarding the entrance to Mornington Crescent station acknowledged the Commander as he arrived, having had to catch a bus from Euston as the line was shut due to the body downstairs.

Making his way through to the lifts, the Commander was soon at platform level, the bright modern lighting in the clean cream tiled passageways reflecting off the metallic features of his uniform such as the gold numerals on the epaulettes, the buttons and the braiding.

"Welcome to London Underground" a ghostly female voice announced, the pre-recorded greeting echoing around the tubular walls and adding eeriness to the atmosphere.

It was on the platform level itself that the Commander found the only activity, several London Fire Brigade officers, a couple of paramedics and three Security Department officers including his soon to be wife and Deputy, Tracy.

Tracy smiled at seeing the Commander's arrival, although he was very much a 'hands on' officer who liked to be in the thick of the action at the front line, it was unusual to see him voluntarily attend a crime scene where blood and gore was involved but this was very different as on this occasion the victim was an old acquaintance.

"Morning Love, err I mean Sir" Tracy called, a few chuckles were heard from the Fire Brigade Officers on the track, although even they knew about these two's relationship, it had been the talk of the City's emergency services and indeed the London Evening Standard newspaper for the past four months.

"Hello, I heard an old friend had dropped in" the Commander replied cheerily.

"No lesser mortal than the former Home Secretary the Right Honourable Trevor Sharman MP".

The Commander knelt down on the edge of the platform and looked down beneath the front of the train although the gore meant he didn't look too closely.

"Is he dead?" the Commander asked hopefully.

"As a doornail" one of the Fire Officers replied equally cheerfully.

"Couldn't have happened to a nicer bloke!" the Commander responded with delight, "almost worth disrupting the Northern Line just to lose the irritating git".

"Still think highly of him then?" Tracy asked, their paths had crossed before and the Commander had sent Sharman to jail the previous September and had had various contretemps with him over the previous fifteen years, the news he was now no more was music to the Commander's ears.

"Now please tell me this was something nice and easy like suicide or accident," the Commander asked staring at Tracy as if urging the correct response from her.

"I hate to be the bearer of bad tidings"

"But...."

"The driver saw someone push him deliberately off the platform into his path".

"Drat, that means a ruddy murder investigation" the Commander muttered in irritation, "Ah well better grab the CCTV footage and call an investigation squad together.

"Briefing room in one hour?" Tracy asked.

"Aye" the Commander responded as he got up and together they walked back down the length of the platform and down the passageway that led back to the lift landing where an empty lift car was already waiting.

As the doors closed and the lift began its upward ascent, they took the opportunity for a quick kiss before the doors opened again and they exited into the ticket hall.

"So who do you reckon did it then?" Tracy asked as they emerged out into the bright sunshine of a late spring morning, only the roar of passing traffic spoilt the effect somewhat.

"First impressions, anyone who he upset in the last twenty years which means practically everyone including at least two ex-wives".

"Well that'll narrow it down" Tracy mused as they approached her marked Security Service motorcycle, the chrome work contrasting with the red livery, "Fancy a lift?" she added.

The Commander was prepared to face many things but balancing on the back of a motorbike, even if it was a Harley Davidson Electroglide and Tracy had three under sixteen girl's motor cross county championships to her name, that was another matter.

"I'll take the bus."

-----

The ring of the telephone could be heard throughout the complex of narrow rooms and corridors that made up the old Victorian offices, once a town house but long ago converted.

An elderly gentlemen, tweed suit and receding silver hair emerged from behind one of the maroon painted wooden doors and walked down the corridor towards the small room nearest the front of the building.

He picked up the phone and with a dialect and manner now long since disappeared from modern life he answered in an authoritative tone.



"Waterloo 1312".

There were a few moments as the caller relayed their message, before the gentlemen took a deep breath and replied.

"Let the players assemble". He put the phone back on its hook and turned and nodded to a second man, younger and more athletically built who had joined him at the telephone before they together returned back down the corridor and into the office from where the elderly gentleman had emerged a few moments before.

The solid wooden door closed with an elderly creak and the corridor was silent once more.

-----

'Seek Assistance' said the illuminated sign on ticket barrier number 55 at Holborn Underground Station. The Commander looked down at his warrant card, the magnetic strip on the back of it should have opened it when he put it across the yellow magnetic reader plate but not today.

Instinctively he followed the standard Tube Commuter procedure, try the next gate along but gate number 56 said exactly the same thing, much to the Commander's annoyance.

"Terry!" the Commander called to the bright blue uniformed Underground Station Assistant nearby, "Barrier 55 is on the fritz again!"

"Have you tried the one next to it?" Terry asked philosophically.

The Commander placed his warrant card back onto barrier 56's magnetic reader with the resultant shrieking beep once more re-telling the story.

"That's odd, those warrant cards of yours never fail" Terry commented as he came over to examine the problem, taking the card from the Commander, he placed it on barrier 54 with the same effect.

"Worked yesterday" the Commander commented as he realised that he had not had to use it today, he was waved through at Westminster and Euston earlier and the barriers at Mornington Crescent were open when he was there.

Terry looked at the magnetic strip on the back of the smart card portion of the Commander's Warrant Card. Since the Transport Division moved into their new offices directly opposite Holborn Station last December, these cards had been used without problems thousands of times without any problems.

A check by attempting to use the card on each exit barriers in the ticket hall all yielded the same result indicating that the problem was more likely attributable to the card rather than the station's equipment.

"Ah well just have to do it the old fashioned way" the Commander mused as Terry let

him through the gate using his Staff Pass.

The Commander communicated his thanks as at last he was out into the bustling central London street outside, the roar of traffic and bustling pedestrians a familiar environment across the city.

It was just a short walk across the Kingsway road to the Security Department building situated on the corner of Kingsway and High Holborn, the modern glass fronted building contrasted with the older stately stone architecture of many of the buildings thereabouts.

Once past the ever eagle eyed receptionist who insisted he sign in regardless of the fact he was the Divisional Chief, he made his way upstairs to the main control room situated on the top floor.

Dominated by the large view screen at the front of the room, the control room was equipped with a number of computerised control desks at which sat despatch officers communicating with the division's officers and other agencies across the Greater London area.

At the main control desk sat Lieutenant Commander Simon Fuller, the division's head of I.T. who was busily calling up CCTV footage from some of the many thousands of cameras situated on roads, in stations and at other key locations across the capital.

"Fuller, check this for me will, its bugged" the Commander called as he entered the room throwing his warrant card across only for Fuller to drop it on the floor, he was never known for his athletic skills.

He picked it up and looked it over fairly casually until something evidently caught his eye and he started to examine it more carefully including holding part of it up to the light from the main screen at the front of the room.

"Comma....." he began but by then the Commander had disappeared again. Looking up towards the digital clock at the front of the room, he realised that the briefing was starting imminently so gathered up various pieces of paper, his laptop computer that never left his side and the Commanders warrant card and made for the door.

Outside in the corridor there was the usual bustle of people moving around between offices, the briefing room however was at the far end on the right and Fuller was forced to fight his way through the human traffic in order to make speedy progress.

By the time he arrived in the darkened briefing room, more of a lecture theatre in design, the Commander had already begun.

"Early this morning at Mornington Crescent Underground Station Northern Line southbound platform, a fatality occurred whereby a member of the public had a mid air argument with the front end of a tube train and lost".

The Commander noticed Fuller and merely shrugged, not in the least surprised he was the last one in before continuing.

"Sadly it isn't as easy as that, the victim is believed to have been deliberately pushed off the platform, we have the driver's witness statement that he saw an unidentified man deliberately sidle up to the victim and push him off".

"Who was the victim?" one of the officers in the audience asked.

"You'll like this" the Commander replied indicating to Fuller to switch on the video screen behind him. As the Security Service mug shot appeared on screen the Commander continued.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, the deceased, one Mr Trevor Sharman, 58 years old and a former Member of Parliament, also at one time the Home Secretary. Utter slime ball and cretin extraordinaire, however his main claim to fame was that in September of last year I nicked him for a variety of crimes including conspiracy to murder and aiding and abetting, and cheerfully packed his sorry backside off to jail".

"If he is in jail then what was he doing at Mornington Crescent this morning?" Fuller asked.

"Apart from getting run over by a train, well he got himself a very expensive lawyer and managed to plead himself to the judge, an old school pal of his as it happened and got six months in an Open Prison in Sussex, whereby he claimed he was suffering some fatal incurable disease and he was let out early on medical grounds. Needless to say the incurable disease mysteriously vanished about an hour after he was released".

No surprises for the audience, after all Sharman was a politician and liar, the Commander had crossed swords with him on a number of occasions over the last fifteen years and was obviously delighted to see he had met a sticky end.

"Fuller, what do you have?"

Fuller made his way over to the front of the room and opened his laptop computer. After a few seconds he was using it to display the CCTV footage from Mornington Crescent station that he had accessed directly from the Control Room a few minutes earlier.

"As you can see, this is the main view we have of the southbound platform" he announced "There is our victim at the south end, no-one else is around at this point" he switched the views and continued with the briefing, "Now we also have views from the lifts, the passageway to the platforms, the northbound platform and the Ticket Hall".

The audience watched as the camera views changed, following Sharman's route through the station from arrival in the Ticket Hall right through to standing on the station platform.

"Right here is the best bit" Fuller added. The audience all paid close attention as an unidentifiable gentleman, predominantly dressed in black overcoat and wearing a wide brimmed hat, stepped forward from the cross passage to the other platform

nearest Sharman and walked purposefully towards him.

Then with the train appearing in sight in the right hand side of the screen, Sharman was seen as he was deliberately pushed hard off the platform into the path of the oncoming train, disappearing out of sight as the train made an abrupt stop.

Then the mysterious assassin was seen to calmly adjust his hat and disappear through the cross passageway the way he had come.

"Right our Mr Mystery here is the problem, all the time he kept himself out of direct sight of any of our cameras, arriving and departing on trains from the northbound line platform, the hat is the main thing that means we can't see his face" Fuller added as the screen showed the assassin boarding a northbound train just a few moments after the events that had led to the initiation of this enquiry.

The Commander took over the briefing again as Fuller sat down, "Right one thing we can be certain of is that this case will generate a lot of publicity particularly from the lesser quality tabloids, the official line is no comment and Metropolitan Division is putting officers on patrol outside Sharman's wife's house, that of his two ex wives and we think at least one mistress".

"Kept himself busy didn't he?" Tracy commented as she entered the room.

"Discretion is also required on this one, I know we all hated this guy and personally I couldn't care less who killed him but there will be pressure from above to get this one so we shall avoid going in mob handed".

The look on the faces of the officers present sort of read 'Us? Mob handed? never!' if anything the most likely person to kick any doors in was the Commander himself who certainly preferred the direct no-nonsense approach to his work.

"Any other business?" he asked. There was a general murmur but nothing came of it.

"Right then lets get on with it". With that the Commander made his way out of the briefing room and back down the hallway to his office where he was joined by Tracy and Fuller.

The Commander's office that he shared with Tracy was noticeably tidier than normal; evidently Tracy was at last having an effect on the Commander's usually chaotic office. The old enamelled cove panel station sign from Holborn Underground station Piccadilly Line platform that Tracy had bought the Commander last Christmas was mounted on the wall above the Commander's head, whilst a small model of a London Bus sat on his desk adjacent to the rarely used computer.

Tracy's desk on the other hand was a complete contrast, neat, tidy, everything in the right place and a computer with copious numbers of post-it notes stuck down each side of the monitor in a neatly organised fashion.

The Commander looked out of the curved windows at the traffic below for a few moments before sitting himself down behind his desk.

"Tracy, we'll go and see the merry widow in a minute, Fuller I want you to pull out the CCTV tapes for every station north of Mornington Crescent, chummy must have got off that train somewhere".

Fuller nodded in acknowledgement.

"Oh and what about my warrant card?" the Commander enquired.

"Eh? Oh yes that, its a fake".

"What?"

"Dud, phoney, false, counterfeit, straight banana....."

"I think we get the picture" Tracy cut in "but how?"

Fuller leaned forward and pointed out some of the details on the card's surface, "Basically its an exact copy, very nicely done and very professional, look at the replication of the security patterning strip, there is only one or two people in London who could have done this".

"Trouble for them was they cannot replicate the magnetic smart card part I suppose" the Commander concluded.

"With your permission I would like to show this to a mate of mine in the Fraud Squad, he might have a few ideas and I'll need a list of all your movements since the last time it worked properly, may be able to work out how the switch was done" Fuller replied.

"Yeah sure, go for it." the Commander responded before Fuller left closing the door behind him.

"Bright enthusiastic lad isn't he" Tracy commented, "No wonder my sister likes him".

"Are those two officially an item now?" the Commander asked.

"Officially they are keeping it under wraps but you can't keep these things from a twin sister you know" Tracy replied, the two sisters regularly met up to exchange gossip and news and knew each other too well to be able to keep any secrets from each other.

"Oh that reminds me..." Tracy added "wedding dress lady phoned, I have my final fitting this afternoon so you are on your own after lunch".

"Can't I come with you?"

"No, its tradition".

"Right then" the Commander announced picking up a pile of papers from the desk and shoving them unceremoniously into his uniform jacket pocket, "in the meantime lets go and see the merry widow".

-----

It was a very well appointed board room in traditional early twentieth century mahogany lined style with pictures on the wall complete with their brass plaques. In the centre of the room a long antique solid wood table, as polished and well cared for as the day it was made some one hundred years earlier, dominated the scene.

Around the table that was at the window end of the room sat two elderly gentlemen, all neatly dressed in full suit, waistcoat and tie despite the hot almost summer weather sunshine that the city was experiencing. A third gentleman, the one that had earlier taken the phone call was stood at the tall windows looking out onto the busy traffic of Piccadilly down below.

"Sir Robert, when did our young friend say he would be joining us?" the gentleman at the window asked, turning towards the man seated at the very end of the table.

The man he addressed as Sir Robert looked up at the big carriage clock that stood on the mantelpiece nearby, the deep ticking of its 19th century mechanism the only other sound in the room.

"I believe he was expected about ten minutes ago".

At that point one half of the large double doors at the opposite end of the room opened and a young man in his early twenties entered carrying a smart almost new black briefcase which he placed on the table, and took a seat between the two gentlemen who where seated.

The first gentleman stood opposite the young man and without speaking prompted him to begin.

"Right, the demise of our mutual acquaintance went as planned, our other mutual friend is out and about and awaits our instructions".

"Is he under our complete control?" the first gentleman asked.

"Absolutely, he is under the impression that he is working for the intelligence services and that all this is part of his bail conditions".

"Heh, heh, what a fool" the gentleman seated at the table remarked.

The young man looked on a little nervously, a point picked up by the first gentleman.

"Something bothering you?"

"Well there may be one small problem which might interfere with our plans".

"Which is?"

"The investigating officer is the Chief Superintendent Commanding Officer of the

London Transport division".

"What of it?"

"Better known to all and sundry as the Commander?"

"Mmmm, I want you to find out everything you can about him and bring those details to me, today."

"Right away" the younger man responded as he got up to leave.

The two older gentlemen watched as he left and waited until the door was closed before the seated gentleman spoke.

"You are aware of his reputation aren't you?"

"What the Commander? Oh yes but everyone has something in their past we can use, even he".

-----

"Very nice work, definitely one of Lenny's" Commander Robert Harman of the Fraud Squad commented looking over the Commander's fake warrant card almost with admiration for the forgers work.

"Whose Lenny?" Fuller asked seated on the other side of the desk.

"Lenny Smith, old boy works out of Southwark, best forger in the business. He's been creating fake documents since the 1950's, the only time we ever proved anything against him he was given a suspended sentence in return for doing some paperwork for Special Branch".

"Busy fellow" Fuller commented.

"Rumour had it he did some passports and documents for MI5 amongst others, he must be in his eighties now".

"Where can I find him?"

"He used to operate out of a flat above a jewellers in Lower Marsh Lane, near the new Tube Station, perhaps you should pay him a visit".

-----

"42 Fowler Gardens" Tracy announced looking up at the Georgian facade of the row of houses that lined one of the more higher status suburbs of north west London "somehow the name doesn't seem to match the classiness of the architecture".

"What, all fake plasterwork and badly designed double glazing?" the Commander added looking at the front of number 42 with distain, "Ah well better see the merry

widow I suppose".

Standing on the patterned mosaic doorstep with its cast iron boot scrapers standing guard either side of the doorframe, the Commander reached forward and pulled out the bell ringer, the sound of the national anthem in slight off-tune chimes filtered through from within.

The door was opened by a slightly tired looking lady in her fifties with what seemed to be a permanently worried expression as the Commander stepped forward and made his enquiry.

"Are you Mrs Lydia Sharman?" he asked politely.

"Yes?"

"We are here about your husband Mr Trevor Sharman".

"Oh that ratbag, you had better come in then" she replied opening the door wider. Tracy and the Commander followed her through the hall and into the front living room.

Upon entering, Tracy noted the empty vodka bottle lying on the sofa and motioned to the Commander to point it out.

"Mrs Sharman...." the Commander began.

"Was about to be ex Mrs Sharman actually, been saved the bother now".

"Have you been made aware of the circumstances of your almost ex-husband's death?" Tracy enquired.

"The stupid sod committed suicide I suppose, good riddance to the old bastard!" she replied semi drunk.

"We regret to inform you that the death is being treated as murder", the Commander announced as sympathetically as he was capable of.

Mrs Sharman sat up with a decidedly uncomfortable look on her face, as much as she hated her husband, the thought of the implications in murder didn't bare thinking about.

"Do you have any idea who might have had a grudge against your husband?" Tracy asked.

"How long have you got?" came the reply, which was exactly what the Commander was thinking, "There is one thing though, he was writing his memoirs, good chance he may have upset someone with what he was writing".

"Did he have a manuscript?" the Commander asked now intrigued by this potential new line of enquiry.



"It would be over at his flat in St. John's Wood".

-----

Dusty documents, old manila folders and elderly computers dominated the darkened room in which Steven Redman, the younger man who was in the boardroom earlier, was seated. On the small wooden desk in front of him were spread out various papers, some original and some old photocopies intermixed with old newspaper clippings and print off's from microfilm records.

Steven scratched his head and yawned, the clock on the wall above him, barely lit by glow from the desk lamp in front of him registered that it was now late afternoon, although it could have been anytime outside as the basement location of the room meant there was no light from outside.

It was with a look of sudden realisation that Stephen arose from the seat and went over to a computer terminal on the far side of the room, a darkened corner from which only the screen provided any illumination.

Putting on his small square gold framed reading glasses; he proceeded to access computerised records from a number of sources. Something clearly puzzled him as he scrolled through endless lists and records on the computer for almost an hour.

"Are, there you are..." he murmured tapping a part of the information on the screen in triumph. Quickly the elderly dot-matrix printer burst into life with its typically noisy process, printing out a lengthy continuous ream of data before stopping.

Tearing off the print out from the roll, Stephen looked down the list of data before collecting it together with the files and papers on the desk. These were crammed into the briefcase, straining at the catches with the quantity of the material that was being carried.

Turning off the desk lamp, the room returned to total darkness, only a brief shaft of light through the door as Stephen left, closing the door behind him.

-----

"Well this just got complicated...." the Commander commented as he examined the forced and open doorway of Sharman's expensive flat situated in the exclusive St John's Wood area of the city.

"Looks like Mr Sharman had some uninvited guests" Tracy responded surveying the badly wrecked interior of the hallway and adjoining rooms. All around, drawers and cupboards were open, belongings and papers strewn about and furniture up tipped.

"Lima Tango Zero Two to Lima Tango Control" Tracy called on her personal radio.

"Lima Tango Control, go ahead".

"Can we have a scene of crime forensic team to 14b Mid River View Court please".

The Commander bent down to examine a laptop computer that had been almost completely buried in the strewn debris, removing a handkerchief from his pocket, he picked up the machine and examined it carefully.

"What do you think?" he asked.

Tracy came over and looked at the laptop computer in the Commander's hand, "Could be worth a look" she commented.

"Definitely one for Fuller to work on, I can barely switch the damn things on without making a cock up of it!" the Commander responded, "Where's the safe?"

"Hmm?" Tracy looked up from the pile of papers she was examining.

"All politicians have a safe, it is in their nature to hide secrets".

At that point Fuller arrived and poked his head through the front room door.

"Cleaning lady's day off?" he joked surveying the wreckage making Tracy giggle.

"Here" the Commander handed Fuller the laptop "something for you to play with".

Fuller went back out into the hall with the laptop as the Commander looked behind a painting on the wall, "Here it is!" he called out.

Removing the painting revealed the safe, its steel door mounted within the wall, the door slightly ajar. Carefully with the end of a pen, the Commander opened it, inside a few banknotes and a couple of empty files were all that was left, no chance here of finding anything.

"Sir!" Fuller called from the Hallway "something you need to see".

Tracy was first into the hall having been in the kitchen area out the back. When the Commander joined her, they saw Fuller kneeling down by the hall table looking over the damaged telephone which had been knocked on to the floor by the intruders.

"What's occurring?" the Commander asked.

"This" Fuller responded with clear concern as he held up the broken receiver from which the speaking part had become detached. In amongst the wires and components was a small round component that didn't seem to fit.

"Is that what I think it is?" Tracy enquired squinting her eyes to get a closer look.

"Ladies and gentlemen, meet a class 2 telephone listening device, our victim was being bugged by someone" Fuller announced using a pen to point out the alien component in the telephone receiver unit.

"Special Branch or MI5?" the Commander enquired understandably concerned by this peculiar turn of events.

"My money is on the spooks, chances are the rest of the place is bugged as well, I'll have a look around" Fuller responded putting the damaged receiver down carefully and making his way off into the front room.

"Aren't you supposed to be somewhere love?" the Commander asked Tracy.

She looked back somewhat perplexed until in horror she realised where she was supposed to be that afternoon. Looking at her watch in sudden realisation at the time, she made a rapid exit pausing only briefly to kiss the Commander before she left, the front door banging shut in her wake.

"Where has Commander Caverner gone?" Fuller enquired having returned to see why the front door had just been shut with a massive bang.

"Wedding dress fitting" the Commander responded "By the way any luck with my warrant card and your mate from the Fraud Squad?"

"Oh yes, he reckons it could well be the work of an old boy based in Southwark, er Lenny something".

"Lenny Smith?" the Commander asked clearly recalling some long forgotten memory.

"Yep that's the chap, I was going to pay him a visit".

"I'll do it, you wait here for the forensics mob and see what you can find on that laptop" with that the Commander left fairly swiftly.

"Hang on don't you want.." the door closed behind the Commander with Fuller still in mid speech "... the address?" he finished somewhat pointlessly.

-----

"You can come in now Sis!" Tracy called.

Commander Jennifer Caverner, Tracy's identical twin sister suddenly awoke with a start, she had been on duty all night as an officer of the VIP Protection Division of the Security Service. Indeed she had not even had time to change out of her uniform.

The lack of sleep had just caught up with her but she soon was wide-awake when she entered the fitting room, where Tracy and their mother were awaiting her verdict on the dress.

If it was physically possible, Jennifer's jaw would have dropped right through the basement floor, she was seriously taken aback, not expecting her sister who despite being identical was always the more shy retired one of the pair, to be so stunningly beautiful.

"Well what do you think?" Tracy asked after what seemed an eternity of stunned silence from her sister.

"Spectacular, no wonder the Commander wants to marry you!"

Tracy was impatient to know something about her own wedding, now only a matter of days away, however Jennifer who was organising it was keeping the details very close to her chest. On the way back to the Holborn Office, Tracy tried to prize some information out of her sister.

"Come on you can at least tell me where it is going to be".

Jennifer pretended not to hear the question hoping that her concentration on driving the patrol car through the busy streets of late afternoon central London would mean she could evade her sister's enquiries.

"Hello, anyone in there?" Tracy asked. Jennifer caved in but only a little.

"All you need to know is that you need to be outside the main doors of your office building at exactly 10.30 on Saturday morning, the rest will be self explanatory from there on" she replied in an insistent tone in the hope that it would put an end to the awkward questions.

However her insistent tone wasn't what would put an end to her questions, but the sight of a large contingent of the press clustered outside the main entrance to the Transport Division office building.

"Oh here we go" Tracy muttered slightly dejectedly, she had picked up the Commander's general dislike for the press, or at least certain lower quality sections of it and running this little barrage to get back into her own office was not what she really wanted at this time of the evening.

Tracy exited her Sister's patrol car just up the road from the office and waved goodbye to her. It was then a case of charge as fast as possible through the gathered throng. Brushing down her uniform, Tracy took a deep breath and charged ahead.

The barrage of questions was almost instantaneous, but her response was uniform.

"Can you confirm that Sharman was the victim of murder rather than accident?"

"No comment at this time".

"Do you have any suspects?"

"No comment".

The questions and the replies continued. As she got to the doorway, Fuller was waiting to open the door and let Tracy in.

"Thanks" she responded as she managed to free herself from the crowds and enter the main reception area, turning to watch Fuller forcing the throngs of the press back out through the doors through which they were trying to access.

"There will be a press conference later this evening, in the meantime kindly sod off!" Fuller announced in a style of which the Commander would have been proud.

"Where is that almost husband of mine?" she asked Fuller who had now managed to close and secure the doors before following her up the stairs to the upper floor and into the office area.

"Don't know, I'll check" he replied quickly turning in mid stride in order to deviate around to the Control Room.

Picking up one of the radio headsets from the main control desk, Fuller tried to call the Commander.

"Lima Tango One from Lima Tango Control receiving over".

There was no response so Fuller tried again but again to no avail.

"That's odd" Tracy remarked and tried her own personal radio, but again there was still no response.

"Could be in a radio blind spot" Fuller commented, "Hang on a minute I have an idea". Sitting down at the central console and with a press of the keyboard managed to call up on the large view screen at the front of the room, a replica of the central London A to Z map.

One part was being highlighted by a flashing red dot, the small attached text showing 'LT01'.

"Well that's where his car is, Southwark" Fuller announced.

"What is he doing there?" Tracy asked.

"Most likely location of the forger of his Warrant Card. There is one odd thing though".

"What's that?" Tracy asked.

"Well, when I mentioned the name I had, the Chief promptly went off to see him before I had even told him the address, which begs the question how come he knows this character".

-----

The Commander walked the short distance from where he had parked his patrol car out of sight behind some old buildings, around to a small jewellers shop situated on a side street in the suburb of Southwark, not more than a few minutes from the bustling

Waterloo area nearby.

He had left his uniform jacket behind in his car, only the gun holster on his belt and the epaulettes on the shoulders of his white shirt signalled the Commander out from the small number of other people about as being a Security Officer.

An old brass bell tinkled as the Commander opened the door and entered the small compact shop, very much laid out in the tradition of a jewellers of many decades before. Moving towards the rear of the shop, the Commander heard an elderly voice call from the back.

"I'll be out in a moment".

"That's all right, I have plenty of time" the Commander responded politely.

The elderly gentlemen in the back room looked up from the piece of jewellery he was working on when he heard the Commander's voice as if he recognised it distinctively but yet had not heard it for a very long time. He quickly made his way out to the front, entering the front of the shop behind the counter.

He was short in stature, barely 5 foot tall, receding hair and a small nose offset with small gold-framed spectacles, which had a magnifying lens that pulled down over the left eye.

"Well I'll be blown..." he began.

"I got your message" the Commander replied holding up the false Warrant Card with a wry smile, "you're looking well Lenny".

Lenny stepped forward and lifted the trap door section of the counter before grabbing the Commander's hand firmly and shaking it.

"Its great to see you, you've grown a fair bit" he replied looking up at the Commander who towered over the short man even though he himself barely reached 5' 8" himself.

"Well I was twelve when I last saw you and that was nigh on twenty years ago" the Commander replied, "This is your handiwork I take it then?"

"Come through to the back office, I'll just lock up the front" Lenny responded, shuffling forward to bolt the front door and draw the black window blind.

The Commander made his way through to the small workshop in the back with its attached small kitchen area. He was looking around when Lenny returned.

"Why don't you put the kettle on" he indicated, "It's still in the usual place". Despite over twenty years having passed since he was last in there, all was familiar to the Commander despite the several coats of paint that had been applied during the intervening years.

As the hiss of the kettle began the Commander looked over at Lenny, "So how have

you been keeping?"

"Not too bad" he replied as he sat back in the tired but loved old armchair in the corner "Seeing you on your Warrant Card was a shock though, I thought I would never see you again".

"Well getting carted off by the Witness Protection Program at the age of thirteen does rather take a large chunk out of your life".

"What about your family, did you ever see any of them again?"

"Not supposed too, don't even know the name of my sister now although I did find out she went to New Zealand when she was adopted out, I have bumped into my brother a couple of times although that was in an official capacity".

"I read all about that, nasty business".

"As for dad, well they said he died in prison a couple of months after the trial".

"I don't buy that, he was one of the strongest men I know, just like you".

"Yeah I think the theory was that someone was after him so they faked his death, probably long gone by now anyway though" the Commander mused, recalling his father, a man of strong character but yet a man he had not seen for almost twenty years.

"Anyway, who did you do the fake card for?" the Commander asked.

"Special job, client was from a Government Department, he didn't specify which. Soon as I saw your picture on it and the name I knew it was you" Lenny replied, in some way a little nervous at divulging this information.

"My name? Its the one I was given by the Protection Program, I didn't get any choice".

"Your first and last name are the middle names of your father, someone evidently felt that you should retain some old connection".

The Commander held up the false card, "I assume you told them the fake one was the real one and the real one the fake?"

"Yes, you were supposed to get the real one back, I switched them so that I could attract your attention".

"Well here I am".

Lenny's tone became more one of deep concern, "I'm worried something is going down, and you are going to get hurt".

"I think I can look after myself you know" the Commander joked, "is there any

connection with the late Mr Sharman?"

"Probably, whoever is behind this has only just started this, I mean it, I think you are in real danger, and that lovely fiancée of yours".

"Oh you know about Tracy then".

"Well you two have been in the news a fair bit". Lenny paused, got up from the chair and went over to a large oak bureau on the other side of the workshop. Producing a huge set of old keys; he proceeded to unlock the small brass locking mechanism and slid up the slatted shutter on the front.

"I have something here for you" Lenny announced proceeding to open a small wooden drawer from which he removed a small red velvet bag and passed it to the Commander.

The Commander opened the small bag and tipped the contents out into the palm of his hand, two magnificently decorated antique gold diamond rings. The Commander looked up amazed, "These are very nice" he said.

"They belonged to your parents, after your Mother died, your Father lodged them with me for safekeeping, and that was the last I saw of him, and you for that matter".

"Aye it's been a long time" the Commander mused.

-----

Stephen Redman entered the same boardroom from which he had left several hours earlier, it was now early evening and the gloom that came over the city with the start of the setting of the sun meant that the small antique electric lights mounted in their Victorian chandeliers shone more brightly.

There was no one else in that large tall ceiling room, the sound only of the elderly clock with its deep ticking echoing off the walls.

Stephen sat down near the far end of the long table and opened his briefcase, removing from it a variety of old files, paper and his laptop computer, which he opened and switched on.

Looking at his watch, he was suddenly distracted by the opening of the double doors at the opposite end of the room and the entry of a group of five distinguished gentlemen and one lady, all of whom took their seats around him.

They were soon joined by the distinguished older gentleman who took his seat at the head of the table and, without speaking, motioned to Stephen to begin his briefing.

"Err right, good evening". It was a nervous start but Stephen soon gained his composure as he stood up, grabbed his notes he had collated and cleared his throat.

"As you know, one of our old members was pushed to his death at Mornington



Crescent tube station in the early hours of this morning." He could quickly tell from the facial expressions of his audience that he was telling them what they already knew and so decided to quickly skip this topic and move on to the main meat of the story.

"The investigating officer for the case is the Commanding Officer of the London Transport Division of the Department of National Security and Civil Defence, along with his Deputy and also soon to be wife, Deputy Divisional Superintendent Tracy Caverner".

Those gathered looked at and passed around the personnel files and official photographs of the two officers which Stephen had brought with him as he continued to go into details.

"Known throughout the service as simply 'The Commander' he is a veteran of the service, joining the service aged just 16 straight from school. His foster parents were both senior officers in the old Police Force, his father once being Chief of Covert Operations at Scotland Yard. He was Deputy Divisional Commander in the City of Haychester in West Sussex for four years, then Commanding Officer same location for five years before taking up his current position in late December of last year".

It was clear that Stephen had certainly done his research very thoroughly, a task that would have not been possible without some of his contacts at various organisations and agencies throughout the capital.

"Does he have any link to Sharman?" one of those gathered asked.

"You could say that, you may recall the massacre of some thirty newly qualified Security Officers one night seventeen years ago when a terrorist and expelled Security Service recruit, James Garforth, went on the rampage, the Commander stopped him although not before he himself was shot three times.

There were only four survivors from that class, the Commander was one of them and collectively they have become legends in the Security Service being called 'The Four Commanders of The Apocalypse' by virtue of the fact that it is never quiet when one of them is around".

"The link to Sharman?" the original questioner asked again.

"Sharman was a junior minister in the Home Office at the time and was a leading proposer of an alternative plan to the then embryonic Security Service, a plan by the way that would have netted his family firm millions of pounds in Government supply contracts. In the resultant inquiry into the massacre chaired by Sir Richard Hainault, there was high level pressure to cover up Sharman's involvement in the incident".

"It wasn't until last year that the full extent of Sharman's involvement became clear however when as Home Secretary and in collusion with others, he facilitated the escape of Garforth from prison to 'finish off the job' that Sharman had hired him for all those years previously and assassinate the four remaining survivors of that night".

"Garforth was eventually recaptured and Sharman also arrested and jailed by the

Commander and his Deputy C/O, Tracy Caverner. In addition the Commander has crossed swords with Sharman in the past with numerous clashes with him in his various capacities within the Home Office".

"Will the Commander be a problem?"

"He's good, indeed he and Caverner are probably the best officers in the service today, they get results so actually I feel that having him leading the investigation will greatly assist our cause".

"Anything about his background we should know? You did say he was adopted but you were vague beyond that".

"When I initially looked at the records, it seemed to indicate he was an only child, an orphan from the age of twelve, however there was absolutely no record of his existence from before his adoption, neither educational or even birth, as far as I was able to tell he was born aged twelve years old".

There were chuckles of amusement from the audience; these sorts of official paperwork bungles often lead to classic and sometimes improbable mistakes such as this.

"Then I dug around for a bit and discovered this" Stephen placed an old manila folder on the table, it was dog-eared and dusty, on the front in faded markings was handwritten a file number and a printed warning 'Not to be removed from Scotland Yard office 134J' as well as a hand stamped red 'Highly Confidential' warning.

The folder was opened by some of the people around the table and Stephen could tell that many were surprised by the nature of the document before them by the raised eyebrows and gasps of astonishment.

"At the age of twelve, the Commander and his older brother and sister were put into the witness protection programme in the UK after their father, a notorious and highly respected member of the South London criminal fraternity, turned Queen's Evidence against the ruthless organised crime syndicate that he had worked for, for over thirty years".

The looks of surprise and astonishment continued as Stephen recalled the full story.

"Now the Commander's father allegedly died in Dartmouth Jail a few months after giving evidence although there were those who were convinced that this was just a ruse to get the death threats lifted. The Commander was given a new name and identity as was his brother and sister, all of which were adopted out separately with strict instructions that they were never to see each other or anyone from their previous lives or mention anything about their lives prior to then to anyone for the rest of their lives. There was and indeed still is the fear that a death threat hangs over them even now".

"Now for the really interesting part, the sister went to New Zealand where she still is serving in the Navy down there, his older brother however after initially being sent to

Canada, came back to the UK and this is who he is now..." Stephen announced passing another file across the table for inspection.

"This is extraordinarily good work, well done. However what of this Tracy Caverner?"

"Twelve year veteran of the service, joined from College at the age of eighteen along with her twin sister Jennifer who is now in the VIP Protection Division of the service".

"I thought her faced looked familiar" one of the men present commented "she was escorting the Prime Minister the other day".

"Anyway Tracy is bright, intelligent, highly decorated and engaged to be married to the Commander in I think three days time".

"I love weddings" the lady at the table mentioned.

The distinguished gentleman turned to the man nearest to him, "What do you think?" he asked.

"Well I feel that we can pretty much expect the Commander to get our man, which is of course exactly what we want. The forthcoming anti-capitalist protest may very well be the tool we need to initiate the final clinching incident that will lead him to our fall guy".

"Right in that case if we all could notify our various contacts that we now proceed with phase two. Stephen many thanks and I remind everyone this meeting is classified and if anyone enquires, none of us were ever here".

It was with some swiftness that the room emptied leaving just Stephen who casually picked up the files he had brought with him, placed them in his briefcase and left. He had no idea whatsoever of the nature of what was happening."

-----

"At approximately six thirty this morning on the southbound platform of Mornington Crescent Underground Station, the former Member of Parliament and Home Secretary Trevor Sharman, 58, was killed instantly when he was struck by the front of an approaching train and fell under the wheels".

The gathered members of the press listened as the Commander read out the official statement in front of the main entrance to the Holborn office. Arranged around the Commander in a crescent shape, they made notes, held out tape recorders and concentrated cameras upon him as he continued.

"We are treating this death as suspicious, in particular we wish to contact a slim white male approximately six feet tall and well dressed in black overcoat and hat who was in the Station building at the time. In addition we are appealing for any witnesses who may have been in the area of Mornington Crescent early this morning to get in

touch with us as soon as possible".

The press began to launch a barrage of questions only one or two of which were even remotely understandable amid the confusion, so much so that the Commander raised his hand for silence which thanks mostly to the respect he often commanded, he quickly got.

"One at a time please ladies and gents" he suggested before indicating one individual reporter standing at the front of the gathered mass.

"BBC News 24 Sir. Do you have any idea as to motive?"

"We have some ideas but I would not want to prejudice this investigation by indulging in public speculation at this time" the Commander responded before indicating the next question.

"Channel Four news, do you have any suspects?"

"Plenty" came the quick straightforward reply.

"Evening Standard, do you feel that your previous encounters with the late Mr Sharman may prejudice your investigation".

"Nice question, I feel that knowing the victim as well as I do will in fact be a benefit rather than a hindrance".

"Is this going to affect your wedding this weekend Sir?"

"Not ruddy likely!"

From the floor directly above, Tracy and half the office staff were watching the Commander's performance through the window, although the sound was relayed by way of the television in the adjacent room that was broadcasting the press conference live on BBC News 24.

"He's doing well isn't he?" Fuller remarked.

"Well he got sent on that press relations course last month" Tracy replied "Head Office felt it was necessary after that time when he announced exactly what he thought of the current Home Secretary live on Radio 4's Today programme" she replied smiling with amusement as she recalled that incident.

"Looks like he is wrapping it up" Fuller mentioned which was Tracy's cue to make her way downstairs to intercept him.

Making her way down the stairs to the main reception area she saw the Commander coming back through the automatic double doors having managed to get rid of the last of the enquiring members of the press.

The receptionist looked up from behind the desk briefly to observe Tracy embrace her soon to be husband, the Commander responding in kind.

"Very good, I am proud of you" she told him.

The Commander looked slightly puzzled for a moment, "I was watching from upstairs," she explained quickly allaying the Commanders confusion.

"Have you seen the Standard?" she asked showing him the front page of London's evening newspaper that the Commander took from her and read the headline.

"'Ex Government Minister Murdered', well its to the point I suppose" he responded.

"There is a picture of the pair of us on page 4, its part of the feature on the life and times of the late Mr Sharman". The Commander opened the paper and turned to the page that Tracy had indicated.

"Well we are in very good company, there has got to be two former Prime Ministers, one head of state and at least two members of the Royal Family here along with one or two others of note" the Commander commented surveying the article and its photographs carefully.

"One in particular of interest, an old acquaintance" Tracy mentioned slightly cautiously as if she was concerned she was raising a past topic that the Commander may have found personally painful.

"Ah yes our old mate James Garforth" the Commander remarked seeing the copy of the Security Service mug shot which the paper had reproduced "a bit old though this is the one taken the first time we locked him up".

"Time to go home?" Tracy asked with a hopeful smile.

The Commander looked at his watch "Good idea" he replied as he followed Tracy up the stairs.

Entering his office, the Commander was quick to pick up the maroon briefcase, throw in the papers on the desk that he wanted and then switch off the desk lamp. Tracy entered through the connecting door from her office already with her Security Service uniform overcoat on and ready to leave.

"Come on" the Commander prompted and taking her arm in his, the couple left, making their way down the corridor, pausing only to allow the Commander to pop his head around Fuller's office door.

"Any luck with Sharman's laptop?" the Commander asked.

Fuller looked up, a mouthful of sandwich however did not deter him from replying albeit in an unintelligible mumble, realising however that he had not been understood, he swallowed the sandwich and repeated the message.

"Managed to unscramble the hard drive and run a decryption program on the contents" he announced pointing to the laptop on the desk in front of him which despite having been taken apart and having several wires hanging out from it, still appeared to be working.

"Your talking Greek" the Commander replied.

"Oh, in other words I have managed to get all the data out of it, in particular the file containing his memoirs although it is passworded".

"Can you break the password?" Tracy asked.

"Depends, hang on a minute" he tapped away on the separate keyboard he had attached to the laptops damaged remains, "Ha, ha gotcha!"

"Success I take it?" the Commander enquired.

"Yep, the password was the word password, most common password known to man, this guy was seriously thick wasn't he?"

"He was an Member of Parliament, would you expect anything less?" Tracy remarked with a smirk.

"I'll print it off and get it too you in the morning" Fuller said as the large printer situated in the corner of his office burst into life with a high-pitched whine.

Both Tracy and the Commander bid Fuller goodnight for which another sandwich hindered reply was the response.

Making their way out of the building through the double glass sliding doors, they exited into the early gloom of a typical late spring evening, before crossing the main Kingsway road, still fairly busy with traffic even at this late hour, over to the main entrance of Holborn Underground Station immediately opposite.

A high pitched beep heralded the opening of the tinted glass gate between the ticket access barriers as the Station Supervisor on duty let Tracy and the Commander through. Acknowledging the Supervisor, it was a short few steps for the couple to reach the first main escalator, one of a bank of four that reached for some not inconsiderable depth into the bowels of the City's sub surface.

Standing on the right hand side of escalator No. 4 as they made their way down, Tracy's thoughts turned away from work and more to matters of the matrimonial variety.

"What are you wearing?" she asked in a query that came almost completely out of the blue catching the Commander who was concentrating on reaching the bottom of the escalator, somewhat off guard.

"Err company uniform I think" he replied somewhat puzzled as he looked down at his uniform that was as usual slightly crumpled.

"I meant at the wedding" she explained.

"Oh right, I suppose it will be the usual full dress uniform" he responded with a tone that spoke of a lack of enthusiasm.

"I do hope" Tracy replied as they reached the bottom of the first escalator and turned right making their way to the top of the shorter bank of three escalators that led further down to the Piccadilly Line platforms "that the lack of enthusiasm I detect was for your uniform and not our wedding?"

"Of course, trouble is I never seem to be able to fit into the damn thing properly".

"How long have you had it?"

"With repairs and two replacement ceremonial swords about twelve years" he replied.

"Well there you go, time to get a new one" Tracy urged with enthusiasm as they left the bottom of the escalator and made their way through the small white enamel panel and tile lined passageways and stairway to the Piccadilly Line's westbound platform.

"The next station is Covent Garden..... Please stand clear of the closing doors." The automatic announcement was actually too late as was the Commander and Tracy as by the time the announcement about the doors was made, the train was already half way to Covent Garden, the red tail lights just visible momentarily disappearing down the dark running tunnel at the far end of the platform.

"Next one in four minutes" Tracy announced looking up at the orange lettering of the electronic next train indicator above, however on turning round she suddenly realised the Commander had vanished. He was in fact only just a short distance down the platform trying to come to terms with the unfathomable mystery that is an Underground Station chocolate machine.

"Try putting some money in it" she suggested.

"I did".

Tracy looked down at the returned coin port, removing a fifty pence piece that was nestling there and proffering it back to the Commander.

"Well item 11, the milk chocolate is forty pence and the little LCD display says change available" the Commander mused.

"Doesn't mean a thing with these things, try the right money" she proffered two twenty pence pieces which the Commander took and inserted into the machine before press the '1' key twice to make his selection.

A whirr and a clang heralded success and as the Commander reached down through the metal shutter he grabbed the contents and removed it, being careful to quickly snap his hand back out before the metal shutter slammed down.

"Gotcha" he murmured as the rumble of an approaching train began to be heard coming from the running tunnel portal.

"You'll have no appetite for your tea if you eat that" Tracy joked looking on as the Commander began to consume the chocolate with relish.

They boarded the tube train through the red painted double sliding doors just as the automatic recorded platform announcer gave another rendition of the same old message.

Taking a seat towards the end of the car, the Commander screwed up the now empty chocolate wrapper, put it in his pocket and then wiped his mouth on the sleeve of his uniform jacket, leaving a brown mark on the gold braiding.

"I can't take you anywhere can I?" Tracy joked.

"You're starting to sound like my mother" the Commander replied, "despite the fact she has been dead a good twenty years".

"Well someone has got to look after you and it is going to be me" Tracy added with insistence as she took his arm in hers.

"I'm so glad..."

The train made its way beneath the streets of the city, through Covent Garden, Leicester Square and Piccadilly until it reached Green Park where the couple exited in order to change trains. In a few minutes they were on the move again this time on a Victoria Line train the one stop south to Victoria Station.

Exiting out through the main ticket hall, they were soon on the concourse of the station amid the usual bustle of movement that was the mid evening rush of mostly commuters surveying departure indicators and rushing at the last minute for departures to the south and south east.

As the couple walked across the South Central side of the concourse that led to platforms 10 through to 19, the Commander looked up as did almost everyone there at the flicker strip departure boards that dominated over the platform ticket barrier gates for a departure for the city of Haychester where both he and Tracy lived, at least that is for another two days as they were scheduled to move by the end of the week to a more convenient apartment on the south bank of the River Thames in London.

"Portsmouth and Bognor Regis via Horsham service, front four carriages in twelve minutes" the Commander told Tracy and together they made their way forward in the direction of platforms 15 to 19 from which the service usually always departed.

Approaching the ticket barriers, they joined the expectant throng of passengers waiting below the bank of monitors that showed what service was departing from which platform. Within a few moments a Brighton service was advertised as ready for boarding from Platform 16, before the screen had even finished scrolling across a



large contingent of the crowd suddenly lurched forward as if one body leaving a reduced number still stood almost in mid step.

As the Commander kept his gaze firmly upon the departure screens, Tracy, still holding him by the arm, casually watched the people as they made their way through the ticket barriers and onwards to the platforms beyond.

The backs of heads were all pretty much the same, a myriad of commuters, sales assistants and financial types all heading home along with a few shoppers and tourists heading for Gatwick Airport, nothing really registered much until one of the last people in the crowd turned briefly and glanced back in her direction.

"Isn't that..." she began with a slightly shocking realisation as though she had just seen briefly a ghost from her past.

"Mmm?" the Commander asked seeing Tracy's slightly anguished expression.

"No its nothing, for a moment I thought I saw someone in the crowd heading for the Brighton train" she shook her head "No, I must have imagined it, totally impossible".

"Sorry you've lost me" the Commander responded looking on into the distance in the direction that Tracy had been looking.

"I thought for a moment I saw James Garforth, it must be these wedding arrangement driving me to hallucinations" she smiled.

"Well he is safely locked up so unless there has been a gargantuan cock up I definitely think it's your imagination. Come on, platform 18". They made their way forward towards the designated platform.

As they boarded the train, the Commander looked up and down the length of the twelve coach green and white painted train casually, although it was theoretically impossible for Garforth to be out and about, he made a mental note to check on his exact current circumstances first thing the following morning.

It was an uneventful journey down to the Sussex coast and the City of Haychester which with its old fashioned ways and total lack of any night life of any reasonable description, was utterly deserted by the time Tracy and the Commander arrived at its rather depressingly bland 1950's built brick and concrete railway station.

From there it was a short drive to the house that they shared in a rural village just outside the city itself. The Commander parked the car outside the house and as Tracy went in ahead of him, he locked the vehicle.

As he was putting his keys away in his pocket he just caught sight out of the corner of his eye of a car running with dipped headlights, pulling in and stopping a short distance up the road before extinguishing its lights.

It was unusual to see cars around there at that time of night but the Commander didn't really give it much of a second glance, he was tired and it was the end of a very long

day. All he wanted to do was snuggle up next to Tracy for the rest of the evening and forget work for he had the feeling that the next day would be just as hectic.

-----

Nearly everything on the Commander's desk leapt into the air momentarily when the weight of the some 200 pages of A4 sized paper landed in one huge wodge.

"What the heck's this?" the Commander asked as Fuller breathed a sigh of relief at having been able to put down the large and heavy tome that he had had to carry down the corridor from his office.

"Sharman's memoirs, well at least a draft of it anyway" Fuller explained.

"And..."

"Well I just spent all night going through it and I reckon we can safely say that whoever killed Sharman, or at least had him killed, is probably named in this lot" Fuller announced. It was at this point that the Commander noticed that Fuller was not looking to fresh and bright for that early in the morning.

"Please don't tell me you were here all night working on this were you?" the Commander enquired.

"Well..." Fuller began.

"I know Jennifer was working a night duty last night so there would have been no-one to drag you out of the office".

"How did you know..." Fuller began to ask slightly puzzled.

"In case you haven't noticed I am your boss, besides I am about to marry your lady's twin sister, there is not much that escapes me you know".

"Rumbled!" Tracy called from the connecting door between the Commander's and her office. She smirked with amusement as she joined the men in the office.

"Well then seeming you spent all night on this great work of literature, did you learn anything?" the Commander asked as he flicked indiscriminately through the pile of paper on the desk in front of him.

"This Sharman character could not write properly for toffee."

"Apart from the grammatical analysis."

"Well what we now have is a shortlist of at least forty odd possible suspects including three former Prime Ministers, two wives of which one is separated and the other divorced, five or six gentlemen now enjoying a room in one of Her Majesty's prisons, several journalists and a not insignificant number of Security Service officers, two of which are in this very room. Along with a few others pretty much all this lot have a

motive for, or at the very least will be very glad to see Sharman dead".

"And I assume you are not one of them?" Tracy inquired slightly sarcastically of Fuller.

"Well I have an alibi" the Commander commented.

"Me too" Tracy added.

"Well that's the list shortened already and we have only been working on it for less than a minute" the Commander announced with a flourish as Fuller handed him the list of names.

"I have listed the names by category" Fuller explained "political, foreign, relations, in jail and formerly in jail, it's all there".

The Commander turned the paper over and back again a number of times as he looked through it for a particular name under the 'In Jail' heading.

"You've missed one" he called to Fuller who was halfway out of the office door and stopped suddenly in response.

"Are you sure sir?" Fuller asked concerned as he returned to the Commanders desk. He always took pride in his work and the thought of having made a mistake was something he did not like.

"James Garforth, he's in jail but not on this list" the Commander replied pointing to the appropriate part of the page.

"Garforth..." Fuller murmured as he searched through his notes, "Ah yes here he is, released on medical grounds following appeal".

"What!" both the Commander and Tracy responded in shocked unison.

"He should be in jail for at least another fifteen years" the Commander responded with indignation. It was with a heavy sigh that the Commander enquired further, "All right who authorised it?"

Fuller scrambled through his notes again before delivering another surprise "You did Sir".

"Where was he released from?" Tracy enquired.

"Fort Royston prison in Wiltshire" Fuller responded "It has a special unit for cases such as Garforth's".

"Right then" the Commander picked up the phone and pressed the number for the internal switchboard. After a few moments the Commander was through "Get me the Governor of Fort Royston prison on the phone pronto please!"

"I take it you didn't authorise this then?" Fuller asked.

The Commander looked up with a quizzical expression "Are you kidding?"

-----

"Right then ladies and gents" Tracy called from the front of the briefing room as she opened the morning briefing in front of some fifty officers and support personnel of various ranks.

"A number of items on the agenda today" she continued with her usual authoritative tone "The demise of the former Home Secretary is causing ructions with quite a lot of political pressure now coming from above. Needless to say I expect you to ignore it and get on with the job of finding the murderer. If you are asked any questions the official line is 'no comment' and you are to refer any inquiries to the press office or our daily press conference".

Some in the audience scribbled notes whilst most just continued to listen intently.

"There are various areas of the investigation which we still require further information for. Notably we still have no reason as to why Sharman was there in the first place so those of you following up his background keep on it".

She motioned to Fuller to add his recent developments to the briefing. Standing up and moving to the front of the room, he cleared his throat before beginning.

"Err right, we have managed to extract some information from Sharman's gaff including a draft of his memoirs. You should have in your briefing notes a list of key people that I have identified, if you could check some backgrounds of those marked with an asterix and watch out for any connections then it would be appreciated".

Fuller then produced a small electrical component from his pocket that Tracy identified as the listening device that had been discovered in Sharman's telephone.

"This little beauty is a Class II listening device discovered in Sharman's flat, this means that there may be some interest in this case from higher authorities, again watch out for any connections as you go about your enquiries, and watch your back".

Tracy stepped forward from the shadows once again as Fuller sat down. "Right then other business" she announced.

"The anti-vandalism initiative has apparently achieved a thirty five percent drop in incidents of petty vandalism in the south half of the city so well done to those on that team" Tracy looked across at a small cluster of plain clothes officers gathered in the far corner who were responsible for running this initiative.

"I think that the Commander shooting a vandal a few weeks back helped with the problem Maam!" the leader of the group called back with a smirk.

"Good point" Tracy replied before continuing.

"Chelsea are playing Arsenal at home tonight so the usual back up contingent will be required at Fulham Broadway just in case of any problems and a final reminder to senior Heads of Section's that the City briefing for all officers involved in tomorrow's operation to police the anti-capitalist demonstrations is at Scotland Yard at three o'clock. Right then any other business?"

There was a hesitant pause from the audience before the hand of one officer was raised slightly nervously.

"Yes?" Tracy prompted.

"You mentioned 'Higher Authorities' in your briefing, are we talking Special Intelligence Services?"

"Probably and you can bet the Governmental Services Division has got its nose stuck in this somewhere as well so watch your backs, if you see anything strange, other than what is normally strange around here that is, report it immediately".

With that Tracy ended the briefing and there was a sudden flurry of movement and conversation as everyone left the room and made their way back to their offices or out of the building.

As the majority left, Tracy stopped Fuller and ushered him to one side with noticeable discretion.

"I want you to conduct a check of this building, if there any devices left by our little friends anywhere in this building, I want to know about it. Just be discreet, other than yourself, the Commander and me, this conversation didn't happen Ok?"

Fuller nodded and with a slightly perplexed expression left to set about his task.

Tracy watched him leave before gathering up her briefing notes and leaving the room.

-----

"James Edward Garforth, released two weeks ago, medical grounds, Doctor Holbrook was dealing with his case, most unusual I recall, you would need to speak to him". The Director of Prisoner Care, what used to be called a Prison Governor, consulted the notes on his desk as the Commander glared at him with a distinctly unimpressed attitude to this whole affair.

The intercom buzzed and the secretary outside the office announced that Doctor Holbrook had arrived as the Director had requested. A few moments later and a gentleman dressed in typical doctor's apparel appeared, the white coat covering a somewhat short man in his late fifties, small half round glasses perched on the end of his nose.

"Commander so pleased to meet you" the Doctor greeted him cheerfully with a shake of the hand however the Commander still appeared sceptical at the situation.

"I'll leave you in the hands of the good Doctor, goodbye Commander" the Director said as the Commander left the office. Being led down the corridor of offices by the Doctor, they reached a generously sized room that on first impression resembled a cross between a surgery and video conferencing room.

"Right you want to know more about Garforth?" the Doctor asked as they each took a seat either side of the large desk that dominated the left hand side of the room.

"Oh you know the basic things like why on earth has he been let loose?" the Commander replied with a quizzical expression.

"You received the details and we got both yours and the Administrator General's authorisation to release him a few weeks later" the Doctor replied showing a copy of the official release authorisation that the Doctor had produced from the green folder in front of him.

"Except Doctor for the small fact that I never saw this information or even for that matter issued any authorisation" the Commander insisted politely but firmly.

"Oh dear, seems to have been a bit of a cock up somewhere" the Doctor replied looking slightly bemused, mistakes of this magnitude were unusual in his experience to say the least.

"So what were the results of this assessment then?" the Commander asked.

"Well it began when Garforth was brought here last September. I was the Doctor on duty that night and I gave him his initial arrival assessment prior to him being put initially into isolation as was set procedure" the Doctor explained. He reached for the video player remote control and pressed a button.

"This is Garforth on the evening he arrived" the Doctor indicated the screen "I have a sideline in studying unusual criminal cases so I made recordings of every event associated with Garforth. As you can see from the tape he was violent and had to be sedated upon arrival".

The Commander leaned forward and watched as the footage from a CCTV camera in the arrival area of the prison showed Garforth having to be restrained by four heavy Prison Officers. There was no sound on the tape but it was obvious what Garforth was shouting and most of it was probably unprintable.

"He was like this for about a week, then we noticed a significant calming down in his behaviour. I was intrigued by this change in events but then he was attacked by another prisoner and badly injured. He was brought into the infirmary and over the next few weeks as he underwent surgery to repair a number of facial injuries, I noticed something odd about the content of blood samples that I took at regular intervals".

"You have me intrigued" the Commander replied.

"Have you ever heard of a drug called 'Physiographine'?" the Doctor asked.

"Heard of it, I can't even spell it!" the Commander replied looking perplexed.

"Doesn't surprise me" the doctor responded "In the early sixties the Russian military looked at a way of controlling a persons mind so that they could turn them into controllable killing machines, essentially physco's to order. A couple of years later the British chemical research base at Porton Down got hold of a sample of this stuff and worked on it, couldn't get to work apparently".

"What happened to it?" the Commander asked.

"Well there was a conference on biological warfare organised by the United Nations in 1971 and they banned this stuff along with several other rather nasty chemicals that were around".

"And this err...."

"....Physiographine...."

".... yes that, you found it in Garforth's blood?"

"Well I compared the blood tests taken when he came in with later ones from when he was in jail before. From what I could work out, despite the paperwork trail having been significantly covered up, someone had been deliberately feeding him this stuff without his knowledge for the last fifteen odd years until he came here".

"And now?"

"We could no longer hold him legally. He was jailed for crimes he was not responsible for in the eyes of the law, therefore once the documentation was satisfactory and he was clear of all the effects, he was just as he was before the entire thing started".

"He is normal, the original unadulterated version of James Garforth?"

"Yes and a free man"

"What would happen if he was put back on this drug?"

"No effect, once a user has been weaned off it for at least a month, they become immune, one of the reasons why the Russian military gave up on it".

"Do you know where he went once he was released?" the Commander asked with a new kind of concern in his demeanour.

"That would be in his file here," the Doctor confirmed as he rifled through the folder. After a few moments he rifled through it again this time with a more confused expression.

"Something wrong Doctor?" the Commander picked up on the increasing concern being shown from the opposite side of the desk.

"This file is incomplete, the release documentation is missing, most peculiar" the Doctor replied as he continued to look through the papers.

"Doesn't surprise me somehow" the Commander responded. It seemed that wherever Garforth was concerned, there was always something peculiar or unusual going on and usually not unintentionally either.

"Well anyway I can assure you that Garforth presents no further danger to society" the doctor assured.

The Commander could feel a twinge in his abdomen where there was still a bullet lodged from when he encountered Garforth many years earlier and he was finding it difficult to accept what he was being told.

"Can I quote you on that?" the Commander replied with a hint of a sarcastic tone in his voice.

"Yes" the Doctor affirmed despite feeling slightly offended by the Commanders obvious doubt.

-----

"What are you doing?" Commander Cassini asked upon coming across Fuller peering under his desk in what could only be described as a furtive manner.

"What?" he responded realising he had been seen.

"You seem to be looking for something" Cassini replied looking down at Fuller in curiosity.

"Oh... err mice!" he replied, it was the first thing that came into his head and sounded reasonable until he actually said it, then it just sounded plain daft.

"Mice?" Cassini was understandably confused.

"Err yes, big mice" Fuller responded getting up and dusting himself down. He held his hands up apart as if to indicate the size of these mythical rodents "huge buggers, place is crawling with them".

"Right....."

"Mmm rats too," Fuller added as he made a swift exit leaving Cassini to look onward with a confused expression.

The phone rang on Cassini's desk and as he sat down he picked up the receiver.

"Undercover op's section, Cassini" he replied. As he said it part of the telephone's



receiver fell off landing with a clatter on the desk in front of him. Being a professional he carried on with the call as if everything was all right.

"Ah yes sir" he added. It was the Commander calling from the prison. He had had no success in trying to get hold of Tracy so Commander Cassini was next on his list.

"Can you get a message to Tra... I mean Deputy Superintendent Caverner?" the Commander asked.

"Yes certainly Sir" Cassini responded scrabbling around on his desk and then in his drawers in the vain search for a pen, "Hang on a second someone's nicked my pen again". He eventually found a rather blunt old pencil and began to scribble on the back of an envelope he found lying around before prompting his Commanding Officer to proceed.

"Right, tell her that Garforth has been released and allegedly it's all above board. I want his details and this notice distributed to everyone on the list in the back of my desk diary under the heading 'Hainault' and also the Divisional Chiefs of the Metropolitan Division and the office in Haychester".

"Do we have a picture of this character?" Cassini asked.

"Not an up to date one, his appearance has changed since we last pointed a camera at him so an old picture would not be of much use" the Commander responded.

"Right I'm on it Sir".

"By the way what was that crash?" the Commander asked out of curiosity.

"Oh that" Cassini picked up the part of the telephone that had detached itself and looked at it in bemusement "just my phone disintegrating, probably those mice Fuller is searching for".

"Mice?" the Commander responded somewhat surprised until he realised more accurately what Fuller had been doing, "Oh right mice, got you, well put it back together again as best as you can and I'll be back later. Tell Caverner I'll see her at the Scotland Yard briefing".

"Will do, goodbye Sir".

-----

Stephen Redman entered the small study with a coffee cup carefully balanced on a pile of files and folders. As he reached the crowded and cluttered desk he noticed that a flashing red message had appeared on the computer screen that was situated on the corner of the desk, partially obscured by more files and papers.

Using his mouse cursor, Stephen clicked on the message and a file list was produced along with a pair of access codes.

"Hello..." he murmured as he studied the codes indicated. Opening another window in the computer program, he entered the two access codes he had noted and called up two corresponding Security Service personnel files.

After studying them for a few moments he reached for his mobile phone, a quick dial and he was connected to an unknown person on the other end for what would prove to be a very short and to the point call.

"Sir? Holman here. Target one's file has just been accessed by the Security Service" he announced. There was a pause as the person he had called asked the identity of the officer who had accessed the file.

"Divisional Deputy Commander Tracy Caverner Sir" he replied "Should I pass this information on to our mutual friends?"

Again another pause as a further instruction was received.

"Very well Sir, I'll delay it for a few hours, goodbye".

-----

The double sliding doors of the train opened with a quiet gliding motion allowing the passengers on the 13.48 Reading to Waterloo service to alight onto the cold hard tarmac of Waterloo's platform 14.

The first passenger amongst the modest number alighting from the service was the Commander, his formal uniform with its gold braiding and features surprisingly fitting in well with the suits and other business wear being worn by his fellow passengers.

Despite it still being the fake, the Commander was able to show his warrant card to the ticket inspector at the barrier that separated the platform from the main concourse and pass without inquiry or incident.

It was a short walk across the narrow but long curved concourse, lined with its shops and cafes, to the down escalator that led to the lower level Underground ticket hall on Waterloo Road. Pausing only to purchase a mid afternoon edition of the London Evening Standard from the vendor at the bottom of the escalator, the Commander made his way round to the left and towards the ticket barriers.

Pausing for a few moments when he remembered the problem with his Warrant Card, the Commander made a slight diversion to the smoked glass gate at the end of the rank of ticket barriers to be allowed through by a member of Underground station staff.

Then it was a few steps toward the down escalators that led into the bowels of the earth, the cylindrical tunnels that rose within poking up out of the ground like two huge drain pipes set side by side.

It was at this point that the Commander was picked out by an observer. A gentleman

in his late fifties and formally dressed in smart well pressed grey trousers and waistcoat, his suit over his shoulder. As the Commander passed him and boarded the right hand down escalator, the observer began to follow a few steps behind.

The Commander stood on the right all the way down the escalator, a few people passing him on the left whilst the observer stood some steps up behind.

Stepping off the escalator, it was a short walk across the Jubilee Line cross passageway and round to the left towards the two moving walkways, one in each direction that led to the Northern and Bakerloo line platforms.

Whilst most walked slowly along these walkways, the Commander elected to stop and stand on the right hand side, letting the hidden machinery do the job of carrying him at a sedate pace the three hundred yards or so to the other end.

It took a couple of minutes for the journey to be completed, eventually ending with the Commander stepping off before heading on ahead into the passageway beyond.

A short distance behind, the observer reached the end of the walkway and then realised that the Commander had disappeared out of sight into the passageway ahead which curved around to the left as it passed an emergency staff access door set into the right hand side of the cast iron tunnel wall segments.

The observer stepped up his pace and his expression grew ever more worried, but as it turned out his quarry was not as far away as he thought, a fact confirmed as he passed the doorway which then opened. Suddenly he stopped dead in his tracks as he felt the pressing of a gun barrel against the back of his head.

"I'm sorry, were you looking for me?" the Commander asked sarcastically.

"It's all right!" the observer replied with a slightly nervous hint of panic, "Administrator General Peters sent me to keep an eye on you and make contact".

The Commander re-holstered his gun and made sure the doorway was firmly closed before turning to the observer with a bemused expression.

"And you are?" he asked.

"Lieutenant Lewis Johnson, Central Services Division" the man replied.

"Right that's the formalities dealt with then. Hasn't Jim Peters ever heard of the telephone?" the Commander asked.

Johnson looked around nervously, checking to see if anyone was eavesdropping before responding.

"He said to tell you that he wants a word with you, unofficially and off the record. Preferably somewhere public but discreet" Johnson replied in a hushed tone.

The Commander thought for a few moments as to a possible location, turning away

from Johnson as he mulled over the possibilities.

"Sir?" Johnson prompted. The Commander reached into his pocket and pulled out an old bus ticket. On the reverse of the small slip of white paper, he proceeded to draw a simple map or plan with a couple of lines of instructions before folding it neatly in two and handing it to Johnson.

"See he gets that" the Commander urged before disappearing off down the passageway and away.

-----

"Right ladies and gentlemen, this is how today's briefing will proceed" the Divisional Chief Superintendent of the Metropolitan Division announced, referring to the overhead projection on the whiteboard behind him.

"Its crooked" Tracy murmured to her sister as she tilted her head to one side and then the other to try and read it on the level.

Realising the error, the Chief Superintendent turned the clear plastic acetate on the projector discreetly hoping no-one in the audience of some two hundred plus officers had noticed the mistake which of course they all had, even the Commander who had only just arrived and made his way to the back left hand side of the room, pausing only a few moments to squint in the darkness to see which of the twin sisters was his intended and making sure he kissed the right one.

"As you may recall" the Chief Superintendent continued now armed with a straightened overhead projection of his list of points "last years Anti-Capitalist demonstrations in the centre of the City resulted in over a million pounds worth of damage to public property, several hundred arrests and over a hundred officers injured sufficiently enough to require hospital treatment, some of those for quite a significant period of time".

It was a determined look that he gave the audience as he continued. "This year is going to be different. Last year we were taken by surprise both by the numbers involved and the extent of the violence unleashed however this year we will be adopting a zero tolerance policy".

The Commander just watched looking distinctly unimpressed as his preferred solution was just to stop the beggars from entering the City in the first place.

"We have had intelligence this year that the usual rent-a-nutters will be joined by a number of anarchists who were responsible for the extensive violence that occurred at the World Trade conference in Ontario in March. As you may recall the Security Services there were well prepared but even still, suffered two deaths amongst their ranks so we are taking this threat deadly seriously".

The Chief Superintendent changed the overhead projection image before continuing. "The plan for this year is to contain and control by corralling the entire protest group within Trafalgar Square until they are prepared to disperse peacefully, the dispersal

consisting of escorting in small groups to the nearest mainline rail station and then out of the City".

Tracy and the Commander were both doing some mental sums in their head as to how many of their officers would be needed to cover this nightmare but cut short their thoughts as the Chief Superintendent continued with his briefing.

"We are calling this 'Operation Tea Towel' the Chief Superintendent announced with a slightly embarrassed grimace making it clear that the daft name was not his idea, "I will be Chief Operations Controller on the ground, number two in the control room here at Scotland Yard will be the Chief of the Transport Division and number three in the chain of command will be his Deputy, Tracy Caverner, who will be overseeing the Transport side of the operation from their Control Room in Holborn".

"Does anyone here recall either of us actually volunteering for any of this?" Tracy asked the Commander aside. He just shook his head in slight bewilderment, this was the first he had heard of it, although he would have known better had he bothered to read the briefing notes that Tracy was now holding in front of him, clearly pointing out the key section about the Command Structure which was on page two.

"As with last year everybody will be on duty solidly from 7 am right through to at least 8 pm and all leave is cancelled". This was an announcement that was greeted with an air of resignation in the room but there was still a general feeling of accepting this inevitability.

"Chief Superintendent, do you wish to add anything?"

It was a few moments before the Commander realised it was he who was being asked the question, somehow the events of the last two days had affected his concentration and his mind was wandering away onto matters more connected with his ongoing Sharman investigation.

"Mmm? Oh right" he stammered momentarily before regaining his composure and making his way down to the front of the room to take centre stage.

"Basically the plan is that Transport Division will be protecting the stations within the Central area and manning, along with some of Metropolitan's Traffic Section, the diversions and road blocks around the section we will have cordoned off". The Commander looked down at his notes and basically recited the text before him, albeit in an abridged form.

"Those Transport Division officers not in use on these duties will be making up the numbers on the ground with the Metropolitan Division, needless to say riot gear will be compulsory. Lets hope it's peaceful, but I doubt it" he added before stepping down.

Looking at his watch as he made his way back to his previous position in the room he realised that time was running short for an urgent appointment elsewhere.

-----

"If you think it is absolutely necessary, then I am prepared to notify our operatives to proceed" one of the various individuals gathered around the board room table announced running his gold plated fountain pen over the list of individual names he and the others in the room had just been presented with by the distinguished gentleman a few minutes earlier.

As before the distinguished Gentleman remained standing and walked slowly around to the head of the table, leaning forward he clutched the edge of the table and fixed a stern look at the gathered persons, five gentlemen and one lady once again.

"Let me make this clear to all of you, what we are about to initiate is in accordance with ISO regulations so if any of you have any feelings of doubt or sudden attacks of conscience then put them out of your mind now".

There were uncomfortable looks from one or two of those gathered as the gentleman continued his speech.

"Right and wrong do not have any place here and I want you to make sure you understand that and all that it implies. I should not need to remind you that this meeting is classified, thank you".

Without further word the gathered committee left, leaving only the gentleman who waited until the doors were closed and he was alone. He made his way through the side door into his office, a neat and tidy traditionally furnished affair that mirrored the grandiose nature of the boardroom he had just left.

Sitting behind the large mahogany desk, he reached across to the traditional style Bakelite telephone, lifted the receiver and dialled a number. After a few moments his call was answered, he spoke briefly and to the point.

"Your target has been assigned, the warrant and payment will be through the usual arrangements, the demonstration tomorrow will be your cover and your target will be placed as indicated, goodbye".

The nature of the call was such that anyone listening would have been unable to make out if he was talking to a live person or a machine thanks to the direct and methodical delivery.

Before leaving the office, the gentleman paused and reached into the bottom drawer of his desk. From there he removed an old wartime revolver and a small case of ammunition that he slid discreetly into his jacket pocket before donning a dark overcoat and leaving.

-----

It seemed a long quiet run from St James Park Underground Station to Holborn, despite the number of people he passed in the two changes of train required at Westminster and Green Park, the Commander was in a deep sense of thought, indeed almost dread at what was about to transpire at this meeting.

He was travelling alone, Tracy had stayed behind to represent their Division at the briefing, she would follow on later but for now the feeling that many people describe as though someone had walked over their grave was dominating his thoughts as he recalled events of the distant past, a past that was once again returning to haunt him.

These thoughts almost caused him to miss his stop, the upmarket tones of the recorded platform announcement at Holborn suddenly made him realise that he should be alighting. Leaving his seat in the rearmost carriage quickly, he narrowly missed the closing of the train doors by a matter of moments.

Barely had his feet touched the hard stone surface of the slightly curved northbound Piccadilly Line platform than the train was already moving, plunging into the tunnel portal at the far end.

He took a few moments to re-compose himself, brushing down his uniform that had become a bit crumpled from the journey from St James' Park. Forty pence was braved in the chocolate vending machine and unusually it was fully co-operative in delivering the Commander's preferred milk chocolate choice without hesitation or deviation.

The late afternoon meant a few people about but certainly not the major crowds of rush hour that was still about fifteen minutes away. Therefore it was only the CCTV cameras, with which every station on the Underground was fitted, bearing witness to the Commander as he discreetly opened and stepped through one of the lattice gateways that barred access to an old disused cross passage and stairway.

The other end of this passageway, the original style patterned tiling contrasting with the modern finishes of the public areas of the station, was also guarded by a lattice gateway but being on the non-public end, this had been left partially open, just enough to allow the Commander to squeeze through without too much effort.

With only the echoing sound of a train arriving filtering through the cross passageways behind him, the Commander surveyed the empty platform, the surface of the running rails rusty from lack of use.

A few old advertising posters dating back to the early 1990's, many tatty and torn, decorated the curved tiled walls whilst a fine layer of dust lay almost unseen and little disturbed on almost every surface.

The sound of the lattice gate that guarded the cross passage at the opposite end of the platform startled the Commander momentarily and three Security Officers, all dressed in the uniforms of different divisions from around the UK entered.

"Well I'll say this for you" Commander Claire Farmer" called as the group met the Commander mid way along the platform "you pick some really glamorous locations for our meetings".

The Commander held his hands aloft as if in appreciation of the surrounding area "Well it's handy for the office plus its sufficiently non-public" he responded.

Warm handshakes and greetings were exchanged between the group of two women and one man and the Commander. These together were the infamous 'Four Commanders of The Apocalypse' as they had become known although with Tracy there were now five in this exclusive and well-respected club.

"All right then, where is the soon to be missus?" asked Divisional Superintendent Simon Holroyd looking around jokingly as though the Commander had hidden her somewhere "its not like you two to be travelling apart".

"She's stayed behind at Scotland Yard, it's the big briefing for tomorrows Anti-Capitalist Protests" the Commander explained.

"Oh lovely, an entire day spent chasing several thousand loonies though the streets of London, you should be in your element" the third officer, Commander Julie Fraser commented.

It was at that moment that the sound of the gates being opened once again interrupted their conversation. All four looked down the platform to see the Administrator General of the Security Service Sir James Peters, the man at the very top of the Command structure of the service in, step onto the platform and make his way towards the group.

"Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen" he called seemingly surprised at the number of people here, he was expecting just the Commander or at least the Commander and Tracy, however he instantly recognised those other present and reflected that in the light of the circumstances and the group's past connection with Sharman and in particular Garforth, their presence was probably a good idea.

"I took the liberty of inviting along a few interested guests to our little gathering" the Commander indicated the other officers around him. It was not very often that the four survivors of the Hainault Incident massacre could be found together in one place and the Administrator General felt slightly nervous in their collective presence, especially as they commanded more respect and influence both inside and outside the Service than anyone else.

The Commander took his radio from the clip on his belt and issued a request, "Ok Dave when you're ready".

The sound of electric motors winding up to full power preceded the emergence from the south end running tunnel portal of an old three car underground tube train. The rusty rails squealed as the weight of the cars wheels pushed over them slowly, whilst the limited light in the platform area reflected off the dull unpainted bare aluminium finish of the unit of 1972 Mk 1 stock.

The Commander stepped forward and reached down towards a control button mounted on the end panel of the middle car. With a simple operation the doors of this car creaked open, there general lack of use contributing to the squeaky metallic ring that they made as the double leaves parted.

"Step into my office" the Commander invited the others who proceeded with not a



little bemusement to board, taking up seats in the centre portion of the carriage.

"This is all very cosy, your very own travelling office" Commander Fraser commented.

The Commander signalled to the driver who had now swapped ends, that he could proceed and the doors closed behind him as he joined the others on board.

"Oh not really, they keep this one on the branch for use if they need to do some filming or training. The staff give it a run up and down every now and then to keep the batteries charged up" the Commander explained.

As the train began its slow run down the disused branch at its maximum permitted speed of 15 miles per hour, it was left to the Commander to start off the business in hand.

"Right as you know our mutual friend Garforth is back on the streets, a fact that bizarrely seems to coincide with the recent fortunate or unfortunate, depending on how you felt about him, demise of the late former Home Secretary".

"Seems an amazing co-incidence that Sharman's death occurred slap bang within your jurisdiction" Divisional Superintendent Holroyd commented.

"Funny that isn't it, one reason why I smell a huge set-up" the Commander retorted.

"Well the reason I wanted to see you may well have relevance" the Administrator General cut in as he steadied himself against the sudden change of force caused by the train swerving across the former crossover from one running tunnel to the other.

"Do go on"

"I have an undercover officer working in the Central Records Section over at Whitehall. He's just reported to me that he had to flag up certain files relating to the late Mr Sharman, Garforth and a number of other people including yourself...." he indicated the Commander "and Tracy Caverner".

"Do we know who for?" Commander Fraser asked.

"I'd rather not say at the moment, suffice to say that the feedback I am getting from him and certain other sources say that individuals within the Political Services Office are extremely anxious about the contents of Sharman's memoirs and seem to be keen on removing from circulation anyone who discovers the contents of them".

"They were probably the ones who bugged and turned over Sharman's place then" the Commander concluded.

"How much power exactly does the Political Services Department actually have?" Superintendent Holroyd asked, clearly concerned.

"People, mostly the press, have tried to link them to assassinations, cover ups and

suspicious deaths in the past but most attempts have been covered up. Oddly the person doing the digging usually winds up moving, disappearing or suddenly retiring for no readily apparent reason. One poor sod in the Civil Service got shifted all the way to the Falkland Islands last year".

"Who heads this lot?" the Commander enquired.

"I'm not sure at the moment, one thing is for certain however, the flags on both yours and Caverner's files flashed up when you put into the central computer the details from his memoirs so watch your backs".

"And Garforth?" Fraser inquired.

"He's been the drug influenced patsy from the start, not now though but he is probably being used by our friends to do the dirty work and take the fall" the Commander concluded as the train emerged into the darkened platform of the closed Aldwych station.

The doors opened and the party stepped out onto the deserted and dusty platform, years of disuse hanging heavy on the surfaces and finishes.

"Don't worry, we're going back the way we came in a minute" the Commander explained seeing the slight concern he saw on the others at the possibility of being stuck in the bowels of a closed disused and locked station for eternity.

"Five minutes mate?" the driver asked as he passed them on his way back to the other end of the train to prepare for the return journey.

The Administrator General motioned the Commander over to the darker far corner of the platform away from the others.

"There was something else too, the investigations of our friends has turned up the old files from the Witness Protection Division" the Administrator General spoke in hushed tones.

"You mean they know...." the Commander intimated.

"Yep, they know who you were and probably more" came the concerned reply.

The Commander looked down at the track bed in front of the end of the train as thoughts of the consequences of this news went through his mind before turning back again.

"Could they use this against me?" he asked.

"Who knows, this bunch are capable of anything and have a carte blanche licence to do it"

The Commander found himself involuntarily removing his revolver from its belt holster and checking it was loaded, a move even more significant given his general

dislike of weapons.

"There was one other thing, my undercover man came across this, he didn't pass it on to them like he was supposed to though". The Administrator General passed over a battered old manila coloured folder to the Commander who took it and read with obvious shock the name written in faded blue ink on the front cover.

"He's alive?" the Commander asked with a look of amazement.

"Apparently so, I'll do some digging around, see if I can't cash a few favours in, it's about time I threw my weight about a bit for an old friend".

"Appreciate it".

The two officers made their way back towards the rest of the group and together they re-boarded the train. The driver looked back from the cab window and seeing that all were aboard, re-closed the doors and proceeded to drive the train back the couple of miles back to Holborn.

For most, the short return journey was indulged in friendly general conversation, the Commander however although participating was obviously in a distant mood, his thoughts quite clearly elsewhere.

As the train arrived back at Holborn's platform 5, Tracy stepped forward towards the doors nearest the occupants and greeted everyone as they disembarked. They were all good friends here and the atmosphere was once again warm and welcoming despite the Commander's obvious sense of impending concern at the current situation.

Farewells were exchanged within the group before most of them left the way they had originally come, leaving just the Commander, Tracy and the Administrator General standing there.

"You two be careful" the Administrator General called, his tone of concern a contrast from his manner a few moments beforehand, "I don't want either of you coming to any harm so watch your backs".

"We'll be alright, we've been through worse scrapes than this haven't we?" Tracy retorted unaware of the full situation, a situation the Commander was not sure whether to tell her everything about.

"Right then, I'll see you two on Saturday" the Administrator General added before turning to leave.

"Hang on, you don't know where the wedding is going to be do you?" Tracy asked after him.

The Administrator General paused momentarily by the furthest exit from the platform and looked back, "Of course I do, but if you think I am going to risk your sister's wrath and tell you, you have another thing coming".

-----

"Welcome back" Fuller announced as Tracy and the Commander arrived in the main Control Room "Whilst you were out" he added proffering two large pile of notes and messages towards them.

"Oh joy..." the Commander mused taking his pile of paper before sitting at an unoccupied console near the window side.

Fuller noticed the distant far away look of the Commander and moved over to Tracy, "Is he all right?" he asked concerned about his slightly out of character disposition.

"I don't know, he's been like this since I caught up with him, anyone would think his world had just come to an end" she replied, clearly sharing Fuller's concern.

"Oh dear" the Commander mumbled.

"You've read message number seven then" Fuller asked.

"Listen to this, 'Due to unforeseen complications, it will be necessary to grant all overtime and leave due which was cancelled for Thursday on the Friday, we apologise for the inconvenience, Central Personnel Office". The Commander stared at the notification in his hand decidedly unimpressed but not exactly surprised at the usual lack of efficiency that seemed to be standard operating procedure in the mysterious administrative areas of the Service.

"That means we will have practically no officers available for duty on Friday because they will have to take their overtime and leave we have cancelled for tomorrows demonstration operation. Typical bureaucracy". Tracy was similarly not impressed and her facial expression clearly reflected this.

"Any luck tracing any of the names on our memoirs shortlist?" the Commander asked.

Fuller picked up his clipboard and perused the list on it, a whole variety of scribbles and notes had been added since the morning briefing and it was from these that Fuller began to summarise the details.

"Right then, of our not so little little list, we can rule out sixteen names by virtue that they are either dead, moved to the Falkland Islands or otherwise out of circulation"

The Commander perked up at that point, recalling what the Administrator General had said some time earlier that day.

"The Falkland Islands?" he asked as if to confirm. Fuller pointed out the details where he had marked them on the clipboard.

"Anyone actually in the frame?" Tracy enquired.

"Well, maybe" came Fuller's somewhat no-committal reply "Pretty much everyone seems to have an alibi, I've had dozens of officers checking them all day, one name

springs to the front of the queue however, our old friend Mr Garforth".

"We have got to find him, and fast" the Commander insisted.

"We cannot be sure it was him though" Tracy cut in "all we have is some CCTV footage of a man in a long black coat and a hat who might as well as been Lord Lucan for all we know".

"I need some air" the Commander responded and with that left the room.

-----

"This is Knightsbridge..... The next station is Gloucester Road..... Please stand clear of the closing doors."

The automated platform announcer that like clockwork filled the air of the westbound Piccadilly Line platform of Knightsbridge station every few minutes died away as the train it was referring too disappeared into the tunnel leaving just a few alighting passengers and the wind turbulence in its wake.

It was late evening and in the relative quiet, the footsteps of the last passengers who alighted from the recently departed service echoed through the passageways as they made their way toward the escalator and on up to the exit.

No one took the slightest notice of the gentleman in the long dark coat and hat stood silent and still, facing the touch screen ticket machine in the main booking hall.

What was unusual was the manner and behaviour of the man. He proceeded to go through the options to purchase a ticket, then when requested for payment, withdrew a credit card from a plastic bag that he had in his inside coat pocket.

Having inserted the card into the machine, the transaction was quickly completed and a ticket appeared in the dispenser slot at the bottom of the machine.

Then bizarrely the man took the ticket from where it had come to rest and replaced it there with the credit card before turning away and making his way towards the escalators.

As the man stood on the right hand side of the downward escalator, he smirked knowingly and looked at his watch as he worked out how long it would be before he would be joined by some old friends.

-----

The darkness of the night air was tempered somewhat by the surrounding glow from the City's myriad of street lights as the Commander looked out over the scene of normally unseen rooftops, most only dimly lit compared with the glare of the street lights below.

He turned as he heard the metal roof access door creak open, seeing Tracy's head

appear around the edge of the door, the Commander smiled weakly and motioned her over to the small bench sized ventilator unit on which he was sitting.

"Penny for them?" Tracy asked seeing the look on the face of the Commander.

"Mmm?" The Commander looked up again, the question not having entirely registered.

"You have had the look of a wet weekend in Bournemouth since we got back" she added as she sat alongside him and took his arm in hers in support "I know you better than anyone and I know when something is wrong, now what is it?"

"I was just thinking that in my life I have twice before been on the roof of a Security Service building and both times I have subsequently been shot" he replied with a smile of mild amusement.

"And what else besides your poor rooftop record is bothering you?" Tracy asked as she watched the Commander's face bathed in the glow of yellow light that was coming up from the street below them.

"When I was talking to the Administrator General, he handed me this" the Commander explained as he produced the bent and slightly crumpled file that he had been given earlier "His inside man in the Political Services Unit came across this when he was digging up files for them".

"Do you mind if I?" she asked. The Commander passed the folder. Opening it, her surprise at the name stated in the contents was obvious.

"Well what do you think?" the Commander asked.

"Bloody hell! Isn't this...?"

"My father? Yep, the supposedly dead old crook turns out to be alive and well. Seems that the Witness Protection Unit arranged for him to 'die' in all but name to get the potential assassins off his back".

"Do you know where he is?" Tracy asked.

"The Administrator General is working on it, not sure whether I ought to see him though, technically I'm not supposed to supposedly for fear of uncovering his and/or my original identity".

"If that were to happen?" Tracy was obviously starting to share his nervousness.

"There is the danger that the gang who my Father gave evidence against twenty years or so ago might resurface and carry out their original threat to kill the entire family".

"Does that include me?" Tracy was feeling every so slightly edgy.

"Probably"

"We'll be all right" Tracy assured the Commander putting her arms around him and reassuring him with a huge hug "When was the last time you heard of the possibility of anyone seriously considering assassinating a Divisional Chief Superintendent of the Security Service?"

The Commander looked at his watch, turning his wrist to get the most light on it, "About an hour ago" he replied wryly.

"Very funny" Tracy responded before she realised that the Commander was actually being serious despite his effort to make as much light of the situation as possible "You're not joking are you?"

"Nope, the warning I got today from the Administrator General leaves me in no doubt. It seems anyone who has seen the manuscript of Sharman's memoirs so far has wound up either disappearing or dead except for us two and Fuller".

"Ah!" Tracy looked slightly despondent "By the way did you know that I tried to renew my life insurance the other day, when I gave the name of my Commanding Officer, they tripled my premium!"

"Told you I was a risk didn't I"

"Never mind, I love you anyway" Tracy assured.

"Hate to break up such a romantic scene" Fuller called from the roof access way "but we have a development".

"Ah just as I was beginning to remember my vertigo" the Commander commented, "All right then what is it?" he asked as he struggled slightly to stand up, perhaps old age was finally catching up with him.

"The supposedly dead Mr Sharman has just evidently resurrected himself, or at least his credit card has" Fuller explained.

"Where?" Tracy asked.

"Knightsbridge Tube Station, about five minutes ago" Fuller replied.

The officers bundled themselves back through the doorway and down the stairs before returning to the Control Room where Fuller had already established a link to the CCTV cameras there.

"Lets see the plot then" the Commander called. Fuller transferred the CCTV pictures to the large view screen at the front of the room. Changing views from camera to camera, Fuller provided a running commentary.

"Right then, booking hall, escalators top, escalators bottom, westbound platform west end, east end, eastbound platform east end, west end." He then put it on a five second delay repeatedly changing between cameras on a rolling cycle.

After a couple of cycles, the Commander held his hand aloft, "Whoa hang on there, go back one".

Fuller stopped the cycle and returned the image viewer to the camera view of the far end of the westbound platform.

"Can you control the zoom from here?" the Commander asked as he stepped forward towards the screen for a closer inspection.

"Not the camera's zoom, but I can get closer on any section of the picture" Fuller replied as he looked down at the keyboards trying to remember how to do it even though he was the one who designed the system in the first place.

"Well in that case lets have a look at this bloke down the far end, two trains have gone past and he has just stood there watching the world go by" the Commander responded clearly reaching up and pointing towards the area of the screen he wanted a closer look at.

Fuller selected the area of the screen required and produced a much larger if less clearer image, a lone figure standing with his or her back against the platform wall.

"Long black coat and wide brimmed hat" Tracy commented "Ring any bells with anyone?"

"Mornington Crescent!" both the Commander and Fuller replied simultaneously.

-----

"Quiet night isn't it?" Dave, the Station Supervisor at Knightsbridge Underground Station commented as he looked across the almost deserted booking hall. It was now almost eleven clock at night and only a few people were about, most late night passengers normally using Hyde Park Corner further down the line.

"Aye" the Station Assistant leaning against the wall alongside him replied in his broad Scottish accent. He pushed up the peak of his cap and rubbed his forehead as though in thought.

The sound of the escalators continuing their never ending rotation, creaked through the hall but apart from that, the hum of the fluorescent lights and the footsteps of a few passing passengers, there was silence.

"Do you hear sirens Dave?" They both strained to listen to the approaching sound that was filtering through the subterranean passageways that linked the booking hall to the roadway outside.

"Well they've stopped" the Supervisor commented, means either the emergency is off or they are right outside.

"Count to three"



"Three, two, one...." As the Assistant reached the end of his count the source of the sirens and their destination became readily apparent as the Commander, Tracy, Fuller and several other officers appeared through the entrance and ran towards the ticket barriers.

The Station Supervisor banged his elbow on the emergency plunger that was mounted on the wall immediately behind him to open the barriers, upon which the officers disappeared down the escalators and out of sight.

"Well that was interesting".

"There goes the neighbourhood".

The sound of a train coming to a halt in the westbound platform greeted the officers as they left the bottom of the escalator and moved cautiously towards the platform entrance. Tracy signalled to the officers with them to go to the eastbound platform opposite to cover any alternative means of escape whilst another positioned herself at the bottom of the escalators.

"Right then, discreetly please, there are members of the public about" the Commander indicated. At his word they moved out onto the platform, guns drawn but held discreetly so as not to incur too much panic.

The doors of the train slid open and a few passengers alighted and boarded, many not taking the slightest bit of notice of the five armed and fully uniformed Security Service officers who were amongst them.

"I don't see him" Tracy commented as she looked around at the faces of those present. They continued to move towards the far end of the platform, as they did so they became aware of a commotion breaking out in the front of the lead carriage of the train.

"Aye, aye" Fuller remarked "Something occurring"

The Commander was the first to board the train by way of the rear door, the others quickly following. The open access door to the cab and front of the train was open, the glass that covered the emergency access handle lying shattered on the floor.

"What happened?" the Commander asked the train operator who was surveying the damage.

"Some loony comes on board, breaks through to the cab and then goes out onto the track" he explained clearly annoyed.

Tracy looked out into the darkness of the tunnel ahead, the headlights of the train reflecting off the running rails that stretched off into the dark.

"What down there?" she asked.

Before anyone could reply a gunshot rang out from the darkness, ricocheting off the front of the cab's red painted metal bodywork but fortunately harming no one. Instantly everyone on board the carriage ducked instinctively.

Fuller took charge of the public and ushered them out of the carriage speedily and away to safety, leaving just the Commander, Tracy and the driver facing the dark tunnel ahead from the drivers cab.

"Right then" the Commander announced as he removed his gun from its holster once again and checked it.

"You head as fast as you can to Gloucester Road and make sure our friend down there doesn't get out, I'll see if I can flush him out from this end".

"Right!" Tracy replied by which time she was already half way down the carriage, making for the exit at a rapid pace.

Clambering down onto the dusty muck that made up the surface of the track bed, the Commander was careful not to step on the positive electric supply rails mounted on the outside and also between the running rails as 600 volts of direct current through his legs would in his own words put a bit of a dampener on his evening.

Not that is he exactly relished the prospect of clambering around the Underground tunnels of west London either, especially as there was someone out there in the dark with a gun and evidently more than prepared to use it.

He was careful to avoid tripping over the rails in the semi-darkness as he went over to the left hand tunnel wall and perched himself against the run of cables that ran along the sides of most of the Underground tunnels on the system.

The cables had amongst them two bare wires that ran parallel to each other along the length of the tunnel and pinched them together. As a result the tunnel lights came on, illuminating the running tunnel for some considerable distance.

"Well your eight minutes start now" the driver called from the cab.

"Eh?"

"When the two communication wires are pinched together, it automatically turns on the tunnel lights and shuts down the track power, trouble is it only works for eight minutes" the driver explained.

"I had better not hang about then" the Commander replied whimsically as he set off down the tunnel, gun drawn and pointing ahead but keeping to the side of the tunnel as much as possible. He ducked momentarily, using the indentations of the metal tunnel segments as cover as another shot rang down the tunnel from some distance away.

This constant moving on down the tunnel and then taking cover every so often as a

bullet flew past went on for some time until suddenly the tunnel lights went out, leaving the Commander in almost total darkness, just the distant light from the station behind him providing barely sufficient glow to see the rails beneath his feet.

It was another few minutes before it occurred to him that he had suddenly had a period when no shot had been forthcoming for quite a few minutes. Had the assailant disappeared or simply run out of ammunition?

The sound of emergency alarms greeted Tracy as she entered Gloucester Road Underground Station, as with forewarning, the Station staff had evacuated everyone and activated the 'Do Not Enter' signs and it was their accompanying siren sound that filled the air.

"Can't you turn that damm thing off?" Tracy shouted to the officer in the booking hall who was holding his hands over his ears to try and protect himself from the din. In response he just shook his head and mouthed something but the noise made it impossible to decipher his words.

As Tracy headed across the booking hall with clear purpose, she identified the location from which the siren was emanating, a speaker and control unit mounted on the wall near the entrance. It was with a swift pull of her service revolver that she fired at the unit twice and there fell a deafening silence as the unit disintegrated in a shower of sparks and partially collapsed to the floor.

"That's better!" she called as she re-holstered her gun. This direct approach was a bad habit she had picked up from the Commander over the past nine months and no doubt yet another strongly worded phone call of complaint was winging its way to their office right now.

The escalators had been stopped some time earlier so she did it the old fashioned way and walked briskly down to the platform level, finding the westbound platform, she jumped down onto the track bed and with her gun drawn, moved on into the running tunnel.

Ten minutes had passed without a shot coming from ahead, indeed the Commander soon realised that there seemed to be no sign of anybody ahead at all. He quickened his pace, being careful to stay away from the live rails. As he rounded a slight curve in the tunnel, he could make out the light from Knightsbridge station far in the distance meaning he must be now about half way between the two points.

Standing there in the darkness, just a few echoing sounds filtering down the tunnel from the far distance, the Commander was starting to think that his quarry had slipped the net. Suddenly the sound of footsteps approaching from ahead caused the Commander to re-concentrate his aim ahead.

"Stop or I'll fire!" he called, the sound of his voice echoing along the long dark tubular tunnel.

"I wouldn't if I were you!" Tracy called back. As she approached, the Commander was able to recognise her outline silhouetted against the distant glow of light from

Gloucester Road Station in the distance.

"What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?" The Commander could not resist the cliché, "I take it you didn't meet anyone else on your travels?" he asked.

"You're the first person I have seen, did he double back on you?" Tracy asked confused.

"No, I thought for a moment you were him" the Commander replied by now also confused.

"Well then where the hell did he go?" The Commander reached across to the tunnel wall and pinched together the wires to switch on the tunnel lights again. The scene that was subsequently illuminated was a slight surprise, instead of the tight confines of the running tunnel, this section was larger, the height of the tunnel almost that of a station platform tunnel.

Also the sidewall on the south side of the tunnel was straight vertical brick, not the curved cast metal segments of the running tunnel ahead and behind them.

"What's this?" Tracy asked indicating a short distance ahead. The Commander turned round and looked at where she was indicating.

"Looks like a door to me" he replied as they went over to the dusty red painted door set into the brick wall. It was obvious from its condition that this door was elderly and little used, however there was the clear sign of a handprint in the surface layer of dirt that covered it.

"On three" the Commander indicated. With Tracy training her gun on the door and anyone who may be on the other side, the Commander drew his own weapon and with a quick movement opened the door.

Inside the doorway, Tracy covered to the left, the Commander to the right however despite the semi darkness, it became quickly apparent that this area was as deserted as the running tunnel.

The Commander, still with his gun trained ahead into the darkness, walked forward along the length of the other side of the brick tunnel wall they had come across just a few moments earlier. A small bulkhead lamp and the glow of the tunnel lighting coming through the open doorway were the only source of illumination that either of them had, barely enough to make out the nature of the passageway.

"Looks like an old station platform to me" the Commander commented as his eyes re-adjusted to the dark and he managed to make out the curvature of the opposite wall, however as Tracy joined him, a sudden noise behind them caused both officers to swivel around quickly.

A person shot across the passageway from a corner or cross passage that could not be seen in the dark towards the door that led to the track.

By the time they could react, the mysterious stranger had bolted through the door and closed it behind him, just narrowly escaping the shot Tracy fired which shattered the bulkhead light next to the doorway.

Now enclosed in total darkness, the Commander fumbled around in the dark for something to lean on and get his bearings, what he found was warm and soft.

"Oi, watch where your putting that gun" Tracy called.

"Oh sorry!" the Commander replied with clear embarrassment when he realised which part of her body he had accidentally come into contact with. Irrespective of the fact that Tracy didn't mind really, it was nothing that he hadn't seen and felt before, after all they were about to get married but still the Commander was a gentleman and touching a lady unexpectedly on her chest in the dark was still not the done thing.

Feeling their way through the dark, they managed to find the door that led back out onto the track, a faint crack of light visible around the doorframe.

"This won't open" Tracy announced as she repeatedly tried the stiff metal handle, however the way it was moving made it obvious that it had been locked or jammed in some way from the outside.

"Let me try" the Commander said as Tracy stepped aside to allow him to access the door, however try as he might he too had no success.

"Ouch!" Tracy called out.

"Wasn't me!" the Commander quickly replied.

"I think I just leant on something, hang on a minute" she announced as she scrabbled around in the dark trying to find the object that she had leant on.

"Whoa! Well done lass!" the Commander said as the object Tracy had found turned out to be the power switch for the lights in the room, the sudden light that appeared illuminating the room in marked contrast to the almost total darkness of a few moments previously.

The initial dazzle of the light soon died down and the two officers adjusted to their revised surroundings. It was obvious that the passageway they were in was indeed an old station platform tunnel with its distinctive curved wall on one side and the straight rough brickwork of the wall that had been built along the edge of the former platform surface along the other.

Tracy walked slowly down the length of the former platform, a coating of dust clearly showed on pretty much all the surfaces in the dimly lit space.

"Where are we?" she asked as she looked around trying to make out some detail of her surroundings.

"Brompton Road" the Commander replied.

"How did you know that?" Tracy asked swinging round to face him.

"Its written in ten inch high letters on the tile work" the Commander pointed towards the grubby tiled platform wall, the old name just visible on the white panel set in the brown, green and yellow tiling, the colours disfigured by the ravages of time and deposits of dirt.

"Come on let's get out of here" the Commander announced.

"I'll drink to that".

Together, they went into the cross passage and up the steps to the former lift landing. Looking up the shaft where the lifts used to be, it was clear that there was no way up to the surface, the spiral staircase had been removed long ago and the shafts blocked off halfway up their length.

"Well that's a non-runner" Tracy remarked, "What about the other platform?"

They went across through the dim passages to the other disused platform, similarly bricked off along the trackside. A similar door to the one through which they originally entered the old abandoned complex was set into the brick wall however this had also been tampered with by unseen hands.

"To stop train, press plunger" Tracy read from the sign that was mounted adjacent to the doorway.

"What plunger?"

"I suppose they mean this button thing here, shall I press it?"

"Might as well, we are stuck here until someone lets us out".

-----

"Lima Tango Zero One or Lima Tango Zero Two receiving over". Fuller was growing increasingly concerned at the lack of contact from either the Commander or Tracy. It had been over an hour since they both disappeared and it was becoming obvious that something was wrong.

Fuller turned to the train driver who was sitting in the driver's seat casually reading the West End Final edition of the Evening Standard.

"How long would it take to walk from here to Gloucester Road through the tunnel?" he asked.

"About fifteen minutes, maybe a bit longer if the lights were off, why is he not back yet?"

"No sign of him or Caverner. Look can you drive the train forward slowly to

Knightsbridge, see if we can find them if they are in the tunnel?" Fuller enquired.

"Well we could, I'll have to get the Line Controller's permission first though" the driver replied.

"Do it".

"Train 132 to Line Control".

Instantly the cab was filled with the sound of the reply as it came over the cab speaker.

"Train 132, pass your message".

"I have some high flying nit of a Security Service officer here who wants me to proceed at slow speed to Gloucester Road, any chance?"

There was a pause while the Line Controller thought or consulted for a few moments and Fuller glared a little at the driver in response to his comment.

"Train 132, you may proceed at a maximum line speed of 10 mph out of service to Gloucester Road from where you can resume you service duty, over" came the austere reply from the Line Controller's office.

A few moments later the signal mounted on the side of the running tunnel wall ahead changed to green. The driver initiated the door closure procedure before releasing the brakes and moving the train forward into the darkness at little more than walking pace.

"There we go" Tracy announced as she pressed the plunger that was mounted adjacent to the doorway on the other of the former station's abandoned platforms, "Now we are covered from both directions".

"Assuming someone hasn't disabled those buttons as well, way my luck has been running lately, nothing would surprise me" the Commander replied scornfully.

"Oh stop being such a grumble guts!" Tracy replied. She went over to him and together they sat down on an old crate that was lying against the platform wall.

"I love you, I just though I'd say that" the Commander suddenly announced as he looked across into Tracy's eyes.

"And I love you. Where did that come from, you don't show your feelings very often do you?" Tracy responded with a bright smile that seemed to light up the dim surroundings that they had found themselves in.

"I've always wondered what you ever saw in me, I mean its not like I am exactly the most passionate bloke in the world is it?"

Tracy took the Commander's hands firmly in her own, "This is what's its all about, us, being together. The reason I love you so much is that you are so honest and down to earth, and caring. Most people these days don't know the meaning of such words".

"Oh right..."

"Besides...." Tracy added wryly "who else would be daft enough to have you?"

"You may have a point there" the Commander replied as he took on a slightly different distant look as though he was concentrating on something in the far distance.

"Tracy, can you hear a train?" he asked.

Tracy strained to listen the almost silent background noise, the occasional whistle of a breeze filtering through the century old tunnels and passageways. In the distance however there was a distinct sound of something approaching, the clonking of wheels over joints in track clearly starting to echo down the running tunnel and filtering over the top of the wall that separated the old station from the line.

Both Tracy and the Commander stood up and walked across to the doorway. Tracy put her ear to the old wood panel and listened intently to the sounds coming from the other side.

"There is definitely something coming, slowly mind but its there" she announced as she made out the sound of electrical motors and air being displaced echoing all around the running tunnels.

The couple both just looked at each other as the squeaking of brakes immediately outside heralded the arrival of their way out of there.

"Hello!" Tracy shouted, "We are in here!" She banged on the door in an attempt to draw attention to their plight. Soon her calls were answered when the sound of someone fiddling with the door on the other side began.

After a few moments the door fiddling stopped and there followed a slightly muffled instruction from an unseen source on the other side.

"Stand back!" said the voice.

"What did he say?" the Commander asked as he made a mental note to himself to get his hearing checked out sometime.

"I think it was...." Tracy began but she was cut off as the sound of a gunshot echoed through the air, its ear-splitting sound being magnified by being in such a confined location.

The swift application of a boot to the doorway soon saw it burst inwards with the catch mechanism and parts of the frame disintegrating and falling to the floor.

"Anyone here call a cab?" Fuller asked as he poked his head around what now



remained of the doorframe.

-----

"...and on the tubes, services on the Piccadilly line are heavily delayed tonight following a Security Alert which closed the line through Gloucester Road and Knightsbridge stations. London Underground advise that they do not expect services to return to normal before close of service tonight and recommend that passengers should use alternative routes. BBC LDN Radio Travel Report at ten minutes past eleven".

The Commander listened to the radio in his car as Tracy drove them back to the office. There was no way they were going to get back home to Haychester tonight, even if they did, he thought, they would have to leave to get back to the Office almost as soon as they arrived.

"You're quiet aren't you?" Tracy enquired as she rounded the Aldwych and turned left into Kingsway.

"Oh I was just thinking about tomorrow, these blasted protests and all that, it's going to be total havoc I reckon".

"But the Chief of the Met division is heading up operations, he's pretty competent isn't he?"

"Yes he's a good officer" the Commander replied "but he doesn't have front line experience in crowd control, that's more my field".

"So what do you reckon will happen?"

"He'll probably wind up getting out of his depth and muggins here will have to step into the breach to dig him out of it I expect" the Commander responded with a little foreboding as Tracy turned left at the traffic lights into High Holborn before crossing over to the small lay-by on the right hand side of the road directly opposite their office building.

The radio stopped as soon as Tracy turned off the ignition, right in the middle of an interview with a Shadow Cabinet Minister on the forthcoming protests. As the Commander released his seatbelt, Tracy got out of the car.

Momentarily, the Commander stood in the street and looked up at the bright lights shining through the windows of their modern office building, partially illuminating the dim and empty streets below. The occasional car passing through and the traffic lights that controlled the cross roads where High Holborn, Kingsway and Southampton Row met.

"Worst things happen at sea you know" Tracy said as she looked across the car roof at him.

"Yeah I suppose so, I just have a bad feeling about this though" he replied still not in

the happiest of moods.

"Come on, I'll make the coffee" Tracy encouraged as she walked around the car and took the Commander's arm in her own. Together they walked across the road towards the fire exit entrance of their offices.

"I can't stand coffee" the Commander having come more fully to his senses suddenly responded as he withdrew his warrant card from his pocket and passed it over the magnetic reader pad that controlled access through the door from the outside.

With a buzz the latch opened and they passed through, using the metal stairway to make their way up to the office floor.

"Where is everybody?" the Commander commented as they entered through the fire door into the oddly quiet corridor.

"Well it is late you know" Tracy advised him.

"Yes but even still, its really quiet" the Commander added as he reached and opened the door to their office.

"Looks like we've had visitors though" Tracy announced when she saw the state of the interior of their office. It was normal for the Commander's side of the office to resemble the results of an explosion in a paper recycling plant, but this was exceptional, especially as Tracy's normally tidy half of the office was pretty much in the same sort of state.

"Is it the cleaning lady's day off or have we been burgled?" Fuller asked as he arrived in the office.

"I take it your office is in a similar state of distress?" the Commander enquired as he looked inside the open desk drawer to see if any of the contents survived their tipping out onto the floor.

"Worse" Fuller explained "the laptop is gone and so are all my papers I had relating to Sharman and Garforth, at least the ones I left in there anyway".

"Get forensics in here, I want some prints although I doubt there are any" the Commander requested. It was clear he was annoyed but not entirely surprised at this latest turn of events.

"We'll re-convene in the staff canteen" Fuller announced.

"Why there?" Tracy enquired.

"That's where I hid the copies of my documentation, I had a feeling something like this was going to happen" Fuller explained.

-----

"Right then!" the Commander called in an attempt to get everyone's attention. It was early morning and the riot gear equipped members of the Transport Division were all gathered in the now closed off High Holborn road outside the main offices. The Commander stood on a box borrowed from the nearby supermarket and attempted to organise the three hundred plus officers that were filling the road in a sea of day-glow yellow outfits in front of him.

"You are allocated into ten groups, eight of which have specific location assignments, the other two are general wanderers to be called on as required" the Commander explained through the loudhailer.

"Our illustrious Chief would like to remind you that our primary purpose is to protect the public and property" the Commander was doing his Henry the Fifth before the battle of Agincourt impression as Tracy looked on from the front of the crowd in proud admiration.

"My translation of this is that if you see any of these idiots deliberately causing criminal damage or injury, then you can shoot the buggers!" he added which produced a roar of laughter from the gathered throng.

"Right, go forth, have a good day and try and come back in one piece". With that final comment the crowd began to break up into their assigned groups and disperse to the armada of red Security Service vans and borrowed London double deck buses that were parked up both sides of the roads stretching towards Covent Garden and Tottenham Court Road.

The Commander gave Tracy a hug and bid her good luck as she left on her Security Service motorcycle with the vehicles that made up team one, destined for Westminster Underground Station. He watched the vehicles disappear into the distance before making his way back to his assigned position for the day up in the Control Room.

"Ok Simon, what havoc shall we wreak today?" the Commander asked as he sat in the centre Command console in the Control Room and looked up at the main screen surveying the current status of the Underground and Main Line Railway systems.

"Whenever you are ready, we can shut down every station in Central London" Fuller announced.

"Let rock and roll" the Commander announced as he sat back and relaxed.

Within a few minutes, Fuller had through the controls of his workstation and a few phone calls to line controllers offices, managed to initiate the close down of every station within the West End of the City.

The Commander observed as red crosses started popping up on stations names on the large version of the Underground System map that was being displayed on the huge main screen that dominated the front of the control room.

"With the exception of Main Line terminus, that's every station shut down in a three mile radius of Oxford Circus and Traffic Division already have the road closures and

traffic diversions in hand" Fuller announced.

"OK, where are these protestors then?" the Commander enquired.

"Many arriving at stations around London as we speak" Fuller showed various CCTV views on part of the main screen "mostly heading for the initial rally at Hyde Park".

"That's the quiet bit, it's the march afterwards and its attendant nutters and rent-a-riot that are going to be the problem" said the Commander thoughtfully.

It was actually quite a peaceful morning. Many of the City centre's usual workers, shoppers and visitors had heeded the official advice to avoid London's centre that day, as a result the centre was unusually quiet, so much so that Tracy and her team, all dressed up in full riot gear and standing in and around Westminster Station, directly opposite the Houses of Parliament, were drinking coffee casually and chatting with the few locals that were about.

Around the City centre were spread teams of officers, some guarding key buildings and areas, others on stand by casually waiting at key collecting points for the call to action.

Only at Hyde Park Corner was there any real sign of activity, a huge gathering of people, many swamped in a sea of banners and placards all proclaiming their own differing political and personal messages and opinions.

All were being carefully watched by the Metropolitan Division's Chief Divisional Superintendent who was well aware that these people were not the problem for today, it was the 'rent-a-riot nutters', as the Commander had unsubtly put it, that these protests attracted that were going to be the problem.

"Lima Mike One to all units, we're moving" the Chief Superintendents voice over the radio suddenly saw every officer in the city jump back to full attention to the job in hand as the massive collective of humanity and their sea of banners and placards started to move out of the south east entrance to Hyde Park and begin their planned peaceful march through the streets of London.

Accompanying the huge crowd both front and rear was a large Security Service escort, mostly motorcycle or horse mounted more for the protection of the protestors from any traffic on the roads than the other way around, that would come later.

Colourful outfits, people from all walks of life and parts of the World, never mind the country made up the group interspersed with some musicians and even a brass band. There was not many people unrepresented in this collective although any trouble makers were either elsewhere waiting and planning or else keeping themselves out of sight.

The Chief Superintendent led the way in the lead Security Service vehicle. As far as he was concerned this was his day for some front line glory after years of sitting behind a desk.

The Commander, who was stuck behind a desk in his own Control Room, watched the events unfold on the screen via the City's CCTV cameras that were following the group's every move.

"Team 4, Green Park and Piccadilly, the march is passing us now" came the call over the radio from Commander Cassini.

Fuller acknowledged the report and changed the CCTV view to the cameras overlooking Piccadilly Circus, its famous statue of Eros at its centre. As one of the camera views panned from the Piccadilly entrance to the Circus around to the Regents Street junction, the Commander sat up and looked closer.

"Lima Tango One to Lima Mike One, receiving over" he called over the radio.

"Lima Mike One, go ahead". The background noise of whistles, chants and music behind him almost drowned out the Chief Superintendents reply.

"You may have some uninvited extra guests at the party" the Commander informed him as he indicated to Fuller to zoom in on the area where he had spotted something unexpected "There is a group of about forty protestors approaching and merging with the group from the Regents Street direction".

"Roger that, I'll check it out".

"Trouble?" Fuller asked a little nervously.

"Oh probably" the Commander responded resigned to the inevitable fact that events were going to turn ugly sooner or later.

There seemed to be further small groups beginning to add themselves or move outwards towards the periphery of the crowd as it turned and made its way towards Trafalgar Square, all the time under the watchful eye of the Security Services both on the ground and via cameras which were observing events from all angles, feeding their constant images back to the Control Rooms at Scotland Yard and Holborn.

Everyone knew that Trafalgar Square, with Nelson's Column dominating the centre of it, would be the first crucial point. A wide open space where crowd control would be more difficult than in the narrow confined streets and when you add the fact that the protest was planned to split into two parts here, the opportunities for trouble were obvious.

"Lima Tango Control to Team 5" the Commander called. Team 5 was based in the cobbled forecourt of Charing Cross Station and had a ringside view of the imminent events in Trafalgar Square nearby.

"Team 5, go ahead".

"The protest crowd has reached the Square. The Oxford Street bound part should be passing you in about ten minutes, be aware that they seemed to have acquired some

uninvited extra guests so be prepared for anything" the Commander advised.

"Team 5 Acknowledged".

The crowd spilled out into the wide piazza of Trafalgar Square, there mass seeming to expand to fill the space available. This started to stretch the escort officers who were finding it increasingly difficult to maintain any kind of cohesion with encircling the crowd.

As the two divided groups began to form in the respective sides of the Square, it was clear from what the Commander could see that things were starting to go wrong for them.

"Lima Tango One to Lima Mike One, respond please" he called. There was no reply so the Commander repeated his call again to no avail.

"Lima Tango Zero One to all units, anyone seen the Chief Superintendent?" he queried, his growing concern about the ongoing situation on the ground obvious.

"This is Team M2, the Chief Super went off to check something back at Piccadilly, we haven't seen him since" came the reply.

"Well who is running the show down there?"

"Err....."

"Team 4, respond please".

"Cassini Sir".

"Take charge of the Whitehall bound crowd, we seem to have lost the Chief Super somewhere along the way" the Commander instructed.

"Roger, on way".

"Simon, you're in charge here, I'm off to head the other lot off at Tottenham Court Road" the Commander announced as he made a bolt for the door.

"Don't you want any riot gear Sir?" Fuller called after him but the Commander was either out of earshot or just not listening.

The two crowds moved off out of the Square in their respective directions, one towards Leicester Square and the main shopping area of the West End, the other down Whitehall, past Government offices and Downing Street bound for Westminster Square and the Houses of Parliament, the very symbol of power and control in the United Kingdom.

As the Westminster bound portion approached Horse Guards Parade, Cassini who was now on duty at the head of the crowd began to grow increasingly worried at the level

of activity that seemed to be brewing around and within the crowd. It was clear that anything that was going to happen was going to happen very soon.

"All units, this is Team 4 leader, the balloon is about to go up". In the background of this announcement that Cassini broadcast universally, there was a noticeable increase in the volume level of the crowd.

On the ground this was even more obvious as many of the protestors at the front of the crowd nearest the lead escort suddenly turned slightly panic driven as they tried to hurriedly get out of the way of the first of a number of missiles that were suddenly hurled forwards through the air by rioters who suddenly emerged from the crowd, pushing out of the way genuine peaceful protestors who had within the space of a few moments suddenly found themselves in the midst of an escalating urban war zone.

Instantly in front of the rapidly advancing rioters, a wall appeared of Security Officers, helmet visors drawn down and hand held riot shields to the fore.

The other half of the crowd meanwhile had just reached the junction of Shaftesbury Avenue where it intersected Charing Cross Road. As if co-ordinated with the Westminster bound section, suddenly the same eruption of violence and missile hurling began, taking their accompanying Security Service escort completely by surprise.

Within moments, bottles, rocks and other objects were flying, windows of surrounding buildings were smashed and those members of the crowd caught in the crossfire were running for cover.

Tracy with her team had the duty of guarding the Underground Station beneath Portcullis House, the office accommodation for Members of Parliament and were preparing to hold their ground against the onslaught that was about to round the corner into Westminster Square.

"Everybody standby!" Tracy called as the front guard of Security Officers backed into the Square area from the Whitehall entrance, the noise and confusion from the approaching rioters almost becoming a din.

By the time the Commander had hitched a lift in the cab of a westbound Central Line train as far as the otherwise deserted Tottenham Court Road station, the northbound part of the protest had disintegrated and the genuine protestors had fled out of harms way leaving about a hundred missile and punch throwing rioters on the loose up the upper part of Charing Cross Road towards the Centre Point building.

Without their leader who had still not reappeared, the Security Services on site were making it up as they went along, outnumbered and out gunned although they were all armed as standard, there was no senior officer present to authorise the firing of weapons except in self defence.

The Commander calmly stepped out of the northeast entrance of Tottenham Court Road Station and surveyed the scene with a distinctly unimpressed look.

"Lima Tango One to all TCR units, fall back to Centre Point and form a double line with shields facing the enemy" he called over the radio.

It was clear that several officers hadn't heard him, the noise of the protestors and their havoc probably drowned out any radio messages.

"Well this is a right cock up!" the Commander uttered to himself as he walked across the junction where Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road met in the shadow of the tall Centre Point office building, narrowly ducking a flying bottle that came flying over the barrier of officers as he did so.

"Who the hell is in charge of this mess?" he shouted above the din. Those officers who were not directly involved in the defending line just shrugged and looked amongst each other.

"Right then, you!" the Commander pointed out one officer of the Metropolitan Division who was standing nearby, he turned and looked slightly surprised in the Commander's direction.

"Yes you, come here, what's your name?" the Commander insisted.

"Err Lieutenant Commander Harrison Sir" he replied a little nervously.

"Right then, consider yourself deputised"

"Yes Sir!" came the much more enthusiastic reply.

"Hi Sis!" called a familiar voice. Tracy looked across in the direction of the source of the voice, barely audible above the noise of the ever-encroaching protest. To her surprise it was her twin sister who was approaching the front of Westminster Station from the direction of the Houses of Parliament.

"What the hell are you doing here?" Tracy asked as she kept an eye on the chaotic demonstration that was steadily encroaching closer and closer to their location.

"Heard the natives were getting restless, beside I have got to collect the Secretary of State for Transport downstairs in ten minutes" she replied indicating towards the interior of the Station.

"He picks his moments, this place is about to go bananas in about five minutes" Tracy responded as her look of concern grew deeper at the mass of chaos nearby.

"Well I'm off downstairs, I'll leave you to it".

Tracy quickly glanced back at her Sister as she disappeared through the ticket barriers and away across the ticket hall. Now more pressing matters needed her attention as she moved to the front of the line of riot gear equipped Security Officers and saw to it that the line was ready to face the oncoming onslaught, the first few wayward missiles of which were starting to land only feet away.



"Shields up, phasers on stun!" Tracy called.

The first task for Harrison in his new temporary promotion was to organise a double line of riot officers now strengthened in number by the arrival of the Euston and Kings Cross teams of Transport Division officers which the Commander had had wheeled across rather rapidly.

The line was soon formed right across the top of Charing Cross Road outside the Centre Point building. For the advancing rioters, there would be no further progression up this particular route.

With the two opposing forces now facing each other, it was time for the Commander to enter the fray and issue the final warning to the unwieldy mob.

Purposefully he strode forward through a gap in the middle of the Security Officer's ranks that quickly closed behind him. Facing the unwieldy mob, he stood out in his dark blue uniform that contrasted with the riot gear, shields and yellow green reflective day-glow uniforms of the officers formed behind him.

The noise of the rioters died down slightly as those at the front saw this new development

With all eyes of both sides and the gathered press upon him, the Commander composed himself monetarily, raised the megaphone and began.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, in accordance with the Riot Act, I am officially cautioning you that if you do not disperse peacefully with immediate effect, then I will authorise the use of force". He could tell by some reactions that he had the attention of at least some of the crowd. The problem was however that they were probably the genuine protestors who had got caught up in the mess.

"Let me put this in basic English" the Commander continued "you have three options, one, you can leave here peacefully by being escorted in groups to the nearest Main Line Rail Station whereupon you will be required to leave the City immediately, two, we can arrest every single one of you"

The Commander paused as one rioter suddenly leapt from the front of the crowd with an axe held aloft above his head. Screaming at the top of his voice he made a direct line for the Commander who calmly pulled out his gun, aimed generally and fired.

The sound of the gunshot echoed around the tall buildings on either side of the road and produced a few moments of almost stunned silence broken only by the distant sounds of sirens, helicopters hovering overhead and the clang of the axe falling to the road. The attacker lay writhing around on his back on the ground clutching his leg in agony.

"Where was I?" the Commander pondered as he re-holstered his weapon "Ah yes, Option two, we can throw your useless backsides in Jail or three, we could just shoot

you".

Some of the rioters where noticeably becoming more nervous, especially when they could tell from the Commander's body language that he meant every word he said.

"So which is it to be then? Train, Paddy Wagon or Ambulance?" Most of the crowd seemed resigned to their fate, some however tried to make good their escape through side streets and back the way they came only to find that the Commander had already launched a pincer movement on them whilst he had them distracted with his announcement and they were trapped.

Most quickly gave up and within a few minutes a convoy of Security Service vehicles were loading up with prisoners leaving only those few hardcore rioters left to be dealt with.

"Well that seems to have gone better than expected" the Commander commented as he rejoined Harrison.

"Most of the hardcore rioters went towards Westminster when this lot split up" he replied.

"Do we know what it's like down there?" the Commander asked.

"No-one's heard anything for about twenty minutes now" Harrison announced concerned.

Virtually every window at ground level and many above that in Whitehall Square and the surrounding streets where now little more than crushed glass shards littering the pavements and roads.

Over a thousand protestors, rioters and others where involved in a massive display of carnage and violence with virtually anything within reach, be it physical or living becoming either a weapon or a target for the senseless aggression that was being metered out.

"I think we are definitely losing this one." Tracy concluded as her team guarding the main Station entrance had to cower behind their shields under the barrage of missiles that were being hurled generally around in their immediate vicinity.

Tracy's team's problems were but a fraction of the trouble that was being encountered by the Metropolitan Division's officers out in the main square. Although they had now managed to block the crowd in, Westminster Square was still a large area of space and it was full of people ranging from Security Officers, Press and innocent passers-by through to the rioters and those who had accidentally caught up in the violence as the rioters targeted any sign of authority, or if none was available the nearest object or person regardless of who or what they might be.

The Ambulance Service were busy hauling out as many of the injured as they could safely reach and numbers of casualties, both minor and serious were running roughly

a 60-40 split with the Authorities being in the unfortunate majority.

"Ruddy Nora!" the Commander exclaimed as a fence post bounced off the bonnet of the Security Service van in which he was a front seat passenger. As he and several other vanloads of officers, mostly drawn from the Transport Division but with some picked up from other Sections along the way arrived on the periphery of the hubbub.

"Got any suggestions Sir?" one officer asked the Commander as they stepped out into the street and surveyed the situation.

"Lets see if we can narrow down the crowd a little" the Commander mused as he moved towards a gentleman who was standing on the edge of the crowd looking even more concerned than everyone else at the way things were going.

"You the Demo Supervisor?" the Commander asked.

"Yes, what's left of it" he replied in dismay.

"Do you have radio contact with your Stewards?"

"Barely, there is so much noise it's difficult to hear anything in there". He indicated towards the chaotic scenes a matter of yards away.

"Right, get on your radio and advise them to get themselves and any genuine protestors that are stuck in that mess as far out of the way as possible as things are about to get messy" the Commander asked.

"Supervisor to all Units, get the hell out of there, the Chief is about to send the heavy mob in".

The Commander went back over to the van, narrowly ducking a passing stone that was hurled over the main defence line of riot officers and imbedded itself in the windscreen, shattering the glass right in front of the point where he had been sitting only a few minutes earlier.

"Lima Tango One to Lima Tango Two, how are you doing over there my love?" the Commander asked over the radio.

"We are holding the fort but the natives are getting restless, any chance of some backup, Met Division are getting well and truly hammered out there". The background sound of the riot almost drowned out Tracy's response.

"Sit tight my dear, the cavalry is here" the Commander replied glad that she was all right but still concerned about her welfare as well as that of all the other officers involved.

"Lima Tango One to all Westminster units, its time for no more Mr Nice Guy. I don't care who they are, if they are involved either arrest them or shoot them. The cavalry will be charging in, in exactly two minutes".

The Commander could have sworn that he heard a cheer rise from the maelstrom within the Square as he turned round and made a quick inspection of the lines of riot gear equipped officers all ready to go behind him.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, I want everyone of this lot either arrested or unconscious within ten minutes, we can sort out who did what later, in the meantime if in doubt, lynch em" The Commander certainly did not mince his words, making his intentions patently clear to all those waiting for the off.

"Lima Tango One this is Alpha Control over". The Scotland Yard Control Room's sudden and unexpected radio call caught the Commander just as he was about to send in his officers.

"Yes what?" the Commander responded somewhat tersely, this was one of those crucial last moment interruptions that really annoyed him.

"The Met Chief Super has been found slumped unconscious in a doorway in Piccadilly, he'll be alright but he is minus his uniform and gun, over".

"Thanks for that" the Commander replied, a tone of curiosity entering into his voice.

"That was weird" Commander Cassini commented as he and his small team arrived having finished their assignment up in the Piccadilly area. "I thought we might pop down and have a bash at this lot with you".

"Welcome to the party" the Commander replied "Ready to go?"

"Lets roll" Cassini responded enthusiastically as he lowered his riot helmet visor in readiness.

It was like a tidal wave being unleashed upon the rioting crowd. Suddenly something in excess of 250 Security Service officers invaded the Square and proceeded to leap upon and bring down to the ground anyone they could lay their hands on.

In the midst of the battle, those offenders who were not brought down and taken away immediately to waiting Security Service vehicles, engaged in hand to hand combat with whatever came to hand.

The Commander was making do with a length of wood and his ceremonial sword as he fought off several attempts by rioters to attack him. Making his way through the melee towards Westminster Station entrance, he could see Tracy and her team still holding their line against a mob that was starting to dwindle as various parts of the crowd were leapt upon en masse by Security Officers and dragged away.

Tracy smiled as the Commander joined her and seeing that the situation was now pretty much under control they retreated to the safety of the Station booking hall.

"You all right love?" the Commander asked concerned.

"Bit of glass got me up here" she replied lifting up the fringe of her hair to show a

small bloody cut on her forehead, "What about you?"

"Nothing a crow bar, bit of four by two and the odd gunshot here and there didn't fix, oh and a cavalry charge or two. Any bother this end?"

"We held them at the pass!" Tracy announced with triumph.

"Aye, aye, what's that?" The Commander indicated an object on the floor that had caught his attention a short distance away on the opposite side of the ticket barriers.

Together they walked over and the Commander bent down to pick up what he now recognised as a familiar object.

"Security Service Warrant Card" the Commander announced, as he looked at the folded plastic coated card he now held in his hands.

"Probably Jennifer's I expect" Tracy replied "she's down there waiting for some Minister or other".

"No it isn't" the Commander responded as he opened the card and saw the picture and details printed inside "It's the Met Chief Super's".

"What's it doing here? He got knocked out at Piccadilly, he certainly hasn't been past us today" Tracy added curious at this peculiar occurrence.

"What's Jennifer's radio code?" the Commander asked.

"Err Victor Papa X-Ray One Zero Two".

The Commander was quickly on the radio, "Victor Papa X-Ray One Zero Two, respond please".

Tracy began heading down into the bowels of the station by way of the first of the huge interweaved collection of escalators that dominate the vast central chamber of the station complex. A room some five storeys deep and filled with both the sight and hum of the constantly moving machinery within.

Not bothering to wait for the escalators to carry her under their own power, Tracy skipped down their metal steps quickly, the hard soles of her boots clanked upon the ridged metal surfaces as she made her way down to the Jubilee Line platform level's.

It was to the bottom most part of the building that Tracy went first, the Jubilee platforms being built one above the other. Looking all along the length of the dark metallic grey platform with the edge adjacent to the running rails guarded by their large glass panels, she could see no obvious sign of life, even the usual mice running along the track beds were absent.

Tracy made her way back into the escalator hall and began her ascent up the first escalator. She was half way up, when suddenly a shiver of fear came over her as if a premonition of something awful, a premonition that seemed to enter reality as a stifled

scream echoed from the entrance to the platform level immediately above her.

Her pace quickened as she rushed up the remaining section of escalator, across the checker plate deck section and onto the other Jubilee Line platform, drawing her gun from its holster in readiness for what she may find.

On the platform, the only visible feature out of place was the smear of fresh blood that was covering the station name roundel sign nearest the end of the platform.

"Jenni!" Tracy called, her voice echoing around the platform. The sound of a distant creaking hinge attracted her attention, she noticed that the glass door that allowed engineers access to the track and tunnel at the end of the platform was ajar.

Approaching the door cautiously, she could see a slumped figure on the ground on the other side of the doorway. Quickly she went over and recognised her twin sister, alive but unconscious and bleeding badly from what appeared to be a stab wound to her lower abdomen.

"Jenni, come on Sis, talk to me" Tracy encouraged as she moved her sister into the recovery position and applied pressure to the wound. There was a momentary movement in Jennifer but apart from that she was motionless and silent.

"Someone get a Paramedic down here quick!" Tracy yelled into her radio. Just at that moment, the Commander appeared on the platform, where Tracy whistled to draw his attention to her obscured location.

"Bloody hell!" he exclaimed upon examining the scene however he then noticed that Tracy's attention had been suddenly drawn to something occurring further down the platform.

"Here hold down here" she indicated where she was applying pressure to Jennifer's wound. The Commander took over as Tracy, her hands coated with her sister's blood, continued to stare down the length of the platform, before leaving the Commander and walking briskly away, her gun drawn.

"Down there" she indicated to the two Paramedics that appeared on the platform at that moment before continuing on her way.

Towards the far end, part of what had attracted her attention became clear, the metal emergency exit doors set into the platform wall, which should normally be closed were open, one of them swinging slightly in the breeze that was filtering through from somewhere.

Behind the doors, a series of staircases led to the surface. Tracy looked up, squinting slightly in the semi darkness through the gap between the flights of stairs, there appeared to be movement some way up the stairs and so she decided to pursue.

The Commander meanwhile was back outside the Station organising the clearance of the area of road immediately outside to allow access by the Paramedic Helicopter which even now was halfway across the river Thames nearby, travelling from the

Hospital just a few minutes away on the other side of the river.

By now Jennifer was on her way to the surface by way of the lifts having now been stabilised and strapped onto a stretcher. From the lift it was a short distance across the booking hall and outside where the Paramedics and indeed everyone else in the vicinity were having to protect themselves against the buffeting turbulence being thrown out by the arrival of the Air Ambulance helicopter.

In the Emergency Exit Stair shaft, Tracy was now halfway up and certain that someone was ahead of her. She quickened her pace, the increase in the speed of her step on the metal stairs resulting in the object of her pursuit becoming aware of her presence.

Tracy gasped with realisation as a seemingly familiar face from the recent past suddenly looked over the banister rail down just a few flights from the top of the stairs.

"Garforth!! Stop right there!" she ordered. It was an offer that was not taken up as James Garforth continued up the stairs and out of the exit at the top.

Tracy reached the top only moments later, bursting through the doors and out into the daylight. Looking around, all she could see were crowds of pedestrians and the traffic backed up through the streets, the after effects of the day's events.

Despite her desperate efforts, Tracy could not see Garforth anywhere. It was as if he had simply vanished into thin air. Despondently, she walked round the corner to the front of the station building just in time to see the stretcher bearing her sister being loaded into the rear of the Air Ambulance.

"How is she?" she asked the Commander who was stood near to the rear of the helicopter observing the Paramedics ensuring that Jennifer was safely aboard.

"She's stable though still unconscious but she should be all right" the Commander assured Tracy as he put his arms around her to comfort her.

"It was Garforth, I saw him on the Emergency Stairs but I lost him" Tracy replied clearly emotional.

"Are you absolutely sure?" the Commander asked.

"He was wearing what looked like a Security Service uniform, the face was different though but it was definitely him".

"Well the Prison Doctor did say he had to have reconstructive surgery a while back so he won't look exactly the same as he used to" the Commander concluded as he and Tracy stepped back whilst the helicopter restarted and took off for its short journey back to St Thomas' Hospital.

-----

"Thirty two year old female, stab wound to abdomen plus minor cuts elsewhere, lost some blood, unconscious throughout" the Paramedic explained to the receiving team of doctors and nurses in the Casualty Department.

They were normally busy anyway but with the riot not that far away as well that day, the number of cases both minor and serious had quadrupled compared with what was normal and the medical staff were hard pressed to keep up with the demands being made of them.

"Do we know her name?" the senior Doctor on duty enquired as he checked her over whilst still on the move through the Casualty Department to the Resuscitation Unit.

"Commander Caverner" one of the nurses read the name off the blood splattered brass name badge on Jennifer's uniform.

"Tracy?" the doctor added.

"Err no Jennifer, Tracy's sister".

"They certainly look alike don't they?" the other nurse with the team commented recalling the pictures she had seen of Tracy in the papers recently.

"Twins I think" the paramedic cut in, "anyway here you go, she's all yours". Having seen to it that his patient was all right and in safe hands, he left to return to his duties.

"Something isn't right here" the Doctor concluded as he checked Jennifer's eyes carefully with a pen torch, "I'd say she's been knocked out by something".

"You should have a Jennifer Caverner in here" Tracy enquired having finally managed to make her way through the tight crowds to the Casualty Department Reception Desk.

The receptionist, who was in the midst of dealing with several enquiries at once, quickly entered the name into her computer terminal.

"Resuss ward, through and to the right dear" she practically had to shout to make herself heard above the din.

The Commander accompanied Tracy through the busy Department towards the Resuss ward. As they approached, the Casualty Department Consultant left the room through the double wooden doors and approached them.

"Miss Caverner?" the Consultant enquired recognising the clear almost identical appearance of Tracy to his patient who he had just left.

"Yes" Tracy replied nervously somehow dreading what the Consultant was about to say.

"Your Sister is going to be fine, she'll need some surgery mind later tonight hopefully" the Consultant responded.



"Thank God for that" Tracy collapsed relieved into the Commander's arms.

"There is one small matter though which you both need to know about though" he added.

"Go on" the Commander urged as he felt a slightly uneasy feeling begin in his stomach, although that may have just have been his usual dislike of hospitals.

"It would appear that someone has administered some kind of knock out drug to her, harmless but effective. I checked with our Paramedic staff, it was nothing they administered" the Consultant explained.

"Damm peculiar" the Commander commented.

"Sounds like someone doesn't want Jenni talking for a while" Tracy added.

The Commander and Tracy both thanked the Consultant and went through into the side ward that Jennifer had just been moved into. In the bed, she was lying unconscious but peaceful whilst being attended to by the duty ward nurse.

"Something has always bothered me about you two" the Commander commented as he looked at Jennifer "how come if you are identical twins, you have different coloured eyes?"

"Just another example of the genetic weirdness that plagues my family" Tracy added "One reason I can't have kids and Jenni can for example".

"And I thought my family were weird".

"Come on, there is not much we can do here" Tracy announced "We had better get back to work".

They left the ward and were surprised to find the Administrator General of the Security Service waiting for them in the Casualty Reception area.

"She's going to be fine" the Commander confirmed.

"Good" the Administrator General replied, "There is another matter about which I need a quiet word... alone".

-----

"You got the wrong Caverner" the distinguished Gentleman announced with clear irritation down the telephone as he leaned forward on his study desk.

"Don't you ever read the intelligence we send your Section?" It was clear that the person he was talking to was making as many excuses as possible to get them out of the mire they now found themselves in.

"Well now you have three people to deal with, both Caverner's and the Commander, get on with it or I'll add you to the list as well". The distinguished gentleman slammed the phone down. It was clear that things were not going to plan.

-----

The Administrator General leaned against the desk of the Doctor whose office he and the Commander had borrowed while Tracy waited patiently outside.

"What I am about to say, you didn't hear, at least not from me" the Administrator General began frankly.

"For ten minutes, you are being seconded to relieve a Security Officer who is guarding a VIP up in the Secure Unit on the top floor of the hospital" he explained.

"Who's the patient?" the Commander enquired although deep down he had a feeling he knew already.

"You'll see when you get there, however this is strictly off the record and if anyone asks, it never happened".

"Right, but why are you doing this?" the Commander asked.

"There are some things that I have always disagreed with in this job. Thirty years I have served first the Police Service and then the Security Service, plus I have know you for many years and its time I repaid some of the favours I owe".

"Thanks". The Commander turned to leave but paused just as he was about to open the door, observing Tracy waiting outside "Should I tell her?" he asked.

"To you she is practically family now so I don't see why not, just as long as you two keep it quiet" came the response.

"Right..." The Commander opened the office door and stepped back out into the busy corridor.

"What was all that about?" Tracy casually inquired as he rejoined her and together they made their way towards the stairs leading to the upper floors.

"We have to go and meet someone" the Commander replied, seemingly distant, his thoughts clearly elsewhere.

He was pretty silent as they made their way up to the top floor and through the maze of corridors that led to the Secure Unit. A Security Service officer was sat on a chair outside one of the small private rooms that led off the corridor. As the Commander and Tracy approached, he stood to attention.

"Relax lad, I've been asked to relieve you for ten minutes, you go and get some fresh air" the Commander instructed.

"Thank you Sir" the young officer replied before departing. The Commander ensured he was out of sight before he entered the room.

-----

"There's something down here" the Chief Forensic Scene Examiner dressed in standard issue white overalls announced to the Security Officers on the platform above him.

Fuller kneeled down and peered over the edge of the platform through the open platform edge doors at the dark corner of the track bed, almost beneath the lip of the platform edge, where the Forensic officer was indicating.

"What is it?" Fuller asked.

"A knife and a syringe in a clear plastic bag" came the reply "looks like it was thrown over the top of the platform edge barrier by someone in hurry".

"Any blood on it?" Fuller climbed down and joined the Forensic officer on the track bed.

"On the knife yes by the looks of it".

"Terrific, get the usual DNA and fingerprints done, I want answers and quickly".

-----

It was a fairly typical looking single bed private ward, standard issue hospital bed, side cupboard, television and all the usual facilities. One thing that seemed to be missing though was a patient.

The sound of a toilet flushing in the adjacent en-suite bathroom answered the question as to the whereabouts of the occupant of the room. The Commander held Tracy's hand tightly and took a deep breath as he waited for the patient to re-enter the room.

"You're looking pretty good for a dead bloke" the Commander commented casually as an elderly gentleman, dressed in standard hospital pyjamas and dressing gown re-entered the room. He stopped and looked up at his visitor, a few moments passed before the realisation of who was standing before him sank in.

His frailty combined with the shock of seeing the Commander meant he needed to quickly sit down on the edge of the bed, the Commander stepping forward quickly to offer support to the elderly man.

"Technically lad, thanks to your Department, I am dead, have been for twenty years" the man replied.

"That makes two of us".

Tracy just looked confused, it was clear that the Commander and the elderly

gentleman knew each other from way back but the relationship was not entirely clear to her.

"Aren't you going to introduce us?" Tracy asked.

"Sorry, where are my manners" the Commander responded as he indicated to Tracy to step forward and join them.

"Tracy Caverner, meet Edward Frobisher, as was, my dad" the Commander announced.

Tracy was silenced for a few moments with the surprise of this news, as she looked at the two men side by side however it became clear that there was a clear family resemblance.

"A pleasure to meet you" Tracy replied slightly nervously.

"Enchanted my dear. So do I get an invite to the wedding then?" Edward asked practically beaming with pride.

"How do you know about that?" the Commander seemed somewhat surprised he knew about it.

"I do read newspapers you know, I have been following your career since you were a nipper, I thought your interview on Newsnight a few years back was particularly good".

Tracy smirked, even she remembered that one, probably the only time in broadcasting history that the BBC's anchor man Jeremy Paxman had been rendered speechless.

"I think the Witness Protection Unit might have something to say about it, come to think of it, I not even supposed to know you are still alive, let alone be in the same building as you" the Commander responded.

"Come on Son, I haven't seen you for the best part of twenty years and you would let red tape keep us apart? I brought you up to be better than that".

The Commander sighed a little, twenty years apart and already they were starting to disagree on something, he smirked at the irony.

"I'm surprised you haven't remarked upon my choice of career" the Commander looked back at his father who was still trying to take in the visual details of the son he had not seen all this time.

"You are the first man in the history of our family to be on the right side of the law, that's an achievement in itself" he beamed with slightly bemused pride.

"You can say that again!" the Commander added as he thought many years back to all those Uncles and other odd relatives of his he had met when he was young, mostly in the visiting rooms of jails as it happened.

Tracy had decided to stay out of the conversation, recognising the significance of this unique meeting for the Commander but now Edward turned to her briefly as he realised too that their time together was almost at an end, possibly for the first and last time.

"You take care of my Son" he held Tracy's hand firmly in assurance as if they were shaking on a contract "He is all I have left, and I am not supposed to even have him".

Tracy nodded in agreement.

-----

Outside the hospital, it was clear to Tracy that the Commander was quite stunned at suddenly being confronted with his Father so unexpectedly like that.

"Penny for them" she urged as they walked together arm in arm out of the Hospital grounds and towards the Bus Stops in the road nearby.

"I don't know what to think, I always thought he'd disown me for what I became, not praise me" he replied clearly confused.

"Sometimes parents can be like that" Tracy assured him, "Trust me, I have two myself".

For some time the couple talked quietly about how they felt about families, walking all the way to Waterloo Station in the process. They entered the entrance to the Underground part of the station that was set into the bottom of the classic 1950's designed and built Shell Centre building that once towered over London but now was almost a dwarf compared with the modern tall buildings of today that now dominated central London.

"We need some shopping" Tracy commented in a change of subject that was so domestic that it sharply contrasted with everything that had gone on before it that day.

"Tesco's in Oxford Street, should have reopened by now" the Commander replied seemingly slipping into thoughts of domestic bliss just as easily.

The train of 1972 Mk II Tube Stock didn't take long to transport the couple the four stops up the Bakerloo line to Oxford Circus station and in a matter of minutes they were exiting out onto the street which had returned to its usual hustle and bustle of tourists, shoppers, buses and taxis having been forced to close earlier due to the day's events.

"When we have got the shopping, why don't we just go straight home, you look like you've been through hell, I know I have" Tracy suggested as they entered the small 'Metro' supermarket

"Nice idea, but we are supposed to be there for the debrief in an hour, besides with Fuller seeing Jennifer down the hospital there's no-one keeping an eye on the shop"

the Commander concluded as he surveyed the chocolate muffins on the bakery shelves with enthusiasm.

As they went around the store, the basket of goods clearly divided into two camps with the Commander going for all the unhealthy chocolate and fatty stuff and Tracy clearly going for the healthy option.

"What the heck's this?" the Commander asked as Tracy placed a cauliflower into the basket.

"It's called a cauliflower, it's a vegetable, you wouldn't know anything about things like that as they are good for you" Tracy responded with suppressed sarcasm.

"Ah, I'll stick to those rather tasty looking cakes all the same thanks" he retorted in an equal frame of mind.

It seemed that having two uniformed and armed senior Security Officers in the store brought about the best in people, the Commander could have sworn blind he saw at least two shoplifters put stuff back on the shelves.

Tracy observed the items carefully as the till assistant scanned at least two packs of microwave chips and placed them in a carrier bag.

"Enough chips for you love?" she asked.

"Should last me until tomorrow" the Commander responded casually, trouble was he wasn't joking.

Tracy paid the bill and with the Commander doing the job of carrying the bags, they made their way out of the store and back into the busy hustle and bustle of an early spring evening in Oxford Street.

Crossing the road by dodging between the traffic, they quickly hopped on the back platform of a momentarily stationary Routemaster bus and sat down alongside each other on the longitudinal seat that was mounted over the nearside rear wheel arch.

"Fares please!" the strong Irish accented female conductor called as she arrived in the lower deck saloon, although she did not bother to check either Tracy or the Commander's passes as she made her way down the aisle, they were front page news and she knew who they were.

"I hope your sister wakes up in time to tell us where our wedding is" the Commander said as their bus bounced its way methodically along Oxford Street and towards Tottenham Court Road, scene of the Commander's earlier triumph that day.

"I can always ask mum" Tracy replied with reassurance, she had an idea where the wedding *might* be but she still wasn't certain "Anyway we still have a couple of days".

"We only have the remains of the largest riot in many years and a major political conspiracy to sort out between now and then" the Commander smiled with

amusement.

It was almost seven o'clock when the bus deposited the couple in Museum Street, the darkness of twilight now readily apparent as the shadows of the buildings around them got longer and duller by the minute.

It was just a couple of minutes walk for them from Museum Street, through Bloomsbury Court and then across the High Holborn road to their office building, the lights from the windows shining out into the gloomy evening like searchlights.

The de-brief was supposed to be handled by the Metropolitan Division's Chief but as the Commander arrived in the briefing room, filled to capacity with officers from three different divisions, he quickly learned that he was still incapacitated following his earlier exploits.

"Looks like its up to me" he murmured to Tracy before stepping up to the front of the room and calling everybody for silence in as abrupt a way as possible.

"Right you lot, shut it!" he began. This had the necessary effect on the audience who instantly fell silent leaving the Commander to survey the room carefully during the dramatic pause that he used to instil his authority.

"Today's operation can be best summarised as interesting, started well, went a bit pear shaped in the middle and then picked up nicely towards the end" he summarised to the amusement of his audience.

"Arrests totalled..... err....." the Commander looked around, a clipboard was passed across the front of the room and into his hand before he continued "2,647, which beats the Security Service's previous record by a mere one and a half thousand".

A general cheer went up from some sections of the audience.

"We had twenty seven serious and about a hundred minor injuries to Security Service personnel, mostly during the early stages of the riot but all are reported as doing well. Rioters are reported as having suffered about a hundred injuries requiring hospital treatment of which the most serious are a number of broken limbs, one fractured skull and three with gunshot wounds, one of which was down to me".

The statistics were impressive but the Commander knew the press were going to make wildly different and opposing interpretations of this, indeed the London Evening Standard had already made up its mind about the days events, fortunately in the Commander's favour.

"Right, each Team Leader will be giving their own debrief in turn, we will have a fuller post mortem on this when the Met Division's Chief gets let out of the Hospital for all the use he was". The audience resumed their mild laughter as the Commander left the stand having cheered himself up by getting one up on his opposite number from the much larger Metropolitan Division.

He decided to slip out of the room and leave them to it, preferring instead the quiet if

untidy surroundings of his office on the top floor immediately above. The double glazing that curved around the majority of two sides of the office walls blocked out most of the noise of traffic and background noise from outside whilst with the door closed behind him, the filtering of noise from the corridor equally was blocked out.

The silence was a stark contrast to the noise of that day's wild and varied events that the Commander had been involved in and right now the solitariness of his unkempt side of the office was just what he needed.

He slouched back in the office chair behind his desk and cast a casual eye across the desk resting his eyes upon the picture of Tracy mounted in an antique silver frame that sat near the infrequently used computer.

Dreaming of her, he almost dozed off, a sharp knock on the office door suddenly bringing him back to his senses.

"What the..... Come in!" he called out to whoever it was that was at his door.

"Evening Sir, hope I didn't disturb you" Fuller called as he entered the room.

"Oh I was just catching up on the paperwork" the Commander flustered.

"Yeah right" Fuller responded sarcastically knowing damn well that the chances of the Commander actually doing any paperwork were about as remote as snow in the Bahamas.

"Anyway" Fuller continued "you've made the front page of the West End Final edition of the Standard and the BBC want you on Newsnight".

"Oh joy...."

"The Administrator General is handling the press conference, its going to be live on News 24 I think, apparently he is going to be singing your praises" Fuller added.

"Which means on one side I get all the credit and on the other I get all the blame, that's nice" the Commander retorted.

"I'll leave you to your 'paperwork'" Fuller responded as he left the copy of the Standard on the Commander's desk and left, closing the door quietly behind him.

-----

The formal dress uniform never really suited the Commander, he always felt he was the wrong body shape for it and felt much more comfortable in the domestic version but the Administrator General insisted he wore it for his appearance on the BBC that night.

"It is being described as the Battle of Westminster in the popular press, a battle between the best that organised rioters could throw and probably the Security Service's best known senior Commanding Officer. Tonight, law, order and the



Commander".

Tracy watched from the sidelines as the presenter guided the programme through the opening headlines before it was time for the evening's main story.

"By lunchtime today, London was in the grip of a serious and poorly contained riot in two different locations, the operations Commander, the Chief Divisional Superintendent of the Metropolitan Division was unconscious in the back of an Ambulance and the area was in the words of our correspondent on the ground best described as an 'uncontrolled war zone'".

The presenter was backed up by a montage of the day's events as captured on camera, as he continued with his introduction to the item.

"Then the Commander arrived" This was the cue for the playing of the videotape of the Commander giving the ultimatum at Tottenham Court Road. Tracy was seeing this for the first time and felt that her beloved looked somewhat vulnerable in his ordinary uniform facing several hundred enthusiastic rioters compared with the fully riot geared equipped ranks of officers that were behind him.

"Twenty minutes later and the Security Service had made over a thousand arrests with another thousand following when the Commander and his team dutifully dealt with the massed crowds of in the Commander's own words 'nutters' that were busy taking the area in and around Westminster Square as well as everyone in it apart".

More footage from the scene backed up the story.

"Tonight almost a thousand protestors, rioters and other offenders are in custody with another hundred odd still in hospital. Tonight we talk to the Divisional Commanding Officer of the Transport Division and ask him about today's events".

As the presenter went over to the desk alongside which the Commander was seated looking slightly fed up, not to say tired, what seemed like the entire duty staff of the Transport Division were crowding into the Holborn Control Room to watch the Commander's performance on the main view screen through the video link up that Fuller had set up.

"Divisional Superintendent, it would be fair to say that today's events do not shed a particularly good light upon the Security Service wouldn't it?"

The Commander leaned forward, always a sign he was about to be very honest, those who knew him and were watching braced themselves as he delivered his reply.

"It is true to say that from the point where the co-ordinated rioting broke out in two locations through until where I took command of the operation, there was a period during which there was a loss of control on the situation".

The Commander was going to continue but was cut short by another question.

"Tonight there are those who are saying that your actions to disperse and or arrest the

rioters were excessive, how do you react to this criticism?"

"When you are faced with a serious situation in which a significant uncontrolled crowd of idiots are causing considerable deliberate damage to property, people and indeed anything else they could get their mitts on, there is little choice but to issue fair warning with an offer to disperse peacefully, which I hasten to say was taken up by genuine protestors to their credit, and then arrest those who decide not to co-operate with the authorities and continue their riotous behaviour".

"There are accusations tonight of the use of heavy handed tactics by some of your officers when arresting some of those involved", the presenter was still trying to get the Commander on the back foot but he was having none of it.

"They were breaking the law, refusing to co-operate, and had been given fair warning that they would be taken down with whatever force was necessary. We were just doing our job and you will find that the vast silent majority of the law abiding public are thanking us for our prompt action in this matter".

The presenter was slightly rattled that he still hadn't managed to land any criticism on the Commander but professionalism came to the fore and he didn't show it. Instead he decided on a change of approach and a different subject.

"Chief Superintendent, there are those who say that your actions particularly were biased by virtue that your soon to be wife and Deputy was involved in the midst of the rioting in Westminster".

The Commander looked across with a disapproving glare, Tracy also glared at the presenter from the sidelines and it was clear he had suddenly started to feel slightly uneasy.

"My primary concern was for the safety and security of all involved, public, Security Service personnel and all other innocent parties involved in today's events. At no time does any relationship that I am involved in provide any influence over my decisions as a Commanding Officer".

That seemed certain and final, a second change of subject to conclude was as a result forthcoming.

"As leading investigating officer into the recent death of the former Home Secretary, the Right Hon. Trevor Sharman, can you tell us anything more about the progress of the investigation?"

The Commander had to be tactful as anything he might say could prejudice the investigation, which was confusing enough for him as it was.

"We have a number of leads which we are investigating, any further I cannot comment at this time" he responded with tact and diplomacy.

"Chief Superintendent, thank you very much".

-----

"Right mate, sign here for it" the armourer requested as he passed a clipboard through the slot in the bottom of the metal grille that guarded the hatchway.

Stephen Redman put a false signature on the document where the armourer had indicated before nodding in thanks, picking up the small paper wrapped package that the armourer passed through the slot and then left without saying a word.

Outside in the dingy corridor that ran past the armourer's office he pulled out the mobile phone from his pocket and quickly dialled a number, a few moments passed before he got a reply.

"Got the material you requested, where do you want it?" Redman asked as he looked around the deserted corridor.

A few moments passed as the person he was calling relayed his response.

"Very well, I'll make sure he gets it for the morning, goodnight Sir". Redman walked down the corridor and pressed the wall-mounted button to summon the old creaky lift that serviced the building.

As the doors opened gingerly, clearly suffering from age with the creaking and scraping that they broadcast to the empty corridor, Redman entered and pressed the button for the ground floor.

The doors closed and the lift began its ascent up to ground level from the basement depths of the building. If anyone had been in the lift with him, they would have seen the obvious look of concern and deep felt worry on Redman's face.

Suddenly he reached across to the battered control panel and hit the stop button. The lift came to a halt between floors but at that time of night there would be no one about to notice.

For a few minutes Redman thought about the situation, he knew what was in the package even though he wasn't supposed to, and he knew to whom it was to be delivered and what it was for, all of which made this task difficult for him.

He knew that working undercover for the Administrator General, he would be put in situations like this but this was way beyond the call of duty, even for an experienced officer like him.

Redman retrieved his phone from his jacket pocket and slowly dialled another number, after a few moments his call was answered but from his tone it was clear he was talking to an automated response system.

"Access code Lima Foxtrot 115, Code word Pegasus". Again another pause as the automated system at the other end of the line processed this curious information.

"Urgent that Lima One contacts me immediately, usual place at one o'clock, tell him

our friends are getting out of control". With those sinister words, Redman terminated the call and let the lift resume its journey to the surface.

Exiting out into the hallway that led though to the street outside, Redman was careful that he was not seen leaving the building. Although now almost past midnight, there were still a few people about in this little side street of the West End of the City, it didn't take him long to reach St. James Park Underground Station, directly opposite New Scotland Yard and adjacent to the head office of London Transport.

As he made his way down to the platform level, a darkly dressed figure observed him from the shadows before following Redman discreetly.

Standing on the dimly lit westbound platform, Redman looked down the track into the dark tunnel for any signs of a train, it was almost time for the last service of the night so he was lucky not to be walking to his destination that night.

However thoughts of his onward journey were interrupted when he became aware of a person approaching from the opposite end of the platform to the way he had come in.

Remembering what happened to Sharman, Redman discreetly stepped back from the platform edge, not wanting to suffer the same fate. As it turned out he needn't have worried as the figure passed him by and made for the chocolate vending machine mounted on the platform back wall nearby.

Redman didn't turn round, he just kept looking ahead towards the track and the opposite platform but he listened as the tinkle of coins in the chocolate machine followed by a mechanical whirring and a clunk told him that the mysterious passenger on the platform with him had successfully completed their purchase.

The twin white headlights of a distant District Line 'D' Stock train began to appear in the distant tunnel, the light from its interior shining through the side windows off the dark tunnel sides providing a halo like glow around train as it approached the station.

Redman forgot about the other person on the platform and readied himself to board the approaching service for the short journey one stop up the line to Victoria, whilst behind him, leaning up against the platform wall, the mysterious passenger proceeded to consume his chocolate that he had just purchased.

The whirr of electric motors, the clanking of wheels over rail joints and the squealing of brakes heralded the arrival of the six carriage long, unpainted aluminium sub-surface stock train. As it came to a halt neatly with both ends of the train snugly fitting within the length of the platform, both Redman and the mysterious passenger stepped forward towards the front most door of the first carriage, just a short window bay behind the drivers cab.

The tired interior with its yellow and brown upholstery was long past its best, there were not many of these trains left in their original condition that they were delivered in some twenty years earlier as many had been extensively refurbished.

Redman swept away the remains of a take away burger meal from the seat nearest the

end bulkhead wall and sat down. The mysterious passenger meanwhile took the opportunity to read an abandoned copy of the Evening Standard that had been discarded upon the seats but chose to stand in the doorway circulation area despite the abundance of seats available.

The large single leaf doors slid gently closed and the train started on its way into the tunnel. The rocking effect of the movement of the carriage caused both passengers to rock from side to side slightly in parallel to the movement of the carriage, an effect accentuated by the gentle swaying of the 'hanging balls', the ceiling mounted hanging handles provided for standing passengers to try and support themselves with.

"We need to talk" the mysterious passenger's sudden address to Redman awoke him from the sleepiness he was beginning to drift into.

"Do I know you?" he asked as he wondered whether he had either connected with somebody connected with current events or just one of the various loonies that tended to inhabit the central London area's Underground network at that time of the night.

The mysterious stranger sat down opposite Redman and removed his hat, allowing his face to come into the fullness of the artificial light of the carriage interior for the first time.

"My name is James Garforth, I believe we have a mutual acquaintance who is currently manipulating the services and good name of us both".

"Like you said, we need to talk" Redman nodded in agreement, he was somewhat shocked at who was seated opposite him, however there was one nagging doubt in the back of his mind.

"I was told we weren't supposed to meet" Redman was clearly confused "I have this package and instructions for you from our mutual acquaintance which I was supposed to leave in the usual place" he proffered the package he had picked up earlier.

"Now that is one of the things we need to talk about, you see someone is going around pretending to be, or at least trying to incriminate my good self".

"Go on...." Redman prompted slightly reluctantly as the train began to slow for Victoria station.

"Shall we?" Garforth gestured towards the doors as the train came to a halt at the platform and with a hiss of escaping air, the large single leaf doors slid open.

"After you, I insist" Redman replied politely but firmly, emphasising this with a wave of his gun that he quickly pulled out from the shoulder holster beneath his jacket.

Garforth made sure he was more than co-operative and duly left the carriage first replacing his hat, with Redman following close behind. At Redman's insistence, they took a seat each on the bench mounted on the platform wall, not many feet from the end of the platform.

"Now Mr Garforth, if that is your real name...." Redman began.

"Bit of a long story on that one but do go on...." Garforth shrugged his shoulders.

"You see my trouble with all this is that the person to whom I have been delivering a variety of items and documents on behalf of my employer is called James Garforth, and peculiarly he doesn't look like you therefore you can appreciate my problem in this matter". Redman continued to keep his gun discreetly trained on Garforth throughout this conversation, in the light of recent events he was not going to take any chances.

"You see my point, it is quite obvious to me that I am being fitted up for whatever it is our mutual friends are up to and it also obvious that someone at the Security Service, i.e. your boss, is on to them otherwise why would you be here".

"I, I...." Redman began as he tried in vain to hide the fact he was an undercover Security Officer, reporting direct to the Administrator General, he continued to try and deny this but Garforth cut him short.

"I have seen enough Security Officers in my time to spot one a mile off, it's a gift you know" he explained.

Redman just nodded, he should have known that someone with a record and history like Garforth would have spotted his real identity relatively easily.

"So what do you want of me?" Redman asked.

"Quite simple, I want to know what you have in that documentation you are going to give to whoever it is who is going around as me, then I want you to contact your boss and the Chief of the Transport Division and...." he paused with dramatic effect as he pondered the right words "... give them my regards".

Redman realised by now that really he had no other choice but to hand over the package with its manila envelope attached for Garforth's inspection.

Garforth opened the end flap of the envelope and removed the official documentation. Redman observed his expression go from one of interest, through to surprise and then finally shock as he read the final few lines of detail printed before him.

Without saying a word, he carefully replaced the document inside the envelope, closed the flap and with a look of serious concern, handed the package back and stood up.

It was at this point that an Underground Station Supervisor appeared on the platform doing his final checks of the night. He noticed the two passengers, both walking slowly towards the exit.

"Come on hurry up!" he called. Redman raised a hand in acknowledgement as he and Garforth continued their conversation out of earshot of the Supervisor who, having seen them leave the platform, continued on his rounds.

The two men used different exits from the Terminal Place end ticket hall, Redman headed up the small flight of steps to Terminus Place, and then on across the forecourt of the Bus Station, busy with Night Bus service passengers, to Victoria main line railway station beyond.

Garforth meanwhile used the Victoria Street exit and disappeared into the night in the direction of the Grovesnor Hotel.

The South Central concourse of Victoria Station was fairly quiet, a few late night party goers, some dispirited protestors from earlier who had only just been released from custody, hospital or even both as well as the usual procession of the large luggage brigade, passengers with extraordinarily large items of baggage bound for Gatwick Airport on the Gatwick Express service.

Redman made his way over to the right hand side, the wide access that led to platforms 15 through 19, and looked around nervously to make sure he was unobserved as he discreetly dropped the package into the wheelie bin that was parked up against the wall awaiting collection by the nearby motorised trolley tug.

A discreet nod of the head was exchanged between Redman and the driver of the tug as he made his way through the nearby ticket barriers and quickly boarded the last service of the night bound for Horsham.

-----

"I would seriously recommend you take the bus today" a muffled voice advised. The Commander and Tracy were gathered with some of the investigation team around a recording of a phone call the Commander's voice mailbox had recorded some half an hour earlier.

It was 7.30 a.m. and neither the Commander or Tracy had been home that night, instead opting to doze off together on the couch in their office, as such the Commander's uniform was looking even more crumpled than usual.

"Well that could mean anything" the Commander commented, "Is that all there is?" The Commander, not being really any good at technology had had to get Tracy to extract his voice mail for him as there was no way he could figure it out, therefore this was the first time he had actually heard the message.

"A warning from someone" Fuller commented as he worked on the adjacent computer network workstation.

"Can you trace it?" Tracy asked clearly concerned.

Fuller tapped away at the keyboard and extracted various pieces of information from the building's voice mail system, after what seemed like an eternity but in the end was just a minute, Fuller declared success.

"You've got something?" the Commander asked.

"Yep, call was made from a phone box at three o'clock this morning. The phone box is located...." Fuller continued to work on the computer until he displayed the location on a section of A to Z map on the screen ".... there!" he declared.

"Bloody hell..." the Commander murmured as he looked carefully at the location of the origin of the sinister call.

Tracy initially didn't react until she suddenly recalled something from the recent past, triggered by what she was viewing on the screen before her.

"Isn't that....." she began.

"Yep, the phone box that the incriminating call that led us to Sharman was made from last time round, this is a message" the Commander announced.

"What message?" Fuller asked, by now thoroughly confused.

"Whoever organised the Hainault Conspiracy, is behind this lot" the Commander concluded with a slightly hesitant stance.

"I thought Sharman was behind that?" Fuller enquired, "That's what all the papers said at the time".

"Nah, he was just an over ambitious Junior Minister at the time, someone else was always pulling the strings but no one could get near them" the Commander explained.

"Wasn't that the lot the press called the Teflon Committee by virtue that nothing would stick to them?" Fuller asked.

"Allegedly yes, which reminds me, are we clear of all those listening devices that we magically acquired?" the Commander asked.

"I reallocated them" Fuller replied slightly reluctantly.

"Where did you 'reallocate' them if I dare ask?" the Commander enquired, not entirely convinced he wanted to hear the answer.

"Oh they are all in a shoebox in the London Transport Lost Property Office, all they'll hear now is people complaining about lost brollies".

"What do you reckon?" Tracy asked.

"About the case or the Lost Property Office?" the Commander retorted.

"The case dear, do you think there is a connection with Sharman's memoirs?"

"It would make sense" the Commander sat back in his office chair "Sharman gets out of prison and writes his memoirs which in turn causes some desperate people to take some drastic action to silence whatever it is he is about to reveal".



"And what about Garforth?" Tracy asked, "Where does he fit in in all this?"

"I don't know for certain yet, he is either doing their dirty work or just being used as an obvious suspect to cover their tracks. Until we find and ask him, we won't know for certain".

"I have the update on yesterday's damage" Fuller announced handing over a clipboard of details before he began to go into detail.

"Metropolitan Division suffered about a hundred minor and ten major injuries, we suffered fourteen minor and three major injuries if you count Jennifer who is still unconscious. Vehicle wise, Metropolitan Division lost four vans, three patrol cars and their mobile operations unit and suffered damage to a variety of other vehicles as well, whilst we lost one van and your motorbike when the Metropolitan Division's mobile Op's Unit got petrol bombed and fell over onto it".

Tracy looked decidedly unimpressed, not to mention furious. "Any chance of a replacement?" she enquired, "With few officers available for patrol today, I'll need some transport".

"I called Hendon Garage, they can spare us a van and they have a couple of reserve fleet motorbikes already to go when I rang, it should be ready later." Fuller confirmed, "Also our new Mobile Operations Unit will be delivered tomorrow".

"Well at least something's gone right today" the Commander concluded as he put his uniform tunic back on and made for the door.

Tracy and Fuller were following him out when the Commander's phone began to ring. He quickly leapt back to his desk to pick it up before the irritating voice mail system cut him off. He was only just in time to hear an unexpected voice.

Looking on from the doorway, Tracy could tell from the Commander's demeanour that the call was as revealing as it was unexpected. He said little throughout the one sided conversation but yet despite Tracy's enquiring look when the Commander put the phone down, he said nothing directly about it, instead he resumed his originally intended route to the main Control Room.

Tracy followed looking somewhat perplexed as they arrived in the Control Room, Fuller in his usual seat at the main front control desk whilst various operators were busy at work in the room taking and making calls between the skeleton crew of officers from the Transport Division who were on duty that day.

"Simon, can you call someone for me?" the Commander asked as he picked up his car keys that he had left on the console unit where Fuller was sitting.

"Oh yes, who?" he enquired barely looking up from the monitor in front of him as he viewed the list of ongoing events around the Division's jurisdiction.

"Well if I get the next ten minutes wrong, the Fire Brigade" the entire room seemed to

simultaneously look up with surprise and worry "and if I get it right, the Bomb Squad".

-----

Tracy accompanied the Commander across Kingsway to where his marked patrol car was parked in the middle refuge of the road with the early morning traffic passing in opposite directions on either side.

"Would you mind explaining to me what the hell is going on?" she demanded.

The Commander knelt down beside the driver's door and peered beneath the underside of the car as if he was looking for something.

"Find anything down there?" Tracy enquired.

"Yep!" the Commander casually replied.

"What is it?"

"Tracy" the Commander called quietly and calmly as he stood back up.

"Yes love?"

"Run"

"Run?"

"Run!"

"And the traffic?"

"I'll take the northbound and you take the southbound".

Tracy turned and proceeded to wave her arms in the direction of the oncoming traffic, the Commander doing the same with the traffic in the opposite direction. The quiet nature of the early morning traffic, rush hour not really having kicked in yet, meant that stopping the traffic a sufficiently safe distance was fortunately not too much of a problem.

Up above in the Holborn office overlooking Kingsway and High Holborn, the duty office staff carried on as normal until suddenly a loud eruption of noise and a flash of orange white light combined with a jolting vibration from the direction of Kingsway broke the normal routine as everyone both there and in other buildings around and about rushed to windows and doorways to try and identify the source of the noise.

Outside, the Commander's car was reduced to a smouldering wreck with pieces distributed in all directions. The echo of the explosion had barely died down by the time Fuller had run to the scene with an emergency medical kit.

"Bloody hell!" he exclaimed, a sentiment echoed by many around who had witnessed the incident and or its immediate aftermath.

The Commander was picking himself up from the ground where he had landed after instinctively ducking when he heard and felt the initial explosion immediately behind him.

Tracy was on the other side of the smouldering wreckage, herself a little dusty and battered but otherwise apparently unharmed.

Fuller was relieved to see both officers get to their feet amid the smoke and debris. Nearby the sound of approaching sirens heralded the arrival of the fire brigade and other emergency services.

"Better strike one more car off our books" the Commander commented with a wry smile as he looked down at the partially melted front number plate from his car lying in the roadway a few feet away.

He bent down to pick it up and looked at the S401 DCD number which was still just about readable despite the damage and distortion caused by the explosion and being propelled some thirty feet through the air to where it had landed.

"Looks like it was just a little one" the Chief of the Bomb Squad unit commented as he arrived in their green armoured Land Rover and surveyed the wreckage.

"If that is a little one, what does a big one look like dare I ask?" Fuller looked around as the Fire Brigade set about dousing the smouldering remains sending a cloud of steam billowing up amongst the buildings whose overlooking windows were still crammed with onlookers.

"Look on the bright side, it can't get any worse" Tracy remarked.

The Commander was about to respond when his pager went off. Unusually for his technical ineptitude he managed to read the message without screwing it up, it was clear from his change of expression he wished he hadn't.

"Tracy, it just got worse".

"Don't you just hate it when that happens?" she sighed heavily as she joined the Commander and they headed off in the direction of the Underground Station.

"We have been summoned by the Administrator General at Scotland Yard, seems we have upset someone" the Commander explained.

-----

"Transport Division" Fuller answered the phone in the General Office. It was the Forensics Unit on the other end with the results of the initial tests on the scene where Jennifer had been stabbed yesterday.

"No match? Are you sure?" Fuller asked.

"That's the peculiar thing about it" the Forensic Scene Examiner explained "The prints we found on the knife at Westminster do not match the sample from this bloke Garforth's records at all, yet the sample from Garforth's records we used to check the prints we found at Mornington Crescent did match but yet they are the same as found on the Westminster knife".

"That's weird, thanks for getting back, let us know if you find anything else".

"I'll have the full report sent over this afternoon".

Fuller hung up and looked around the General Office, a corner from which he was being observed by Commander Cassini.

"You look like a man with a problem" Cassini commented as he got up from his desk and went over.

"You know what I think" Fuller asked.

"If I knew I wouldn't be standing here".

"This whole thing looks like a set up, smells like a set up, feels like a set up and sounds like a set up" Fuller replied.

"Which means...." Cassini continued.

"It's a set up!" they both concluded in unison.

-----

"Welcome to New Scotland Yard" the receptionist, announced as she invited Tracy and the Commander to sign the visitor's book. Tracy did the honours for both of them.

"The Administrator General is expecting you in his Office" the Receptionist announced "take the lift there and get off on the top floor, his office is then straight ahead, you can't miss it".

"Thanks" Tracy replied while the Commander begrudgingly nodded, he was clearly not looking forward to this meeting.

For once the Commander actually took the lift, perhaps he was feeling old or something, usually he took the stairs wherever possible, lifts not really being fully to his liking.

"Something wrong?" Tracy asked, she took hold of his hand and held it firmly to affirm her concern, love and support for him.

"What, you mean apart from the fact someone just tried to kill both of us?" he replied

wryly.

"Look at it this way, it's not exactly the first time is it?" she added philosophically as the lift reached the top floor and with a soft gentle 'ping' the doors opened.

"You two are supposed to be dead!" exclaimed a voice as the couple exited out of the lift into the bustling corridor that served the Senior Management Offices.

The Commander looked across at the source of the voice and quickly recognised the face of Deputy Divisional Superintendent Rebecca Hawthorne, the second in command of operations in the Metropolitan Division.

Unlike most of the officers in the building, she was in plain clothes but her wispy long hair with its silver streaks that belied her mid fifties age made her stand out.

"You have something you wish to share with us Ms Hawthorne?" the booming deep voice of the Administrator General asked as he stood behind her having just come out of the adjacent office and came in on the chance encounter in the corridor just in time to hear all this.

Hawthorne looked around with a sudden shock and realisation that she had just let slip something she shouldn't have had and quickly looked around for either a bit of inspiration or alternatively a swift exit.

"Administrator General Sir, how many in this office know exactly the target of the Holborn explosion?" the Commander asked all the time keeping his well known stare of authority firmly fixed upon the increasingly worried and nervous Hawthorne.

"Myself, the Chief of Operations, Commander Harrison of the Anti-Terrorist Unit and of course your good selves" he replied, himself watching Hawthorne carefully.

"Madam" the Commander addressed Hawthorne as he stepped forward "you seem to have let a proverbial feline out of the proverbial packaging. I and no doubt my colleagues here would love to hear your explanation".

"I, I, I don't know what you mean?" Hawthorne stammered. She was going to have to think quickly on her feet here and she wasn't getting off to a good start by any means.

By now most of the officers and civilian employees on the floor were crowding into the corridor watching this drama unfold as the Commander, smelling a large and particularly nasty rat here, continued his polite but firm enquiries.

"The exact nature of the explosion in Holborn not more than thirty minutes ago was not revealed to anyone outside of Administrator General and the Senior Management Team of central operations. Therefore I must ask the question, how come you expected both I and Miss Caverner here to be deceased?"

The Commander paced around the stationary Hawthorne and kept a firm stare affixed upon her at all times. She had by now realised that she had been at least partially rumbled and now was a good time to make that swift exit.

Looking around in a moment of desperation, she noticed the fire escape doorway next to the lift only a matter of feet away, was open as someone had just arrived through it and the automatic closer was still only beginning its journey back to the closed position.

This was her only chance. She waited until the Commander was behind and to the right of her before she suddenly kicked out, striking the Commander in the leg with the point of her stiletto heel that sent him spiralling to the ground.

With the Commander incapacitated, she lunged forward through the wall of officers that was surrounding the scene and made it just through the increasingly smaller gap of the closing fire door.

Tracy drew her gun and with the Administrator General accompanying her, quickly gave chase as several officers saw to the Commander's welfare.

The clatter of hard soled shoes on the checker plate metal steps of the fire stairs echoed around the tall narrow passageway as Hawthorne ran down the stairs as if her life depended on it.

Two flights behind, Tracy was leading the Administrator General by several steps, as she continued onwards she noticed he was falling behind.

"Are you all right Sir?" she asked.

"Just getting a little old for all this excitement!" he called down "I haven't seen any decent pursuit action in years".

"Well it's not all its cracked up to be" Tracy replied.

The sound of a door opening about two thirds down alerted Tracy to the fact that Hawthorne had left the stairs and was now proceeding through the building. The slightly ajar nature of the door opening onto the first floor of the building gave the game away.

Through the door Tracy came across the unconscious body of a young uniformed officer, the Administrator General who arrived a few seconds later, checked to see if the officer was all right, whilst Tracy looked around for any sign of her quarry.

The sounds of consternation from the near distance signalled a disturbance in the large general offices just down the corridor and it was in this direction that Tracy and the Administrator General headed, finding once they had got there, up tipped furniture and a number of people picking themselves up off the floor having been knocked to the ground by someone passing through the busy office in a hurry.

"Which way?" Tracy called. A number of officers pointed in the general direction of the far side of the room, the sound of a metal fire exit door being opened in that direction confirming this information.

"Coming through!" the Administrator General called as he and Tracy ploughed their way, guns drawn through the office and through the fire exit that led to the emergency stairs at the opposite side of the building to where they had come in.

"Where does this come out?" Tracy enquired as she looked down the flights of checker plate metal steps that twisted their way down beyond ground level to the basement car parks.

"Round into Broadway I think" the Administrator General responded as he followed Tracy who had started making her decent downwards.

Outside, Hawthorne calmly closed the fire exit door behind her and walked briskly down the pavement and across the Broadway road towards the 55 Broadway headquarters of London Transport, blending in as inconspicuously as possible with the pedestrians around and about.

"Stop right there!" came a shout that announced to Hawthorne that Tracy had caught up with her. Looking behind her she could see Tracy and the Administrator General on the other side of the road trying to get a clear line of shot through the crowds and traffic that separated them.

There was nothing left but to run, as fast as her legs could carry her, Hawthorne ran through the entrance of St. James Park Station barging people out of the way which resulted in several shouts and cries amongst the commotion.

Tracy had by now managed to get across the street and was running up the pavement in pursuit, navigating her way through the crowds that had been scattered this way and that in Hawthorne's wake.

The Administrator General was not far behind, he pacified the frayed tempers of those members of the public that had been caught up first in the passing of Hawthorne and then Tracy who had by now hurdled the ticket barriers and was on her way down to the platform level.

As she arrived at the bottom of the steps that led onto the platform from the Broadway entrance of the station, she could see a modest number of passengers all waiting patiently for the next westbound District or Circle Line service.

Tracy with her gun still drawn but held discreetly at her side so as not to cause any undue alarm, moved amongst the crowd quietly. Her uniformed presence made a few people look up from their newspapers but generally she went unnoticed by the majority.

As she reached the furthest end of the platform, her search seemed to be proving fruitless and as she turned around she casually glanced across at the opposite platform. Suddenly her eyes came to alight on Hawthorne who was standing on the opposite platform trying to blend in with the crowd.

Realising she had been recognised, Hawthorn pulled out a gun and pointing in Tracy's general direction, opened fire with a volley of three shots.

By the time the first shot had missed her by inches and ricocheted off the back platform wall, shattering one of the original tiles in the process, she had leapt to the ground, the remaining two bullets passing harmlessly over her.

Some of the crowd on both platforms panicked at the sound of gunfire, accentuated as it was by the dark enhancement of the echoing around the platform tunnel walls.

"EVERYBODY DOWN!" Tracy shouted out. Most did as they were advised and fell to the floor whilst others simply ran faster for the nearest exit off the platform.

Tracy got up and took cover behind a pillar at the far end of the platform before looking around the corner to see where Hawthorne had got to.

A further two shots rang out, one hit the face of the platform, the other was closer, striking the steel pillar Tracy was using to shield herself with.

Looking round the pillar once again, Tracy could see that Hawthorne was now out in the open, all the passengers in the platform having either run off or jumped to the ground. She took her chance to fire a couple of shots, more of a warning than an attempt to disable Hawthorne, however by the time the second of her shots passed harmlessly overhead, her quarry had skipped up the steps at that end of the platform.

Tracy quickly extracted herself out of the corner and was soon up the steps and onto the bridging corridor that spanned the tracks and led to the two platform staircases. As she looked up and down for any possible sign of her quarry, another shot rang out, a different sound this time to that produced by either hers or Hawthorne's weapon.

There followed an ominous flumph of a collapsing object as the last echoes of the shot rang through the now deserted corridors and passageways of the station complex.

Tracy made her way ahead towards the other platform and the source of the unidentified gunshot with her gun drawn and pointing directly ahead.

As she rounded the corner cautiously Tracy looked slightly apprehensively down the flight of steps and then lowered her gun when she saw Hawthorne's body lying sprawled face down over the top few steps and a trickle of blood slowly running down the side of the stairway.

It was then that her radio crackled into life, which shocked her slightly, the sound of the radio contrasting sharply with the near silence of the station complex.

"Lima Tango Two, Tracy I want Hawthorne alive" the Commander called.

Tracy knelt down and put her fingertips of her right hand to Hawthorne's neck to check for any sign of a pulse but there was nothing but a still and lifeless body.

"There might be a bit of a problem" Tracy replied slightly uneasily.

"You didn't..."



"Well technically no" Tracy added as she looked around nervously "but someone did, I'll call you back". She swung round and trained her gun ahead when she heard approaching footsteps but quickly lowered her weapon when she saw the Administrator General approaching with a small squad of officers he had managed to collect together to join in the search.

"Oh dear!" he commented upon setting his eyes on the body of the late Ms Hawthorne still bleeding blood which stained the steps dark red almost down to the platform level now.

"There goes our newest and best lead unfortunately" Tracy added as the other officers proceeded to conduct a systematic search of the station.

"Lima Yankee three one two to Alpha One" the Administrator General took his radio from the belt clip and answered the call.

"Alpha One receiving over" he responded.

"There's no one in the station complex, whoever shot Commander Hawthorne is long gone Sir".

"Okay, thanks. Wrap it up and get the Forensic Service Unit down here".

-----

"Fuller, get down here to the Yard, I need your IT hacking skills" the Commander requested. Finishing the call, he replaced the receiver and then sat down behind the neat and tidy desk that dominated Hawthorne's office

He casually sat back and opened the top drawers either side, there he found nothing but pens, paper and stationery. The middle drawers were full of mundane items such as folders and rolls of sticky tape as well as a few spare clips of ammunition for a Security Service standard issue semi-automatic pistol.

The left hand bottom drawer yielded something much more to the Commander's interest however in the shape of a packet of milk chocolate digestive biscuits which brought a smile to his face.

"Now that's more like it" he commented as he removed the packet and proceeded to consume the contents.

"You'll get fat" Tracy jokily remarked as she entered the office and took the next biscuit off the pile.

"Well Hawthorne was never going to need them again anyway" the Commander casually responded as Tracy leaned back on the edge of the desk immediately next to him.

"Hello...." he added as he tried the right hand bottom drawer "this one is locked". He

got up and walked out of the office into the general open plan area of the general office outside.

"Anyone here got a key for this office drawer?" the Commander called out. Most of the officers in the office looked up but the response was a general shaking of heads and looking quizzically at each other.

"I take it that means no then?" the Commander added as he looked across the room at the fire axe mounted on the wall behind a glass panel mounted in a red wooden frame.

Tracy was on her mobile phone when the Commander calmly returned to the office whistling while carrying the fire axe over his shoulder.

"You're not...." Tracy began.

"Mmm?"

"You are aren't you?"

"Oh yes" he calmly replied as he gently swung the axe back in a golf putting swing before hitting the front edge of the bottom drawer with not inconsiderable force.

The office outside all looked up again as the sound of splintering wood and clanging metal echoed from the nearby office.

"Commander!" the Administrator General commented seeing the remains of the drawer front and some of its contents now liberally strewn across the office floor.

"Woodworm" the Commander calmly responded as he slung the axe casually in the corner of the room before reaching down and removing the remains of the drawer from its position and tipping the contents out onto the desk.

"I've got to go" Tracy explained looking at her watch with concern.

"Where are you off to?" the Commander asked as he blew off the shards of cheap plywood from the drawers contents.

"Small matter of a new motorbike to collect from Hendon Garage and the fact I am supposed to be on patrol in an hour" she advised.

"Right then, I'll see you later love" the Commander responded leaning across the desk to kiss her goodbye.

He watched the love of his life walk out of the door and away, it was a few moments before he came back to the task in hand.

"You really do love her don't you?" the Administrator General asked as he saw the look in the Commander's eyes.

"I'd die for her if necessary" the Commander found himself involuntarily replying.

Normally these were the sort of emotions he kept under wraps in public.

"Now that's heavy" Fuller added as he came in the office, a battered and well-used briefcase in his hand that he proceeded to place on the desk.

"Another day, another laptop to break into" the Commander announced as he retrieved the small computer from the formerly locked bottom drawer.

"Palmtop actually but I'll let you off" Fuller replied as he took the Hewlett Packard Jornada 720 palmtop computer and opened it to reveal its small touch screen and keyboard interface.

"Mmm, password" he commented when confronted with a login screen after he had tapped the screen to switch the computer on.

"Can you break it?" the Administrator General enquired.

Fuller thought for a few moments before tapping in a word on the small keyboard.

"There you go" he replied handing the palmtop back to the Commander.

"What was it?" he asked.

"Password, most commonly chosen password in the world of Information Technology, the equivalent of those people who set their briefcase codes to 123" Fuller explained.

"I must remember to change my passwords" the Commander commented aside to the Administrator General.

"Me too"

"Right then" the Commander cleared his throat and then turned to Fuller who was about to dismantle the computer terminal that was on the desk in that way that all IT Technicians and engineers do even when they are not supposed to.

"I want you to trawl the late Ms Hawthorne's files, anything interesting, I want to know about it" the Commander ordered.

"You got it Sir, I'll have to take most of this stuff back to my office though" Fuller replied as he started pulling cables about.

"Do it" the Commander advised before turning to leave with the Administrator General.

"Do we have an address for the late Ms Hawthorne, next of kin, etc?" he asked.

"Most of that sort of stuff will be in the Personnel section downstairs."

"Good, then you and I can go and kick in a front door or two".

"Now you're talking my language".

-----

"Yes?" To say that the Garage Foreman at the Security Service Vehicle Section's Hendon Garage was unenthusiastic, if not just plain depressed would be an understatement.

"Deputy Divisional Commander Tracy Caverner?"

It was clear from the look of disinterested puzzlement that Tracy was not getting through so she decided a further prompt was called for.

"Here to collect a new patrol motor bike? Does any of this ring a bell in there anywhere?" Tracy was by now half tempted to wave her hand in front of the man's face to see if anyone was home but just as she lifted her arm, there appeared a sign of realisation on the foreman's face.

"Oh yes...." he responded slowly. He lifted himself up off his elbows and tore his attention away from his copy of The Sun newspaper that was open on the desk in front of him and with some reluctance grabbed an oil stained clipboard that was hanging from a bent nail on the wall next to him, whereupon he read from it with equal disinterest.

"Yeah.... Here we go, one Honda Pan European, Transport Division but to be billed to the Met?" he replied.

"Sounds right" Tracy responded, now relived she had finally managed to make some progress.

"Workshop Number Two, see the duty vehicle engineer, he'll sort you out luv."

"Thank you!" Tracy replied with relief at finally managing to achieve her original goal of finding out where she was supposed to be going.

Leaving the Foreman to return to his newspaper, Tracy walked through the battered and oil stained workshop complex with its canophy of sounds of clanging tools being dropped onto concrete surfaces and in one instance the slightly worrying sound of one vehicle receiving some careful and delicate bodywork repair with the application of a large sledgehammer.

Workshop Number Two was to be found on the opposite side of a small yard that separated two buildings of the complex, the yard being full of Security Service vehicles in various states of disrepair and in a few cases, neglect.

Tracy stepped carefully through the pools of oil and bits of vehicle lying strewn around to reach the opposite building, inside which apart from the sound of a distant radio that was only just tuned into BBC Radio 4, was silent.

She looked around the gloomy interior for any signs of life, surveying the line of vehicles under repair in the bays set in a row across the back wall but seemingly failing to see any signs of anyone around, working or otherwise.

"Shop!" Tracy called out, her voice echoing around the interior of the tin sheet pre-fabricated building.

A clang of a spanner hitting the floor and shout of pain as an unidentified person hit their head on the underside of a vehicle announced to Tracy that she wasn't alone after all.

"Are you all right?" she enquired of the boiler-suited engineer that emerged rubbing his forehead from underneath one of Metropolitan Division's high-speed pursuit cars over on the left hand side of the building.

"I'll live, I think" he replied before he started to wonder why there was such a senior Officer in his lowly workshop.

"Is it always this quiet in here?" Tracy asked indicating the seemingly deserted building's interior.

"Oh everyone is out retrieving what's left of Metropolitan Central's vehicle fleet from around central London at the moment, usually its just plain bedlam in here, anyway what can I do for you Maam?"

"The troglodyte out front sent me through here" Tracy replied causing the mechanic to snigger "One motorbike for the Transport Division?"

"Ah yes, the Honda Pan-European. You must be the poor lass who lost her Harley yesterday, my condolences, it was a great machine" the mechanic replied.

"Yes, thank you" Tracy responded taken slightly by surprise at the total contrast in attitude between this man and the aforementioned troglodyte.

"It'll be through here," the Mechanic indicated towards the right hand side of the building in a dark corner. Switching on the lights illuminated a row of motorcycle shaped dust covers, the mechanic consulted a label tied to the front of one of them.

"Here she is" he announced throwing the dust cover off and discarding it aside revealing the gleaming red motorbike standing beneath. Being one of the spare reserve stock, it already had received its Security Service markings with the exception of the duty allocation number and the Divisional crests on the pannier sides.

"Wheel it forward, I'll be back in a minute" the mechanic disappeared into an adjacent office and returned a few moments later with a plastic tray of bits and pieces.

"Right now lets see" he commented as he rifled through the items in the box, "Crests, I've got Hertfordshire, Metropolitan, Sussex, Essex.... ah here they are!" He pulled out two crest transfers which Tracy recognised as being that of the London Transport Division which he proceeded to affix to the pannier sides of the bike.

Peeling the backing paper off the transfers, the gold, blue and red crests were just what was needed to set off the red patrol livery. A few moments more work and the allocation number 'LT02' was applied to the inside of the windscreen using black numeral transfers.

"Right then my dear, what number plate would you like?" the mechanic asked as he picked out a stack of unused yellow number plates from a nearby desk.

"I get to choose?" Tracy was surprised.

"We have two block of numbers available, the LK02 series and the LT02 series" he announced holding up two different sets of plates for her inspection.

"Oh LT02 definitely" Tracy replied quickly indicating the coincidence of the match of registration number series to her own duty identification code.

"Right then all we have to do is pick one of the three letter combinations and Bobs your uncle".

"Can I have that one? Only that's my initials, well at least until tomorrow afternoon anyway" Tracy asked pointing to one of the plates that had been shoved into the side of the box.

"LT02 TLC" the engineer read from the plate as he retrieved it and took it around to the back of the bike, where upon he affixed it in place through the two holes provided for the securing screws.

"By the way" he added, "your new mobile operations unit is round the back, I'll get someone to wheel it over tomorrow".

"Oh lovely, can we have something ending in 'DCD' please?" Tracy enquired thinking back to the Commander's plethora of patrol vehicles he had been allocated over the years that all ended in the same three registration letters.

"I'll see what I can do" the mechanic finished tightening the last screw and stood up. "Right she's got some fuel in her so give her a quick once round around the yard and see how she feels" he advised "You will find it will handle differently to your old Harley so you best get used to it before you hit the road".

Tracy did not need a second invitation and climbed aboard her new machine, starting the engine, she revved it, released the brake and shot off across the workshop and out of the large doors into the yard outside.

After a few minutes of running various quick negotiating and weaving manoeuvres, Tracy returned to the interior of the workshop and a somewhat surprised Chief Mechanic.

"You've done this before haven't you?" he commented.

"Once or twice" Tracy wryly responded, "Comes of having been three times girls under sixteen county motor cross champion" she replied coolly.

"Sign here" the mechanic requested, his face full of realisation.

"Thanks, bye!" Tracy's voice was almost drowned out by the roar of acceleration as she pulled away leaving just a trace cloud of exhaust smoke in her wake.

-----

"Right I want a full update" The Commander's sudden arrival in his office almost caused Fuller to choke on the jam doughnut he was partially through.

"Yes Sir...." Fuller mumbled through a mouthful of doughnut before proceeding to cast his eyes over the devastation that was the usual state of his office, bits of computer, cables and papers strewn to the four winds in a maelstrom that even managed to make the Commander's office look tidy.

"Sharman's memoirs. He names a number of now senior Civil Servants and politicians during the sections about his involvement with the Hainault Enquiry" Fuller showed the Commander the appropriate passages in the print out in front of him which were highlighted with bright green ink.

"Now these names also recur in two other places" Fuller went on as he retrieved a further set of papers, this time press cuttings. "Thora in the archives section pulled these out for me. Turns out that a reporter a few years ago on the Daily Mail received a tip off about a secret 'Government within Government' and did some digging around".

"That sounds familiar" the Commander added.

"Well anyway she came into possession of a series of confidential documents and memos, some allegedly from the Security Service at Scotland Yard but before she could get to a telephone to tell anyone about it, she was found dead on a Circle Line train at South Kensington".

"Nasty."

"Yeah, turns out she had been round the Circle at least three times before anybody bothered to check to see if she was all right" Fuller added as he passed over the press cutting concerning the mysterious death of the reporter almost five years earlier.

"The official verdict was that she died of a drugs overdose, something that her mother described as and I quote 'Nonsense on stilts!' also all of her documents and files were 'accidentally' destroyed in a 'routine clearout' a few hours prior to her death".

"Me smells a rat"

"However some of the documents were stored on microfilm at the Newspaper's offices and it just so happened that someone had the foresight to 'misfile' them until

someone one day came to enquire as to what the hell was happening".

"Tell me you got them" the Commander practically pleaded.

Fuller reached over and pulled another file from beneath the pile of papers and passed it to the Commander who read the first few pages with not a little astonishment.

"Am I good or am I good?" Fuller asked casually.

"You're bloody brilliant" the Commander replied as he looked through the copies of phone records, confidential memos and other documentation that was laid out before him.

"Take a look at some of the names, any ring a bell?" Fuller asked.

"Commander Hawthorne, couple of the politicians ring bells, this is dynamite" the Commander commented as he continued to look through the files.

"I reckon we must have pretty much all of the 'Teflon Committee' listed here" Fuller added "and it gets better". He called up a list of names and addresses on his computer which the Commander squinted at with his failing eyesight through the plethora of tatty post-it notes that littered the edges of the VDU screen.

"These are all the contacts in Hawthorne's palmtop" Fuller explained "and pretty much everyone in these other documents who is, or at least was still alive up to a few days ago also appears in this list".

"I like it, now where do we find these idiots?" the Commander asked.

"Give me half a day and I'll deliver them on a plate".

"What about Garforth?"

"Forensics called and said that the prints they found at the Westminster scene matched the ones that they found at Mornington Crescent, but....."

"But?" The Commander could feel a problem starting to emerge on the horizon here.

"The prints from Mornington Crescent matched the set from Garforth's records that we sent over apparently but they don't match the ones from the second copy I had to send to them yesterday because they had lost the first set" Fuller announced.

"They should have been the same" the Commander replied "Where did the Forensics Section get their first set from?"

"Central records apparently" Fuller showed the Commander a faxed copy of the original file "I'm guessing that the Central Records Section has been hacked".

"Someone is trying to manipulate events and are using Garforth as the patsy" the Commander concluded.



"And even better for them, whoever they are, they are getting us to do their dirty work and nick Garforth for them, case closed and everyone goes away happy" Fuller added.

"Is there any way of tracing who hacked into the Central Records?" the Commander asked.

"Only one guy I know who could have done this, former Security Officer, name of Stephen Redman, this looks like his kind of work" Fuller was clearly in deep thought as he looked through the computer files on the screen in front of him.

"You know him?"

"Only by reputation. He designed the original security for the National Criminal Records Network and was a leading light in the Computer Crime section" Fuller went on "but he disappeared from the Service a few years back in odd circumstances".

"Odd circumstances?" the Commander enquired.

"Rumour mill worked overtime at the time, the words Echo Division were mentioned" Fuller tailed off.

"Terrific, that's all we need, the bloody Spook Division".

"Come again?"

"They who do not exist, commonly referred to as the Spooks".

"Oh right" Fuller replied still not fully understanding what the Commander was really saying. "What about Garforth?" he added.

"Well if my hunch is right, we will get him and some 'convenient' clinching evidence against him handed to us on plate any time now"

"I hope not, we have hardly a serviceable vehicle or officer left in the Division until at least tomorrow morning".

"Ah well. See if you can dig up this Redman bloke, let me know when you have something" the Commander requested as he turned to leave.

He was almost out of the door when the phone rang on Fuller's desk causing him to scabble through the mass of paper to excavate it.

"Hello, yes?" he responded. After a short pause the Commander stopped when he heard Fuller say the dreaded words "Yes he is, hang on a minute".

The Commander turned round without even being asked and took the phone from Fuller's outstretched hand.

"Yes, tell me something I actually want to hear" he responded.

After a few moments the look of general resignation on the Commander's face turned to one of distinct irritation.

"Tell me you are joking!" he responded.

-----

"Would all customers and employees please leave the station by the nearest available exit immediately please." The tannoy announcement echoed around the concourse of Victoria main line railway station whilst a similar but pre-recorded announcement filtered through the passageways of the Underground Station directly below.

The inevitable chaos duly resulted as the majority of the people in the two stations made for the nearest way out, a choice of several being available, whilst some blissfully ignored the repeated announcements and continued on their journey towards the platforms and their trains.

"What the hell is going on?" the Commander asked as he jumped off the front platform of the Division's old Mobile Operations Unit. Being an old single decker bus and still painted red meant it blended well with the traffic in the Bus Station area outside Victoria Station's main entrance.

"Didn't you hear about the bomb alert Sir?" the Station Supervisor asked as he met him outside amid the chaos of confused tourists and annoyed passengers.

"I meant this lot" the Commander indicated the crowds of people who were still milling around looking somewhat confused.

"Oh them, half of them either have a death wish and want to be blown up or don't speak any English so cannot understand any of the announcements" the Supervisor explained.

"Did the caller indicate where this alleged device was meant to be?" the Commander asked as he and the Supervisor battled against the flow of people in an attempt to enter the Main Line part of the Station.

"No, which means we are looking at least at an hour of searching".

"Well then may I suggest we evacuate the Bus Station as well only if your bomb is in the Underground section and it goes off, the Bus Station is right on top of it" the Commander pointed out.

They both looked around at the chaos that was still unfolding before them before the Commander saw a few officers from the Metropolitan Division struggling against all possible hope to control the crowds.

"Hey you!" he called over to them. He recognised one of the officers as the young officer he had deputised at Tottenham Court Road the day before. They gave up their pointless efforts over by the Station's Wilton Road exit and came over.

"Right you two, find anyone who is wearing a uniform, Railtrack, Station, Underground, Traffic warden, anyone and systematically sweep the platforms of the mainline station" the Commander instructed. "Anyone gives you any objections, threaten to arrest them for obstruction and if they still have a problem, send them to me, now go".

He turned to the other officer, "Harrison right?"

"Yes Sir" he replied. Evidently yesterday's events had given him a new found confidence.

"Right you are with me". Together they headed for the entrance to the Underground Station.

Out in the Bus Station area, Fuller was now armed with a megaphone and with the assistance of a couple of London Buses Traffic Supervisors was seeing about the systematic evacuation of the Bus Station area.

"Everyone is to leave the Bus Station area immediately. This is a Security Alert, for your own safety please leave immediately" he called out. The Bus Supervisors threw everyone they could find on the waiting buses and then ordered their drivers to leave whether it was their booked departure time or not.

A couple of other officers were stringing tape across the entrance and exits to the Victoria complex to try and prevent anyone from entering and every so often had to shout at some idiot or other who had decided to duck under the tape, seemingly oblivious to the sirens, announcements and general chaos that was around and about.

The Commander meanwhile was not in the least bit surprised when he got down to the District and Circle Line platforms to find passengers still patiently waiting for a train, oblivious to the announcements being made repeatedly around the station.

"Everybody out!" the Commander called. Reluctantly those that could understand English made a move whilst those from overseas were persuaded by hand gestures or whatever would work to move on out via the nearest exit.

It only took a minute to finally clear the District and Circle line platforms before Harrison and the Commander moved on down to the deep level Victoria Line tube platforms where there were also a few stragglers who were quickly persuaded in the Commander's usual brisk and direct style that it would be in their best interests to move out.

"Right we'll start here and work our way up" the Commander told Harrison. "I'll take the southbound and you take the northbound" he indicated.

Methodically they went through the lower levels of the Station checking nooks and crannies for any possible sign of an abandoned bag or other indication of a potential explosive device.

The spartan lower levels proved fruitless and they moved on upwards to the intermediate level, again each officer taking one platform and its connecting passageways each.

"Sir...." Harrison suddenly whispered from across the opposite platform. The Commander looked across and saw Harrison nervously pointing downwards towards some object apparently beneath a bench of seats at the far west end of the westbound District and Circle Line platform.

The Commander broke every rule in the book as he jumped down onto the tracks and carefully stepped over the live rails before clambering up onto the platform on the other side.

Harrison motioned towards the bag he had found and stepped back cautiously as the Commander stepped forward and approached it.

There was nothing that unremarkable about the bag, one of those higher quality plastic carrier types that were usually issued by the top department stores in the City's west end and very popular with overseas tourists.

The Commander knelt down and peered underneath the bench into the slightly open top of the bag whilst Harrison watched with an understandably nervous stance.

"Shouldn't we wait for the bomb squad?" Harrison whispered.

"Unfortunately they are busy scraping the remains of my motor off Kingsway at the moment so they may be a bit delayed" the Commander replied in hushed tones as he looked over the bag carefully in the way a surgeon looks over a patient before commencing a delicate operation.

"Ah.... " Harrison replied now understandably even more nervous "so you've done this sort of thing before?"

"Once... in a training room.... with a dummy bomb" the Commander casually replied.

"You diffused it then?"

"Blew up most of my staff and the entire building, hypothetically" the Commander replied as he got up from his kneeling position.

"Don't worry, I'm getting better at this" he reassured Harrison with a wink. This needless to say didn't assure Harrison whatsoever.

"Shall I go for backup?" Harrison asked clearly anxious to put as much distance between him and the potential device as possible.

"Not much point, its someone's sandwiches" the Commander announced as he casually pulled the bag out from its position and tipped the contents out on the platform floor.

Harrison looked like he was going to have a heart attack but he quickly recovered when he saw the various packaged food products and loose fruit spilled out before him. The Commander gave the goods a quick once over with the end of a pen before scooping the contents back into their bag and leaving it on the bench.

"Come on, let's see what's occurring upstairs" the Commander encouraged a still slightly shocked Harrison.

Outside, the chaos had calmed down somewhat now that re-enforcements had arrived and the lines preventing the public from entering the area had been moved further back and re-enforced.

The Commander saw Fuller standing in the entrance to the main concourse of the Main Line station and went over to him to ascertain the current situation.

"How are we doing?" he asked.

"Here we are fine, the Bus Station is clear as is Terminus Place and Victoria Street. Bomb Squad are here and are checking any cars along Wilton Road past the Apollo Theatre" he indicated up away to their right where the Bomb Squad Land Rover could be seen parked up next to the newspaper stand.

Overhead the Metropolitan Division's helicopter came in to hover above the scene, the reverberation of its rotor blades echoing off the walls of the tall buildings around and about.

"We are still checking the main station" Fuller had to speak loudly to make himself heard "the South Eastern side is clear and we are still working our way through the South Central side".

The Commander grabbed his radio and looked up "India Nine Nine, this is Lima Tango Zero One, take a hike, we can't hear ourselves think down here!" he yelled to the helicopter that was now so close overhead it was deafening.

The crew of the helicopter took the none too subtle hint and pulled away, much to the relief of everyone present before the Commander went inside the station and joined the search teams of officers who were still working among the higher numbered platforms that serves Sussex and Surrey destinations as well as the Gatwick Airport Express.

The Commander passed through the open ticket barriers and wandered along the mezzanine-floored finger that allowed access to platforms seventeen on one side and eighteen on the other. As he observed the search going on a short distance ahead, he paused by a chocolate vending machine and reached into his pocket for some change.

Being the same design machine as those the Commander frequently frequented as he passed through Holborn and other stations in the course of his daily duties, he was slightly taken by surprise when the familiar tinkling noise of the coins hitting the interior of the machine failed to materialise, instead a couple of dull plastic like thuds

was the result.

"What the...." the Commander commented to himself as he reached forward to the machine to press down the coin return lever.

His hand was about to come into contact with the lever when he was suddenly prevented from touching the machine by the appearance of the arm of the Bomb Squad Chief.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you Sir" he advised as he carefully pulled the Commander's hand away from the machine and then pointed to the catch mechanism that allowed access to the interior of the machine that was partially unlatched and showed signs of tampering.

The Commander stepped back cautiously allowing the experienced Bomb Squad chief to take over, whereupon he produced a small pen torch and shone the narrow beam of light through the gap between the front door and the body of the machine.

"Nasty...." he commented under his breath before standing up and looking around for his colleagues. With a shrill whistle and a wave of his arm, he beckoned his them over.

"In the machine lads, looks like a small quantity of plastic explosive visible just here" he announced before turning to the Commander.

"Have you got a death wish today Sir?" he asked casually "Anyone would think you were getting married tomorrow" he added with a smirk.

"Funny you should say that" the Commander mused as he left the scene to the experts and rejoined Fuller and Harrison who were outside exchanging stories of their days in the service.

"Reports coming in from all over town Sir, the usual reporting of every single dropped carrier bag being called in as a suspicious object." Fuller reported.

"I suppose that means half the ruddy Underground is shut by now" the Commander retorted as he saw what little was left of his hoped for quiet day evaporate before his eyes.

"Good guess" Fuller added "Central, Northern City Branch, Circle, District and Victoria are all shut down across the Central area, the Jubilee is a mess and the Drain is off completely".

"The Drain?" Harrison asked mystified at this latter reference.

"The Waterloo & City Line" the Commander explained, "Don't ask me why it is called the Drain though".

"Well anyway, the traffic is grid locked throughout the centre of the City now" Fuller added.

"There you go, bloody amateurs!" the Bomb Squad Chief interrupted and handed over the now diffused bomb to the Commander as well as a bar of chocolate from the machine.

"Doesn't look like much explosive" Fuller commented as he looked down at the wires and timer mechanism protruding from the small amount of explosive like material sitting in the Commander's hands.

"That's what we call a taster bomb" the Bomb Squad Chief explained as he removed his armoured flak jacket in deference to the heat that was resulting from the mid morning spring sunshine beating down, "You can expect more".

"Don't suppose you can tell where the explosive came from by any chance?" the Commander asked.

The Bomb Squad Chief took the device back and looked it over before pointing out the remains of a paper label attached to the explosive itself.

"Trace that their batch number through the manufacturer and you'll soon get your source" he replied as he climbed back into his Land Rover.

Fuller made a note of the batch number before the Bomb Squad Chief casually took the device back again and tossed it over his shoulder into the back of the vehicle.

"Right Nigel, lets go" he called and with a hail of sirens, he disappeared off through the traffic that was starting to filter through the roads around the station once again.

"All right, let them in!" the Commander called out and in seconds the Station area was awash with people once more.

-----

"God I hate bomb alerts" Tracy cursed as she attempted to sort out the chaos that was engulfing the vast Euston Station complex on the north side of the centre of the City.

With the heightened tension arising from that day's security alerts, the Commander's fear that every plastic bag and burger wrapper would be reported as a suspicious object and practically shut the City's transport network down was proving more than correct.

Tracy looked down on the mass of disgruntled humanity, people from all walks of life, nationality and racial origin all gathered together in a huge crowd lining Euston Road having been caught up in that morning's events.

"Lima Tango Zero Two from control" the radio mounted on Tracy's new motorbike called. With the background noise of sirens, helicopters and disgruntled crowds that seemed to be engulfing the City far and wide, she was lucky to even hear it.

"Lima Tango Zero Two, go ahead" she replied.

"Where are you?" the Commander asked.

"Stuck in Euston dealing with the utter bedlam here. I shut Euston down ten minutes ago just as most of the Kings Cross and St Pancras traffic arrived having been kicked out of there" Tracy replied having almost to shout to make herself heard "Where are you?"

"Oh just dicing with death, nearly getting blown up by a chocolate machine, the usual" the Commander calmly replied.

"Oh I see, quiet morning then!" Tracy sniggered.

"Quite. I just spent the last hour fighting my way back to the office. Are you going to stay on the road?" the Commander asked.

"Looks like it, it'll be a good hour before this lot is sorted out" she replied.

"Like the new bike, very swish" the Commander commented as he observed Tracy leaning against the gleaming new machine by way of the CCTV traffic monitoring camera nearby.

Tracy looked up, waved and smiled causing the Commander and indeed most of the control room to wave back until they suddenly realised that she couldn't actually see them.

"I'll see you later love" the Commander replied.

"You owe me lunch!" Tracy added before signing off and leaving her bike to go and attempt to bring some order to the crowd chaos before it got out of hand.

"Commander, you are not going to believe this" Fuller announced as he passed across a piece of paper that he had just received through the fax machine.

The Commander looked down and read it with obvious raised interest. "Is this confirmed?" he asked.

"Yep, that explosive belongs to Special Branch and....." Fuller reached across the desk in front of him and retrieved his clipboard "...guess which now late Deputy Divisional Superintendent of the Metropolitan Division had authorisation to issue the stuff?"

"Come on, we are overdue to kick some doors in" the Commander announced.

"I'll bring my skeleton key" Fuller added as he followed the Commander out of the Control Room.

-----

"Who the hell is it?" a tired and grumpy female voice shouted angrily from the other



side of the door that the Commander had just knocked at loudly and repeatedly for the third time in as many minutes.

This was quite an exclusive block of what many called 'Yuppie' apartments in the midst of the vastly redeveloped Docklands complex, now a prosperous residential and business area, a stark contrast to the decaying and disused former docks complex of a couple of decades ago.

"Security Service, open up!" the Commander added.

The sound of locks being undone on the other side heralded that the Commander had finally managed to achieve his aim of getting into Hawthorne's flat without resorting to Fuller's skeleton key or a crowbar as it was more commonly known.

"Bloody hell, what happened? Someone rob the Bank of England?" the dressing gown dressed woman in her mid forties asked as she opened the door, the light coming in from outside momentarily startling her.

"Mind if we come in come in?" the Administrator General asked as he, the Commander and Fuller all passed the woman in the hallway and went inside the flat.

"You are?" the Commander enquired as he casually eyed up the ornate but fake Greek ornaments on the mantelpiece.

"Roberta Downing" she replied "Ms" she added with insistence.

"Mmm yes" the Commander muttered unimpressed. There were not many things that irritated him but women who insisted on using the pointless and non-descript title 'Ms' was one of them.

The Commander looked over at the Administrator General who was taking a close interest in the locked antique bureau that was situated in the corner of the room.

"Look do you lot have a warrant or something?" Downing demanded, clearly annoyed at this invasion of her privacy.

"When you have two of the most powerful and influential law enforcement officers in the City if not the country going over your gaff with a fine tooth comb, warrants just do not figure in the big picture of things if you get my drift" the Administrator General replied as he tried to get into the bureau with a Swiss army knife.

"What is your relationship with Miss Hawthorne?" the Commander enquired formally as he tried to distract Downing's attention away from the imminent act of destruction that the Administrator General was about to perform on a valuable antique.

"I'm her... partner" Hawthorne explained rather vaguely as she dodged her head from left to right in an attempt to see behind the Commander.

"Oh yes, I forgot Hawthorne used to bat for the other team as my granny would have put it" the Administrator General replied as with a loud crack of splintering wood, the

brass lock on the Bureau gave way under the enforced pressure brought to bear by the knife blade.

"Oi! You can't do that?" Downing protested but it was too late.

"Complain to my boss" the Commander replied as he sifted through some of the documents that were within the formerly locked section of the Bureau

"And your boss is?"

"How do you do!" the Administrator General replied in a polite if sarcastic manner.

"This is a conspiracy!" Downing continued to protest.

"I say that every time my wife cooks me lunch" the Administrator General muttered.

"Where is Superintendent Hawthorne?" Downing demanded.

"Now that's the strange thing" the Commander replied "There I am on my way up to see my colleague here having narrowly escaped being blown to bits when I run into Ms Hawthorne only for her to exclaim remarkably that she was somewhat surprised to see me still alive".

"So?!?" Downing was not yet really seeing the point of this but allowed the Commander to continue his story.

"Well when she realises what she had said, she promptly legs it only for someone to assassinate her in a nearby Tube Station not ten minutes later, not however before she had taken several pot shots at both my Deputy and several passing members of the public. Now call me old fashioned and cynical but that in my book constitutes somewhat suspicious if not irrational behaviour don't you think?"

"She's dead?" Downing asked seemingly devastated and falling back into the adjacent chair clearly in a state of shock.

"Very!" the Commander responded, subtlety was never his strong point.

"This is what we need!" the Administrator General announced as he held up a large A4 sized leather bound diary. He passed the red coloured diary to the Commander and left him to study the contents whilst the Administrator General went over to comfort Downing, a task the Commander simply was no good at whatsoever.

"SOC" the Commander read out.

"What?"

"Its written in here under each Tuesday evening, SOC, 7.30" the Commander explained pointing to the entries.

"Scene of Crime Officer?" the Administrator General suggested.

"Nah, that's SOCO, this is something different".

"Strategic Operations Committee" Downing suddenly piped up.

"Never heard of it" the Commander responded.

"Me neither" the Administrator General added.

"That's strange considering she said it was a Security Department Committee, I assumed officers like you two would know about it".

"Where does this committee meet?" the Commander enquired.

"Don't know" Downing responded as she wiped away a tear "there should be some paperwork in the back of the diary relating to it. I wasn't supposed to know anything about it but we shared everything together".

The Commander turned to the rear of the diary and looked briefly through the set of files and papers that had been roughly shoved in the back.

"I'm going to head back to the office" the Commander advised and with that left swiftly leaving the Administrator General to watch over Downing until re-enforcements arrived.

-----

"At last, thank you" Tracy replied as the Euston Station Supervisor advised over the radio that the Station complex had finally been given the 'all clear'. Within moments, the heaving tide of humanity that was the waiting passengers and staff held back from the station by a combination of Security Officers and barriers suddenly lunged forward en masse as if on a mission to be the first back into the station.

Tracy got back on her bike and started the engine, looking down behind her briefly to check the engine was actually working, as it was significantly quieter than her previous machine.

Remembering for once to put on her helmet, she set off slowly across the paved forecourt area that separated the main station building from the bus stop area and the large black glass finish tower blocks that were home to the Railway Authority and a large Insurance Company, the occupants of which had had a pretty much ringside seat of that morning's events and were now returning to their desks.

The traffic in Euston Road was virtually at a standstill with all the extra vehicles and people who had been forced into using surface transport with various major sections of the Underground network continuing to be unavailable.

This traffic was in addition to the excessive amount of movement that was the norm for the busy streets of the City and the air was thick with the taste and murk of exhaust fumes hanging like a surreal cloud overhead, from some distances and angles

almost obscuring the upper parts of the taller buildings on what would otherwise have been a clear and sunny day.

Tracy headed east along Euston Road, weaving her way through the tightly packed traffic that was at a virtual standstill even where traffic lights were green, towards St Pancras and Kings Cross where a station closure was still in effect.

The gothic architecture of the huge St Pancras Hotel dominates the front of the original late nineteenth century railway station of St Pancras. It is a huge contrast to its immediate busier neighbour Kings Cross which by comparison is rather squalid with its somewhat unsuccessful 1970's style front end grafted onto the original Great Northern station building, all of which seemed to Tracy to be looking permanently in need of a coat of paint, if not outright demolition.

There were few open spaces along the main adjacent roads for the waiting crowds to utilise that had not already been swallowed up the seemingly endless blue painted hoardings guarding the building site that was the ongoing redevelopment of the shared Underground section of the two stations.

A few quick blasts of her siren managed to have the desired effect of shifting some of the crowds as Tracy wound her way through the chaos, before parking up on the raised tarmac forecourt outside St Pancras, the clock tower of the main building towering high overhead and looking down silently as it had for over a hundred years on the scene unfolding below.

"Morning!" Tracy called to the Duty Area Commander of the Transport Division who was looking around at the crowds with a decidedly depressed look on his face.

"Maam" he acknowledged albeit not with much cheer. Being responsible for day-to-day duty shift supervision for the stations along the length of the Euston Road with its three main line and countless Underground stations meant that today was even more chaotic and busier than usual.

"What's the latest?" Tracy enquired.

"We had a report of a suspicious package in the main ticket hall of the Underground section about an hour and a half ago" the officer explained "The Bomb Squad came and blew up a suspicious bag twenty minutes ago that turned out to be nothing and we are doing the final sweep through the station buildings now".

"Lima Tango Four Six Four to Lima Tango Five Nine" the radio in the officer's hand suddenly announced.

"Lima Tango Five Nine, go ahead".

"Something you should see on the Pancras concourse" the caller advised.

"We'll be right there" the Officer replied by which time both he and Tracy were making their way through the large brick archway and onto the concourse, totally dominated by the huge arched glass and steel train shed roof, exhaust fumes from

diesel powered trains hanging heavy in the air where it was trapped by the impressive structure.

"Is that it?" Tracy enquired as she looked down on a large splodge of recently applied green paint on the dark tarmac surface that the young officer who had just called was looking down at.

"Well apparently this paint shouldn't be here but I thought nothing of it until I looked up there" she indicated towards one of windows a couple of storeys above them which faced and looked down upon the station concourse.

"Depressed commuter?" Tracy asked casually as her eyes came to rest on the sight of a man dressed seemingly in all dark clothing, hanging by one of his feet from a damaged section of the wire mesh netting that was suspended above them to keep pigeons and other birds out of the roof space and off the concourse end wall.

"Don't know, but apparently he wasn't there when we evacuated the station earlier" the young officer added.

"Are you sure?" Tracy enquired.

"I think someone would have noticed".

"Well that's different!" the Commander commented as he arrived on the concourse and looked up at the sight above them.

"What are you doing here?" Tracy asked.

"Oh I was on my way back to the office, thought I'd pop by and see how you were. Looks like I picked a good time" the Commander retorted. "Is he dead?"

"Well if he isn't, he's awfully still for a chap in his predicament" Tracy replied.

"We seem to mounting up the bodies lately" the Commander added, "Right go on, get him down".

Within a few minutes, a small group of Metropolitan Division officers which the Duty Area Commander had rounded up for the task were making their way up through the building and had soon appeared at the windows either side of the suspended body.

Working carefully, two heavily built officers reached out of the windows and grabbed the legs of the body whilst a third freed it and together they brought it inside.

"Any identification on him?" the Commander enquired as he joined the officers who were making a standard check of the deceased.

"Something here" one officer announced as he continued his search through the pockets of the deceased and removed a small black leather wallet like item that without opening it, he passed to the Commander.

"Well I think we can rule out this identity" the Commander concluded as he examined the interior of the object he had just been handed before holding it up, its open face towards the officers there with him.

"If you find out anymore about our friend here, let me know" he instructed before leaving the officers to it and making his way back downstairs. Outside he met up with Tracy who was organising the crowds that were now being let back into the main line section of Kings Cross station.

"Find anything?" she asked as the Commander joined her and stood alongside adding his arm gestures to her crowd control efforts.

"Well I can tell you who he isn't" the Commander replied as he showed her the item that had been found on the body just a few minutes earlier.

"Your warrant card?" she was clearly as surprised as the Commander had been.

"Small world isn't it?"

"How do you know this is the genuine example and not another fake?" Tracy asked passing it back to the Commander.

"There's an old receipt from Tesco's shoved behind the badge" the Commander produced the crumpled piece of paper and handed it over.

"Tesco Oxford Street" Tracy read out as she scanned the printed information "Ten jam doughnuts, two pack of frozen microwave chips, two packets of chocolate digestive biscuits and a large pack of sweets. Yep, its yours all right!" she concluded clearly recognising what can only be described as the typical content of the Commander's daily diet.

"Question is what was it doing on some strange bloke hanging from the roof of St Pancras Station?" the Commander mused.

"Also why did he have a high calibre rifle with sight scope?" the Duty Area Commander interjected.

"Pardon me?" Tracy expressed her surprise although she thought to herself at that point that after recent events, nothing really should surprise her that much anymore.

"It's lying on top of the newsagents kiosk directly below where the stiff was hanging around. It's being retrieved now".

"As soon as you can, get it to the ballistics section" the Commander requested "and I want it to have top priority".

The Duty Commander acknowledged his Commanding Officer's request and headed off to carry it out before the Commander turned to Tracy.

"I'd better get back to the office, I need to get on with some serious thinking" he

announced to her before stealing a quick kiss, "I'll see you later".

"Don't forget you owe me lunch!" Tracy called after him as he turned and headed away in search of some transport back to the office.

-----

"He is? Mate you are brilliant!" Fuller declared down the telephone "Next time I'm buying, OK cheers mate, bye!" He put the phone down and let his face adopt an expression of delight that almost illuminated the dimly lit office, this latter point being subsequently picked up on by the Commander as he arrived in the office looking slightly out of breath having had to walk much of the way from Kings Cross.

"Are we trying to save on electricity or something?" the Commander remarked wryly

"Hmm? Oh that, we've got the electricians in" Fuller explained.

"The electrics here haven't worked properly since they built the place" the Commander commented, "You seem excited about something?"

"I have managed to track down an address for Redman, our missing computer expert" Fuller announced with rejoyce.

"How did you manage that?"

"Pulled in a lot of favours, greased a few palms, threatened to break the odd leg or two, hacked a few computers...."

"Oh standard operating procedure then!" the Commander chuckled as he sat down at the desk alongside Fuller.

"Shall we pay him a visit?" Fuller asked.

"He can wait until after lunch methinks" the Commander responded as he studied his watch.

"Ah much more important"

"Anyway, before I up my cholesterol level, I want to have a review of all the evidence and material we have on this" the Commander added "Did you get Hawthorne's diary and papers"?

"Over there" Fuller indicated to a second desk on the opposite side of his office that was strewn with documents and papers resembling the results of an explosion in a stationery shop.

"Don't panic!" Fuller added "I have copious notes right here" he passed across his well used clipboard, the metal retaining clip almost loose having lost much of its springiness through extensive use.

"What do we have?" The Commander began.

"Well it all seems to have kicked off with the late Mr Sharman and his argument with the front of a tube train" Fuller replied.

"No, it started before that. This goes all the way back to the Hainault Inquiry Incident" the Commander recalled some of the events of that time, bringing back momentarily painful memories.

"But when Sharman suddenly announces he is publishing his memoirs, somebody wanted him silenced, and they did it" Fuller went on.

"Sharman may have been a member of, or least a dogsbody of our mysterious Teflon committee and if he spilled the beans, that would mean everything they had been up to, let alone their very existence, would suddenly become very public".

"Sounds like a motive to me" Fuller replied. "Of course the brilliant thing about it is that they are using Garforth as the patsy".

"And what better for them than to have me as the senior investigating officer on the case by committing the crime on my jurisdiction" the Commander added.

"Neat. They bank on you pursuing your old nemesis Garforth to the ends of the earth and it keeps them out of the loop" Fuller mused. "Who then?"

"What?" the Commander asked clearly confused for a moment.

"Who is the person impersonating Garforth, doing all the dirty work?"

"Could be anyone" the Commander replied. "What about Redman?"

"Nah, not his style, he is just a computer expert really, besides he is working for the Administrator General" Fuller responded.

"The man on the inside?"

"Exactly" Fuller added.

"Clever bit is that the Teflon Committee or SOC or whatever they call themselves, get their man to do the dirty work in Garforth's old style, get me to take him down and clear out some unwanted baggage in the process".

"Unwanted baggage?" Fuller asked.

"Hawthorne was killed because she had given the game away. Sharman went because of his memoirs, you, Tracy and I were targeted because we have seen the memoirs and they know that the officer probably most likely to topple them is me".

"So by making it look like Garforth is still after you, they get you more determined to get him and ignore their very existence" Fuller concluded. "These guys are smart".



"Yeah well we are going to be smarter" the Commander responded with grim determination.

"What about Garforth?"

"Well if they want us to arrest him, we may very well have to do that, and when we get him delivered to us on a plate, we had better make it nice and public" the Commander announced.

"What makes you think we will get him delivered practically gift wrapped?"

"Because their dirty work man is dead" the Commander explained "The body at St Pancras had this on him". The Commander tossed across his warrant card which Fuller took and placed across the face of a magnetic card reader unit attached to the side of his computer"

"Genuine article" he passed it back "What did he die of?"

"Looks like he slipped on pigeon droppings and got caught up in the wire anti-bird netting" the Commander replied, "There was a high calibre marksman rifle below where he was hanging".

"So when can we expect Garforth to be 'delivered' to us?" Fuller asked.

"Well lets hope its not until after lunch" the Commander smirked as he turned to leave.

"I'll drink to that" Fuller responded as he joined the Commander on the journey to the staff canteen.

-----

"I understand officer, thank you". The distinguished gentleman put the phone down gently, however this did not reflect his anger at the news he had just received. He reached across his desk and pressed the intercom button.

"Can you send Mr Garforth in please and then put me through to ticket sales at Waterloo International, thank you".

After a few moments the phone rang and the gentleman answered it just as Garforth entered the room clearly slightly nervous at being summoned there.

"Hello, I would like a First Class ticket on your first available service to Brussels please" the gentleman enquired. After about a minute of silence at his end, he continued.

"Can the tickets be collected at Waterloo?" Again another pause as the booking clerk he was talking to replied.

"The name is James Garforth, the three fifteen service to Brussels Midi, thank you".

"Is this trip business or pleasure?" Garforth asked clearly slightly sceptical, especially as his boss was paying for him to travel First Class.

"Business" the gentleman explained, "You are to meet with my opposite number in Brussels. You'll be picked up from the station and get your instructions there".

"Oh lovely" Garforth's scepticism was not well hidden under his response.

"Have a pleasant trip". The gentleman watched as Garforth turned and left, waiting until the door was firmly closed before returning to the telephone.

"Mr Redman, can we have lights out at three o'clock please, thank you". He hung up again, sat back in his chair and pondered what was going to happen later that afternoon.

-----

"How's Jennifer?" the Commander asked in between mouthfuls of chips as he and Fuller sat in the corner of the Holborn staff canteen.

"She may recover consciousness later today they hope" Fuller replied "Once that happens, she should be out by tonight".

"The doctors say she can go by tonight?" the Commander was surprised by this.

"No, she will. You now how strong willed she can be" Fuller explained.

"Well I know by identical example" the Commander mused as he looked around the semi-deserted canteen. A combination of it being mid afternoon and the lack of officers available for duty contributed to that day's quietness.

The Commander was enjoying one side effect of this, the canteen had too many chips cooked and he was tucking into twice his usual large portion with gusto whilst Fuller contemplated the salad sandwich, a substance potentially alien to his superior officer sitting opposite.

A ringing of a mobile phone began to permeate through the canteen leading the Commander to start looking around the for the source of the annoying intrusion in what was up until then a pretty good lunch.

"Its yours" Fuller mumbled with a mouth full of salad sandwich.

"I forgot I even had one, Tracy insisted I joined the twentieth century" the Commander responded as he pulled the small silver phone out of his pocket.

"Yeah, pity its now the twenty first!" Fuller muttered but the Commander was too busy trying to fathom out how to answer the call to notice.

"Hello?" the Commander enquired.

"Good afternoon, I believe you are the gentleman interested in knowing the whereabouts of a James Garforth" the mysterious caller began.

"You have my complete and undivided attention" the Commander responded as he grabbed his plate of chips and made his way back out and up to the control room with an understandably confused Fuller in hot pursuit.

"It may be of your interest to check the names booked on an afternoon departure from Waterloo, needless to say I did not tell you this".

"And you are?"

"My name is not important, that you arrest Mr Garforth quickly must be. I trust you will use your usual efficiency, good bye Commander".

"What happened?" Fuller asked.

"He hung up" the Commander replied before turning and looking at the large view screen at the front of the room.

"Can you get into railway company reservations computers from here?" the Commander enquired.

"I can try" Fuller replied as he sat down at the main computer terminal and thought about it.

"Waterloo departures, this afternoon, check of any known names" the Commander responded.

"Something I should know about?" Fuller asked.

"Depends on what you find".

-----

"How long is that recovery unit going to be?" Tracy enquired over the radio unit that was fitted to the cab of the Routemaster bus that itself was imbedded in the side of a black taxi at the Gower Street junction of Euston Road, immediately outside Euston Square tube station.

In every direction the traffic was solid and at a total standstill, the air filled with idling engines and beeping horns. The source of the entire problem being a major collision between two cars, a taxi and the bus whose radio Tracy was using.

"Tottenham Garage crew say they will be at least another half hour, the traffic is solid for miles in every direction" the reply crackled over the dented speaker mounted in the top corner of the cab.

"Roger that" Tracy added and hung the radio back up on its hook before climbing down from the cab. Steam was venting from the broken radiator of the bus and enclosing the scene in a dense cloud whilst those involved, the drivers and passengers of the various vehicles were assembled along the length of the pavement, most unhurt although one or two were receiving attention to minor injuries from crew of the bus as Ambulance support was still stuck in the traffic.

"Look on the bright side love" the bus driver, showing that standard knack of philosophy that most bus crews seem to display in times of 'major cock up', "After all of the trouble today on the roads and with half the Underground system shut, today couldn't possibly get any worse".

"The day is but young!" Tracy responded looking at her watch "Its only three o'clock and I am getting married in the morning!"

"Who said life was dull in London?"

-----

"Guv!" Fuller practically screamed down the corridor from the Control Room in the direction of the Commanders Office knocking a number of people flying.

"What?" came the direct reply from the opposite end of the corridor.

"I've got something you need to see!" Fuller yelled back in reply.

"Why the hell are we shouting?"

"Because we are at opposite ends of the corridor and the ruddy internal phones have been cut off by the electricians!" Fuller explained at full volume in a conversation that was loud enough to be heard by anyone listening without the aid of their devices had Fuller not already removed them.

"Well why didn't you say so" the Commander replied as he jogged down the corridor, throwing his uniform tunic on as he arrived back in the control room.

"Three fifteen departure from Waterloo International to Brussels Midi, Coach 11, Seat 71, passenger name of Garforth. Does that attract your attention?" Fuller announced.

"As I was saying, delivered on a plate" the Commander responded, "Anyone available at Waterloo?"

"No-one is answering the phone, mind you the fact that it seems not to be working either may have something to do with it" Fuller replied.

"Alright then, just tell me the CCTV cameras at Waterloo International are working" the Commander requested.

Fuller looked down at the main control console in front of him and pressed a few buttons but his facial expression turned quickly from hope to dismay as a large red

symbol marked 'Picture Not Available' appeared on the main screen.

"Do you want the bad news or the bad news Guv?"

"Don't bother, I can guess" the Commander replied in a resigned frame of mind before he turned to the duty despatch officer who seemed to be keeping her head down, "Where is Commander Caverner right now?"

"Euston Square, helping out with an RTA" she replied as the Commander picked up the radio head set from the desk in front of him.

"Lima Tango Zero Two from Lima Tango Control, are you receiving over?"

Outside the slightly decrepit facade of Euston Square Underground Station just above the main underpass, the huge traffic jam was continuing to snarl up the roads for some considerable distance in every direction.

Tracy, along with several passers by, were continuing to provide assistance to the injured and pacify the unimpressed motorists caught in the resultant tailbacks that were expanding rapidly throughout the nearby roads and side streets.

Handing control of the situation over to one of the Metropolitan Division's Security Officers who had arrived at that point meant she could take the call on her radio.

"Lima Tango Zero Two, go ahead".

"Our old friend Garforth is reported as about to board a Eurostar service at Waterloo, trouble is we have no CCTV link and you are the only person in any fit state to recognise him, can you get down to Waterloo fast?"

Tracy looked up and down the roads that led away in four directions from the crossroads outside the Underground Station. In each and every direction as far as the eye could see the roads were packed tight with stationary traffic and Euston Square had no direct service to Waterloo.

She looked briefly at her watch and then thought for a moment before responding, "What's the state of play with the Tube?"

"Fuller?" the Commander passed the request over who took up the conversation.

"Well Euston mainline Underground and the Victoria Line is about to re-open, the Jubilee should follow in about ten or fifteen minutes but the Northern Line is shut for at least another hour".

"I'll be there" Tracy responded "just make sure you lot are!"

The Commander was about to reply but Tracy had abruptly cut short the conversation as she ran down the entrance steps of Euston Square station and along the passageway that ran past the booking hall and ticket barriers to the entrance and exit on the opposite side of the road.

Turning right at the top of the stairs she exited out onto the pavement only to see through the stationary traffic, the Metropolitan Division officer waving his arms frantically to attract her attention. When he realised he had been seen he pointed to Tracy's day-glow uniform motorbike jacket and helmet that she had accidentally left draped over the pedestrian barrier on the other side of the road.

She quickly decided that there was not enough time to go back so just waved her hand to indicate her intention before passing around the corner to where her motorcycle was parked.

Quickly boarding, she started the engine and revved it as loud as possible sending out twin plumes of exhaust smoke from the chrome plated exhausts either side of the rear number plate, before beginning to weave her way slowly through the pedestrians that were on the pavement that ran down the north side of Euston Road.

Meanwhile the Commander, Fuller and a couple of other officers he had managed to round up in the corridor where outside the Holborn office building in the middle of Kingsway boarding the division's slightly battered looking converted mobile operations unit, already very second-hand when it was bought cheap in December it had only had a few patches of red paint added here and there to its previous owner's London Transport ayres red livery plus a blue flashing light bar at either end of the roof.

The hazards of busy city traffic over the last five months had also seen to it that its state of tattyness had continued to increase.

Parked in the middle of Kingsway between the two opposing directions of traffic meant that not only did the Commander have to negotiate the traffic which was being its usual uncooperative self, but also once they where on board and the Commander had taken the wheel, he still had to pull out into traffic, much of which was passing through there in search of an alternative route to avoid the chaos that was ensuing from the accident and the resultant traffic jam in the Euston area.

Meanwhile Tracy was driving through the bus station that was situated in front of Euston's mainline railway station, causing at least one Routemaster on route 73 to abruptly halt slightly short of its correct stand as she crossed the traffic, and up onto the paved forecourt before passing slowly through the sliding double doors into the station's black marble floored concourse.

"Oi!" the on duty Railway Authority jobsworth called.

Tracy still had her intermittent sirens on and the sound inside the spacious but enclosed station concourse area was deafening some of the stations passengers.

"Sorry!" she called back as she turned it off.

With the siren silenced she got off the motorcycle and wheeled it around to the stairway in the middle of the concourse that led to the car park area below the station complex itself only to be intercepted by the railway jobs worth again.

"You can't take that down there love, you'll have to ride it away" he called repositioning his peaked cap in an attempt to increase his own self-imposed over importance.

"Tell me you are joking!" Tracy responded, anxious to be moving on, as time was short.

"Nope, company rules, no motorbikes are allowed in the car park at any time until further notice".

"Not even Security Service ones?"

"No-one".

"Do you know who I am?" Tracy asked in an unusual gesture of insistence.

"Doesn't matter if you are the chief of the Security Department...."

"Or his Deputy?"

"No!"

"...Or his wife?" Tracy murmured as an afterthought.

"You're the Commander's wife?" he asked.

"Well not until tomorrow" she replied as she wheeled her bike away towards the escalators that led down to the tube station where the Underground station supervisor and an assistant were about to remove the barriers that were preventing access below and re-open the station.

"Excuse me mate!" Tracy called to the slightly startled Station Supervisor. After all generally speaking Deputy Divisional Chief's of Security riding motorcycles with their blue flashing lights still active inside Euston Station was not something you see everyday "Victoria line re-opened yet?"

"Err, just about to, first train should be in a few minutes".

"Thank you!" Tracy called as she called upon her old champion motor cross skills to manoeuvre the not insignificantly sized motorcycle down the set of fixed steps that were situated between the up and down escalators and led to the semi-gloom of the booking hall below which, being that the station was still only in the process of re-opening, was fortunately deserted allowing her to speed past the main bank of ticket barriers to the open gate at the far end.

Pedestrians scattered and vehicles pulled more reluctantly out of the way of the Security Department Mobile Operations Unit, the fact that it looked at first glance, and indeed was an old single deck London Bus that had spent its previous twenty

years of service plodding up and down the streets of the Red Arrow routes of London's Buses, meant that many did not realise the speeding vehicle's significance until they suddenly realised that it was the source of the sirens and blue flashing lights.

Rounding Aldwych and proceeding into the Strand, the Commander was forced to make several stops and change direction as he weaved all 10.6 metres of the vehicle through the traffic, those who had joined him on board were seated behind the control desks with which the interior of the vehicle was fitted, holding on for grim death, these seats having been primarily intended for use when it was standing still.

For Tracy, a set of fixed steps was no problem after all she had several under 16 girls motor cross championships to her name even if the motorbike was significantly larger and more powerful than the little motorbike she used back then. However now a moving down escalator was more of a challenge.

With little time to waste, Tracy simply drove the bike forward slowly to the top of the escalator and hit the emergency stop button, before carefully balancing herself to ride down the comparatively short run to the passageways below.

Meanwhile the Commander's attempts to manoeuvre through the traffic came to nothing as the heavy goods lorry he was following suddenly seemed to veer and wander about the carriageway strangely as they began to cross Waterloo Bridge over the River Thames.

With lightning reflexes the Commander realised something was wrong and hit the brakes as hard as he could bringing the vehicle to an abrupt halt just as the lorry in front jack knifed, its trailer section skidding around so that it became jammed right across the full width of the carriageway blocking the path of traffic in both directions, most of which managed to swerve or stop in time to avoid any major collision.

Fuller picked himself up off the floor, dusted himself down and made his way to the front platform adjacent to the drivers cab and surveyed the scene through the front windscreen,

"Euston we have a problem....." he commented.

The roar of forced air and electric motors filled the cavernous platform area of the southbound Victoria Line at Euston as the train of 1969 Tube Stock came to a halt and the red painted doors slid open with their usual clanking metallic sound.

As the air brake reservoir pumps mounted beneath the motor cars of the train sprang into life, Tracy pushed the bike aboard, the level step between the platform edge and the carriage being of great assistance.

Parking it in the doorway area normally used by standing passengers she looked around at the small number of understandably astounded passengers in the carriage before taking a seat, picking up a discarded copy of that afternoon's Evening Standard



newspaper whilst the doors closed with their warning bleeps and the train pulled away into the darkened running tunnel.

"Okay, to your right a bit" the Commander called out as he stood in front of the mobile unit or old bus depending on how you looked at it, and gave instructions to Fuller. He was sat in the drivers seat trying to manoeuvre the vehicle around and through the gap that they had managed to create between the back end of the jack knifed lorry and the retaining wall of the bridge.

Fuller leaned out of the driver's side window and looked down at the very close proximity between the offside front bumper assembly and the solid grey vertical concrete retaining wall.

"It won't fit Sir!" he called obviously concerned about not damaging the vehicle any more than it already was.

"It'll fit, just shove it through" the Commander called.

"As long as the damage isn't coming out of my pay!"

"Course not, beside we are supposed to be having the new one delivered tomorrow so it doesn't really matter does it?"

"All right here goes..."

"The next station is.... Green Park.... Change here for the Jubilee and Piccadilly Line.... Alight here for Buckingham Palace". The awful, slow and annoying on-board digital announcement system was only a recent introduction to the Victoria Line trains but already the regular passengers hated it.

Regardless the announcement was repeated as the doors opened and Tracy pushed her bike out onto the cold black tarmac of the platform surface watched by the platform supervisor who didn't think anything of it, he had seen plenty of strange things on the Underground network in his time and this was nothing different.

"Jubilee Line?" Tracy asked.

"Far end of platform" the Platform Supervisor responded indicating the sign mounted from the roof of the tube shaped platform right at the opposite end from where Tracy was.

"Oh marvellous!" Tracy responded as she remounted and started the engine, switching on the blue flashing lights she made her way down the now empty platform just as the train left, turning right at the end and up a short flight of fixed steps before turning left and running into and through the Jubilee Line part of Green Park Station, decorated in brash late 1970's style red coloured tiling contrasting markedly with the more sombre greys and blues of the 1960's Victoria Line part she had just passed through.

The scrunching of bending metal was heard as the front offside corner of the Mobile Operations Unit came into heavy contact with the retaining wall, a clang and a further scrunch heralded the predicted forceful removal of the bumper section as it fell to the ground.

As the front offside wheel went over the remains of the bumper, part of the lower side panelling buckled as well. With the front end clear ahead however, the Commander signalled to Fuller to straighten up and push through which he managed successfully despite scraping pretty much every panel on either side below the window line.

The Commander hopped back on board and closed the air operated four leaf doors before Fuller re-started the sirens and flashing lights and continued their now somewhat delayed journey to Waterloo.

Tracy had by now joined a Jubilee Line train and was heading south passing through Westminster Station on the way where a few passengers were more than a little surprised to be sharing their carriage with a motorcycle.

The higher line speed of the Jubilee Line Extension south of Green Park meant that the train fairly rocketed along and pulled into the modern dark metallic grey coloured platform at Waterloo with little delay or fuss.

Which was more than could be said for the Commander and his team who were battling major traffic problems, not least the difficulty in crossing the oncoming traffic in Waterloo Road in order to pull up outside the Underground and Main Line Station entrance.

Fuller looked on at the incessant line of traffic that despite the traffic lights in the distance still managed to come on in one continuous stream. In the end he saw a small gap in the traffic and decided to make a jump for it but as he accelerated and turned he managed to out manoeuvre himself and collided with the metal barrier that separated the road from the pavement, the barrier won.

As Fuller was busy unintentionally reshaping the local street furniture, Tracy was disembarking onto the platform sweeping in a fairly majestic manner through the exit portal at the north end of the platform only to be confronted with a bank of three escalators, all moving and all very long.

Even stopping one of them was not really an option as the steepness made it too difficult even for a lady of her considerable motorcycling talents. Her only saving grace however came in the form of a London Underground employee who appeared to investigate what the strange engine noise was that she had heard echoing up through the station complex.

"You know you could try the lift, we have them at the extension stations nowadays" she suggested in a cheery voice although it wasn't clear if she was trying to be genuinely helpful or just anxious to get Tracy and/or her bike out of the building as soon as possible.

The lift however was the easy answer to Tracy's problem and riding the bike into it, she was soon on her way to the surface ticket hall.

"Simon, have you been taking driving lessons from Tracy?" the Commander asked as he briefly paused to survey the not inconsiderable damage that had been caused to the offside of the vehicle.

"No, her sister" he replied.

"Oh yes of course you two are an item now aren't you" the Commander added as they passed through the entrance into the Waterloo Road ticket hall.

"How did you know about that Sir?" Fuller asked with some surprise, he and Jennifer had been keeping their relationship out of the general eyesight as much as possible.

"Oh just the small matter that I am living with and am engaged to her identical twin sister and besides I am your boss, its my job to know everything about you" the Commander replied as he looked round for any sign of Tracy but to no obvious avail.

"All right then Sir, what's my favourite colour?"

"Apple green".

"Damm I should have put money on that".

The sound of an approaching motorbike reached their ears, looking round the Commander was expecting to see Tracy outside in the street however Fuller saw her coming from a completely different and unexpected direction, the lift landing towards the rear of the ticket hall and drew his attention to this fact.

"Sir, behind you".

"What the...." the Commander began but deep down he was not all that surprised, it was just the sort of unusual but effective thing Tracy did and a notable part of her overall character.

Passing through the ticket barrier gate, she pulled up alongside the Commander and Fuller and smiled meekly when she saw the look on their faces.

"I'm sorry, you were expecting someone else?" she asked sarcastically.

"With that kind of entrance, no" the Commander replied affording a brief moment to kiss her.

She looked outside at the slightly bent Mobile Operations Unit and then at Fuller who was rather hoping she hadn't noticed his unintentional handiwork.

"Mmm, nice parking" she commented, "almost uncannily like my driving".

"Right to business...." the Commander interjected, "We'll go up to the main station concourse and in the front entrance, Tracy you go through the passageway that runs past the Waterloo & City line platforms and get onto that Eurostar as fast as you can, you're the only one who can i.d. the sod".

Tracy nodded in agreement and spun the bike around on its rear axle before backing out almost to the entrance in order to gain a good run up to the short flight of fixed steps that lead up to the passageway running above the ticket hall.

As she made her ascent with consummate ease, the Commander, Fuller and the two other officers with them made their way via the escalators situated within the next archway across.

However despite the presence of four fully armed and uniformed Security Officers, one of them practically the most senior Security Officer in the capital and all obviously in a hurry, a couple of tourists with unnecessarily huge suitcases insisted on pushing in front of them and blocked the entire width of the escalator.

"I don't believe this" the Commander muttered to himself but he restrained his usual urge to threaten the tourists with arrest for obstruction and waited behind them all the way to the top although he gave them one of his well-known stares for their trouble.

Quickly rushing across the concourse a call of "Security Officers, stand aside please!" from Fuller cleared some of the crowd of pedestrians and tourists from their path, the less co-operative ones responded to the Commander's version which with gun drawn was "Oi! Shift it!".

The two escalators that led down to the lower concourse that made up the front entrance area of Waterloo International were quickly descended but at the check in gate was Tracy still on her bike and held up by a problem.

"Don't tell me another Jobsworth!" the Commander asked her as he approached.

"As I was saying to your officer here, past this point is Customs & Excise jurisdiction and you can not go beyond here" the official explained in a brisk French accent.

The Commander hated timewasters and certainly had no time for this nonsense so called upon Fuller to apply some appropriate diversion.

"Simon, flannel this guy!"

Fuller stepped forward and proceeded to flood the official with rules, regulations and any other nonsense he could think of in his usual babble speak that was so fast the French chap had no chance of understanding a word of it. Fuller's distinctly rural southern England accent just added to the confusion the poor guy was suddenly being bombarded with.

By the time he had realised what had happened, Tracy was through the check in barrier and was passing the metal detector and x-ray official who failed to look up at

the latest arrival in the hallway.

"Any metal objects on the tray please" he stated pointing to a small grey plastic tray on the bench in front of the box like x-ray machine.

"You need a bigger tray mate!" Tracy called as she sidled past him with the engine on tick over, just enough to provide a semi-fast walking pace that meant she could manoeuvre through the terminal area with its shops, seating area and of course waiting passengers and officials without causing too much havoc.

The official at the check in gate meanwhile had given up by now and just let Fuller through who walked briskly to catch up with the Commander who had already gone on ahead. The other two officers that had travelled with them were put on patrol within the lower concourse area in case their quarry tried to slip the net.

Tracy meanwhile used the inclined moving walkway that led up to the furthest part of platforms 22 and 23 to reach the waiting Brussels service, the half mile long grey and yellow Eurostar train curved around the natural shape of the impressive glass roofed five platform train shed that made up Waterloo's International section of the station.

Riding along the platform, she quickly reached the front of the train and pulled up alongside the driving power car with its distinctive yellow-ended streamline sloping nose.

"This train moves and you answer to me right?" she instructed the driver who being Belgian actually didn't understand a word she said but got the general meaning from her body language and a glowering stare the likes of which even the Commander would have been impressed with.

Boarding the first carriage she sped quickly down the aisle of the carriages removing her gun from her side holster and checking it as she moved, much to the slight unnervement of some of the passengers who were only just settling down to a nice relaxing journey.

The various sliding doors that separated the carriage connections parted and allowed Tracy throughout the train until she reached the first carriage of the First Class seating area, its darker interior and more luxurious two and one seating contrasting with the cheaper seats in the carriages behind her.

She paused for a few moments, watched by train staff and nervous passengers as she reached for her radio and sought enlightenment.

"Commander? Which carriage is he supposed to be in?" Tracy enquired.

"Twelve" came the reply causing Tracy to turn round and attract the attention of the Train Steward nearby.

"Carriage twelve?" she asked.

"Next one" came the reply and swiftly Tracy moved on though into the next carriage

but stopping short at the carriage connection doorway where she rechecked her weapon.

Looking through the glass window set into the door, she could just about make out the row of single seats down one side of the train but the double seats on the opposite side were out of sight.

Slowly Tracy allowed the door to open and with care she entered the partially full carriage, only a few seats now remaining vacant. Stepping down the aisle with caution, her gun drawn, she looked in turn at the occupant of each individual seat in the first section.

Then momentarily she looked up at the glass screens that separated the next section of seats from the one beyond and caught a glimpse of a face she instantly recognised.

With a swift move she stepped forward, swung her arm back and brought the butt of her gun in her left hand down on the back of the neck of the person sitting in that seat.

Instantly Garforth fell forward and his head crashed onto the table in front of him observed by some surprised passengers and train staff. He wasn't fully unconscious, at least not yet anyway as he was heard to groan and try and lift his head from the table.

"That was for Jennifer" Tracy remarked but Garforth was too knocked out to comprehend, he was soon brought to his senses though when Tracy roughly hauled him up out of the seat on to his feet and then promptly kned him in the groin.

"And that was just from me" she added.

"I think you got him!" the Commander called as he entered the carriage from the opposite end with Fuller right behind him.

-----

The interview rooms in the Holborn office were certainly never designed for comfort, stark grey walls, simple furniture, a video camera mounted in the upper corner and a tape recorder was all that was to be found in the room bar the hard wearing green carpet.

With not inconsiderable intent, the windowless door was opened and Tracy roughly shoved Garforth into the room under the watchful eye of the Commander who followed them in and took up a seat alongside her on the door side of the table.

Garforth almost collapsed into the seat opposite and without any further ado, the Commander initiated the proceedings.

"Interview with James Garforth" he announced into the tape recorder, "Those present James Garforth, Chief Divisional Superintendent of the Transport Division and...." he looked across at Tracy.

"Deputy Divisional Superintendent Tracy Caverner" she replied, a clear tone of terseness in her voice.

"Mr Garforth" the Commander continued as he advised Garforth of his rights "You do not have to say anything unless you wish to do so but anything you do say may be used in evidence. You have the right to legal representation, which you may call upon at any time. Do you understand?"

Garforth just nodded weakly.

"For the benefit of the tape, the sod just nodded!" Tracy scowled.

"Now then my dear" the Commander advised "Innocent until proven guilty".

"Bollocks!" she muttered but the Commander let it pass.

"James Garforth, I am going to ask you some direct questions, I would appreciate direct answers" the Commander asked.

"Shoot" Garforth replied leading the Commander to quickly reach beneath the table and stop Tracy in case she took that as a cue to draw her gun which in the mood she was in was not beyond impossibility.

"Did you kill Trevor Sharman at Mornington Crescent Underground Station?" the Commander came straight out and asked.

"No"

"Did you plant explosive devices in Kingsway, Holborn, London Victoria Station and other locations?"

"No, who do you think tipped you off about your car?"

"Where you present at Westminster Underground Station yesterday afternoon?"

"Yes".

The Commander was taken slightly off guard by that reply, which meant he had to take this particular accusation a level further on.

"Did you attack with intent to kill Commander Jennifer Caverner on the Jubilee Line platform of Westminster Underground Station yesterday afternoon?"

"No" Garforth insisted once again "But I know who did".

"Go on...." the Commander replied after a thoughtful pause.

"It would appear that some unsavoury persons with whom I have become unfortunately associated since my lawful release from custody, have been using my err good name and appearance to their own ends" Garforth explained.

"The man at Westminster?" the Commander asked again.

"One of Dawson's thugs, specialist leg breaker amongst other talents. You will probably find he is the one who 'accidentally' broke his neck at St Pancras this morning" Garforth replied.

"Who is this Dawson character?" the Commander inquired as Tracy just sat alongside and seethed continuously.

"One of your guys, at least that was what I was told" Garforth replied clearly now realising the extent of this subterfuge with which he was embroiled. "He is the head of the Specialist Operations Committee or something".

"Small world" the Commander commented before he took a deep breath and looked Garforth squarely in the eye and issued one final question.

"At any time have you been involved in the assassination or attempted assassination of anyone in the last five days?" the Commander asked with clear insistence on a direct answer.

"No" Garforth calmly replied.

"Interview terminated at five minutes past four" the Commander announced and turned off the tape the recorder.

"Can I have a word?" Tracy insisted "Now!"

"Back in a minute" the Commander mentioned to Garforth as Tracy practically frog-marched him out of the room.

Outside, she shut the door firmly and stared the Commander down with determination.

"Just what the hell is going on?" she demanded.

"Clarify" the Commander calmly requested.

"Well, in there is a man who in the last fifteen years has tried to kill you at least twice if not more" Tracy responded clearly confused, angry and mystified as to why the Commander seemed to be letting Garforth off scott free.

"....and you are treating him like he was...." she tailed off when a sudden shock realisation came over her.

"My brother?" the Commander calmly cut in.

"Bloody hell!" she muttered as the family resemblance between the two and their father who she had met earlier in the week suddenly became readily apparent. She was mystified as to why she had not seen it before.



"The evidence against him is dubious at best thanks to our 'friend' in the SOC or whatever it is, beside if he says directly he didn't do it, then that's good enough for me".

"Alright then" Tracy enquired now a little calmer "what the hell do we do now?"

"They wanted us to arrest and charge Garforth and we've done it" the Commander explained "Now they think they have got away with it so lets pamper to their vanity and issue a press statement saying we've charged him".

"And then?" Tracy asked.

"We find this SOC mob and put them out of business" the Commander responded with clear determination "permanently".

-----

"What happened?" came a murmur from Jennifer Caverner as she began to regain consciousness for the first time since she was attacked.

"Nurse! NURSE!" Fuller called down the corridor, a call that quickly summoned a nurse and the duty doctor from the ward reception desk. Fuller had only been in the hospital room a few minutes as he had decided to call in on his way back from Waterloo, a decision that seemed to be well timed.

"Try and remain still and calm Miss Caverner" the doctor encouraged as he proceeded to make a series of standard checks on her but she was having none of it.

"Where the hell am I?" Jennifer asked, her clarity and consciousness quickly returning in leaps and bounds.

"St Thomas' Hospital" Fuller explained as the Doctor finished his standard checks and stood back, allowing Fuller to come closer and speak to her face to face.

"How long have I been out for?" she asked.

"About a day" Fuller replied.

"Oh" she tried to sit up "Did I miss anything?"

"Oh not much" Fuller responded wryly "Tracy's bike got flattened by the Metropolitan Division, the Metropolitan Division Chief is hospitalised, the Met Deputy was assassinated by some dodgy lot nobody's ever heard of, I managed to write off the Mobile Op's Unit when I impaled it on the railings outside Waterloo Station, Garforth's been arrested, we found a body at St Pancras, there have been bomb alerts all over the place and the Chief is about to round up every armed support unit in the city and kick some doors in".

"Nothing out of the ordinary then!" Jennifer chuckled but grimacing slightly as a

result.

"Just an average day at the office" Fuller added.

"It wasn't Garforth by the way" Jennifer insisted.

"We know, turns out he was the patsy, he is supposed to take the fall with our assistance for some house keeping" Fuller explained "Anyone who is thought to have read Sharman's memoirs has been targeted".

"Where do I fit into all this?" Jennifer demanded to know.

"I think our mystery assassin thought you were Tracy, he stabbed and then drugged you in such a way as to incriminate Garforth but at the same time keep you out of action long enough so as not to spill the beans that it wasn't Garforth after all".

"I got a headache, I'm not sure whether it's being in here or all this info!" Jennifer retorted as she looked around the drably decorated standard hospital interior of the small one bed private ward.

"I wouldn't worry about it" Fuller replied "You'll be out of here in a few days once you have got your strength back"

"A few days!" she exclaimed "Not ruddy likely!"

Jennifer turned towards the door and tried to grab the attention of the nearest medical personnel in the only way she knew how.

"Doctor! I want out of here!" she called.

-----

"You really don't remember any of it?" the Commander asked Garforth with some surprise.

They were alone on the terrace section of the Holborn Office roof, looking out across the roof tops of Central London chatting casually like two old friends reunited after a long time.

"Apparently the affects of that drug meant not only were my actions controlled by subversive influence, but when I was weaned off it last year, I had virtually no recollection of the entire time from about two months before I got slung out of the Security Service Cadet Programme" Garforth explained, "It was quite a shock I can tell you".

"I can imagine" the Commander responded before Garforth continued.

"Well anyway the Doctor treating me in the prison hospital sent off some medical report or other and the next thing I know a release warrant turns up with my name on it".

"Apparently I was the one who signed it, news to me though" the Commander remarked.

"Thanks anyway, I think!"

"You're welcome".

"One of the conditions of the release warrant was that I was to work for this Dawson character in that weird division I can never remember the name of" Garforth continued "It wasn't until I read in the Standard that that snide git Sharman had got his comeuppance and then I saw your performance on Newsnight the other night and I realised something was up".

"The power of the media you see".

"Then last night I run into this chap on the Tube, one of your guys apparently who had been running errands to some bloke who he thought was me. That's when the penny fully dropped and I called you about the bomb under your motor".

"Thanks for that"

"Anytime mate".

"So where do I find this Dawson and his cretins?" the Commander enquired.

"That I don't know, even though I've been there" Garforth replied.

"Ah!"

"I was always carefully guided in and out with blindfolds" Garforth explained "and I never wound up in the same place twice afterwards".

Fuller's head appeared around the door that led out onto the roof terrace area causing Garforth and the Commander to look up.

"Two bits of news for you" Fuller began before looking over at Garforth wondering whether he should share the information with him present.

"Its all right" the Commander assured "go ahead".

"Oh right then, I have tracked down our missing Redman bloke and Jennifer is back on her feet" Fuller announced.

"Thank God for that!" Garforth commented.

"Right where do we find him?" the Commander asked.

"Flat in Tottenham apparently" Fuller read off his clipboard.

"Right then" the Commander responded "Fuller, you organise some transport and make sure that Garforth here gets fed and watered. We wouldn't want to be accused of mistreating our 'prisoners' now would we?"

"Oh heaven forbid!" came Garforth's slightly sarcastic reply.

-----

"I call to order this committee meeting at 7.30 p.m." the distinguished gentleman, Sir Robert Dawson announced to the constitute members of the Strategic Operations Committee who where seated around the large boardroom table.

"First order of business, Operation Omega report" he announced.

A gentleman in his late fifties stood up and with briefing papers in hand began his report to the group.

"Ladies and gentlemen. At three fifteen this afternoon, the Security Service duly obliged and arrested and charged James Garforth with virtually everything we have spent the last four days fitting him up for"

This news was greeted with general appreciation around the room. He let the appreciative responses die down before continuing.

"However we did lose the services of our man in the field when he fell at St Pancras station, hence the reason why we brought the timetable of operations forward by twenty four hours".

"Is there any indication that the Security Service has been alerted to our existence or location?" Dawson enquired.

"Not at this time" came the frank reply "Thanks to our efforts, we have successfully convinced them that this whole episode was a vengeance thing by Garforth and totally independent of any authorities or public bodies".

"In that case" Dawson announced, "We can relax".

-----

"They better not relax for a moment because when I catch them, I'm going to crush them" the Commander announced "and that's a promise".

"We have got to find them first" Fuller replied seated in the back of the patrol car that the Commander had managed to 'borrow' from the Metropolitan Division for the evening.

Commander Cassini was driving them through the quietening streets of early evening London, the rush hour now past and the late evening surge yet to start.

The Commander, seated in the front passenger seat looked over at Fuller when he

heard the rustle of papers from the direction of the back seats.

"What are you doing?" he enquired.

"Looking through Hawthorne's papers" Fuller explained showing the diary and some other files that had been recovered earlier from Hawthorne's flat "I reckon the location of the SOC offices has to be in here somewhere".

"Do we know what this Redman looks like?" Cassini asked as he stopped the car at a set of traffic lights.

"Bit like that bloke over there" Fuller commented as he pointed out a lone figure standing at the bus stop on the other side of the road before he realised something important "Wait a minute, that is him!"

Just as Fuller announced this, their view of Redman was blocked by the arrival of a red double deck bus at the stop. After a few seconds, the Routemaster bus signalled to pull away from the stop and as it slowly edged forward into the traffic, the bus stop behind came back into view and Redman was gone.

"Quick, turn around here!" the Commander ordered but it was too late, the traffic lights on their side of the road had just turned green and crossing the traffic was now all but impossible.

"Ok then, plan 'B' it is" the Commander announced as he started to take his uniform tunic off.

"What's plan 'B'?" Fuller asked.

"'B' as in Bus" the Commander explained, "You two follow but make it a discreet distance, and I'll keep in contact on the radio".

With that the Commander left the car and darted between the slow moving vehicles that were clogging the junction, over the carriageway to the other side. He had to put on a fair turn of speed to catch up with the bus that was creeping slowly at just a little above walking pace.

Weighed down by the combined weight of his gun, radio set and other uniform paraphernalia, the Commander only just managed to grab the vertical stanchion on the rear open platform of the bus just as it accelerated away with a clear road ahead.

Standing on the platform for a few moments to get his breath back, the Commander looked casually into the lower deck saloon where there were about ten passengers seated plus the Conductor, a small smiling Irish lady who had just completed her task of collecting fares from the lower deck passengers and joined the Commander on the platform.

"You have a pass Sir?" she enquired.

The Commander showed her his warrant card although he was not sure if it was the

real or the fake one, not that it really mattered.

"Passenger who got on at the last stop, where is he?" the Commander enquired, clearly a little out of breath.

"Upstairs, towards the front" the Conductor indicated towards the staircase that led up and around the offside rear corner of the bus from the platform to the upper deck.

"Cheers" the Commander replied as he took the longitudinal seat nearest the back of the lower deck saloon over the offside wheel arch and relaxed a little.

-----

"You know if this committee or whatever Hawthorne belongs to...." Fuller, now seated in the front passenger seat, began as he continued to sift through the papers.

"....belonged to" Cassini cut in

"....belonged to" Fuller continued "has a regular meeting which usually takes place at 7.30 on any given evening, then would it be not unreasonable to assume that an Underground ticket issued at 7.05 in the evening of one of those meetings would be for travel to one of these meetings?"

"Sounds reasonable enough" Cassini replied as he negotiated his way through the traffic now some two hundred yards behind the bus they were following "Trouble with your theory is that Hawthorne has a free ride, all she has to do is run her warrant card over the ticket barrier reader at the station".

"Except that all those journeys are recorded by warrant card number" Fuller explained.

"All right then, assuming she didn't use her free ride, where does this ticket come from then?"

"Oh you mean this one?" Fuller asked as he held aloft the small pink and white coloured card ticket up for Cassini's inspection.

"Can you tell anything from it?" Cassini asked as he swerved around a white van that decided to pull out of a side street right in front of them.

"Well it was issued at Waterloo" Fuller replied.

"How can you tell that?"

"It has the word 'WATERLOO' printed on it in very large letters"

"Oh yes, so it does"

"Anyway the trouble is I can't tell where it is going without running it through a ticket barrier reader so it doesn't help us that much at the moment".'

"Ruddy traffic lights!" Cassini yelled as he slammed on the brakes.

"We lost them?" Fuller asked as he picked up the papers off the floor of the passenger compartment.

"We lost them" he responded looking ahead to a road with a lot of traffic and not a bus in sight.

-----

"Lima Tango One from control"

The Commander picked up the radio off his belt clip and answered the call.

"Yeah go ahead".

"Current location please" the Dispatcher inquired.

"On a bus in Oxford Street" the Commander somewhat unhelpfully responded, "Why? Has Cassini lost us by any chance?"

"Funny you should say that Sir" came the response "I'll pass on the message, Control out".

As the Routemaster bus crawled across the confined open section of Oxford Circus that linked the north-south Regent Street with the east-west Oxford Street, the Commander got up from his seat briefly to look up the staircase at the circular mirror mounted at the top of the steps which afforded a view of the fairly crowded upper deck.

He could just about make out the back of Redman's head, seated at the front of the bus and satisfied that his quarry was still on board, the Commander turned back to return to his seat only to stop suddenly when he clapped eyes on a very familiar face in front of the Tesco supermarket outside which the bus had now ground to a halt.

"Tracy what are you doing here?" the Commander called out to her across the pavement.

Tracy was taken slightly aback as she looked around for the source of the voice she knew so well, it was a few seconds before she got her bearings and saw the Commander standing on the rear platform of the bus a few feet away in front of her.

"Just been dealing with some loonies at the Tube Station," she explained, indicating towards the sunken entrance to Oxford Circus station about a hundred yards distant.

"Seems to have been the week for them" the Commander commented as the bus driver engaged the gears ready to move off "I'll see you later love!" he added as the bus pulled away and managed to skip through the next set of traffic lights just fractions of a second before they turned red again.

Tracy blew her beloved a kiss and waved him goodbye as his bus disappeared off down Oxford Street.

Resuming his seat, the Commander looked across at the abandoned copy of that evenings Evening Standard newspaper that was lying beside him. Casually he picked it up and read the front-page headline about the arrest of Garforth in the Sharman murder case as the bus continued to lurch as far as New Bond Street whereupon it turned left and headed into the expensive quarter of the West End.

Some distance behind was Cassini and Fuller who were now totally out of touch with the bus on which the Commander and Redman were travelling.

"Lets take the tube" Fuller commented.

"What?" Cassini responded in surprise "How can we, we don't know where he is going?"

"Shouldn't take long to find out" Fuller replied, "Pull over just here".

Cassini pulled the patrol car over to the centre of the road where the taxi rank stood and Fuller got out, being careful to take the ticket from Hawthorne's papers with him.

"I'll see you later" Fuller announced.

"What am I supposed to do?" Cassini asked.

"Follow that bus" Fuller replied.

"Which bus?" Cassini indicated to the street ahead which as far as the eye could see was full of near identical red London buses.

"Well its got to be a number 8 so turn left at New Bond Street and I'll see you at Green Park" Fuller responded.

"Why Green Park?" Cassini called after Fuller but it was too late as he was already out of sight in the crowds along the pavement and heading for Oxford Circus Underground Station.

Despite the lateness of the early evening, the subway entrances down to the subterranean booking hall directly beneath the centre of Oxford Circus itself, were still crowded with the usual plethora of humanity. People from all walks of life and nationality it seemed were all trying to occupy the same space around that area making Fuller's progress through the crowds a slower procedure than he would have liked.

The booking hall itself was slightly less crowded and Fuller managed to make faster progress. Attracting the attention of a Station Supervisor, Fuller decided to check on a theory he was running.



"Excuse me mate" Fuller called, attempting to make his voice heard over the general background noise of conversation and movement from those around him "Can you check this for me?"

The Station Supervisor stepped over and they met by the barrier gate.

"I need to know where this ticket was bought for" Fuller explained proffering the ticket from Hawthorne's papers.

"Bung it through barrier number forty and I'll see what comes up on the computer" the Supervisor called before turning and entering the small glass and plastic booth that was situated about halfway along the span of ticket barriers.

Fuller duly inserted the ticket and was taken aback by the sudden beeping noise that emanated from the gate and the yellow illuminated lettering that advised the ticket holder to 'Seek Assistance'.

"Don't worry" the Supervisor called back "Its because it's out of date probably, anyway, my readout says Green Park".

"Cheers mate!" Fuller replied as he removed the ticket from the return slot and opened the barrier by passing his warrant card over the magnetic reader pad.

Soon he was descending down the escalators and making his way onto the southbound Victoria Line tube platform. A service formed of 1969 Tube Stock arrived at the platform almost as soon as Fuller did and within the space of less than a minute, he had taken a seat aboard the forward most carriage and the train was on its way beneath the streets of central London.

In just a matter of minutes Fuller was exiting the train at Green Park, one stop down the line and making his way through the sub-surface passageways and escalators up to the booking hall and out into the busy Piccadilly road, the expanse of green open space that is Green Park itself lining the southern edge of the road adjacent to the famous Ritz Hotel.

With the light failing quickly, it was getting difficult to make out much around and about despite the provision of copious amounts of street lighting and the lights from passing traffic, indeed Fuller only narrowly missed being run over by the Routemaster bus that pulled out from a side road opposite, across Piccadilly and stopped immediately adjacent to the pavement in front of him.

Then the familiar face of Redman appeared, alighting from the back of the bus, making Fuller duck momentarily behind the retaining wall of the exit from Green Park Station so he wouldn't be seen as he was wearing his full uniform and stood out a country mile from the diminishing crowds around him.

As Redman walked down the road in the direction of Hyde Park Corner, Fuller returned to the pavement only to find himself in the presence of another uniform.

"All right how did you do it?" the Commander asked as he too alighted from the bus

just as it was pulling away. He waved his arm in acknowledgement to the Conductor who was dutifully standing on the back platform of her vehicle like a Captain of a ship in full sail.

"By the time you had passed Oxford Circus, I reckoned the only Tube station he could be going to on Route 8 was either Green Park or Victoria" Fuller explained.

"What about Bond Street?" the Commander replied determined to get one up on Fuller for once. He was about to be disappointed.

"Route 8 in the westbound direction turns left some distance before Bond Street Tube" Fuller explained, "Besides I checked Hawthorne's ticket and then jumped on a train".

While the two men conversed, they continued to observe Redman in the near distance and followed discreetly in the same direction, only to remain on the same side of the road as they watched him cross the carriageways of opposing traffic to the north side of the road where there was a row of distinguished tall office buildings, their architectural design being of a more regency period than many of the more modern office buildings to be found elsewhere in central London.

"Number 104 I bet" Fuller remarked as they observed Redman heading for the office buildings.

"The only one with the lights on" the Commander replied.

"Exactly and its got a 'To Let' sign on the outside which is a combination that is kind of odd don't you think?" Fuller responded.

"Lima Tango One to control" the Commander called on the radio.

"Control go ahead".

"Can I have as many bodies, including an Armed Response Team or three assembled in Berkeley Square in fifteen minutes?" the Commander enquired.

"We'll see what we can round up. Control out".

"Are you sure they are in there?" Fuller asked.

"Seems logical, besides I am in a door kicking mood this evening" the Commander smirked in response.

-----

Dawson poured himself his second whisky of the evening from the decanter on the side table before returning to the seat at the head of the table. He held his hand aloft momentarily for the general chatter amongst those gathered to die down and allow him to continue the meeting.

"Right ladies and gentlemen, now that we are all refreshed, the next item on our...." he was interrupted by a polite gentle knock at the door at the opposite end of the room.

"Enter!" he called. The door opened and Redman walked in.

"Are there you, take a seat, we will come to you in a minute" Dawson called.

Redman just nodded in acknowledgement and took the first vacant seat available whilst one of the others passed a drink and a copy of the meeting's agenda over to him.

"As you are all aware" Dawson continued "We are still working on plans for the forthcoming operations in Northumbria and also South London divisions so as ever, we need all the information and contacts from the usual sources by the end of the month".

Dawson allowed a brief pause whilst some of those gathered jotted a few notes before continuing.

"We need a new member of our permanent committee to replace the late Ms Hawthorne as our Security Service contact" Dawson announced before turning his gaze to Redman seated at the end of the table, "I propose that Mr Redman here be appointed".

The room's occupants nodded in approval of the proposal, Redman's look however was one of stunned surprise.

"I think we all agree that your skills and talents have been more than ably demonstrated during the last few weeks and your trusted position with influence on the Administrator General for London and the South East makes you an ideal candidate for the job" Dawson went on to explain as Redman looked on somewhat uncomfortably.

"Its an honour Sir" he replied although he couldn't help thinking deep down that this was inherently a very bad idea.

"Right if that is all" Dawson concluded, "the usual light refreshments should be available in the drawing room and I'll join you in a few minutes".

He watched as everyone got up, many nodding or verbally acknowledging him before they all went through the side doors from the boardroom into the drawing room.

Dawson picked up his briefing papers and returned through the door on the opposite side of the room to his study which was now in darkness, only a slight glow from the street lights outside coming in through the partially drawn curtains.

He was about to switch on the lights but was beaten to it by an unseen hand that activated the desk lamp, illuminating the room in a low glow.

"Good evening, we need to have a chat" the Commander announced.

"Good Evening Chief Superintendent, I do hope you remembered to bring a warrant" Dawson responded as he turned to the Commander who was sitting behind the desk casually but with a business like expression.

"Warrant?" the Commander sarcastically enquired "Nope, don't know that word, goes with vegetables, vitamins, stuff like that, haven't a clue!" he replied.

"A chat?" Dawson seemed resigned to this encounter. "May I enquire as to the subject?" he asked still standing in front of the desk from where he had not attempted to move since this confrontation began.

"How about conspiracy to murder, attempted murder, theft and use of unauthorised explosives and firearms and that is just for starters" the Commander responded as he stood up and tried to look as menacing as possible despite the foot difference in height between himself and Dawson.

"And your evidence?" Dawson remained cool and unflustered at least on the outside anyway.

"Plenty to put you and your cretins away for a very long time" the Commander replied "You see Garforth wasn't the faithful friend you thought he was and unfortunately for you, I didn't live up to your expectations and kill him on sight so what we have is a witness".

"Hardly a credible witness in my opinion" Dawson responded casually as he leaned forward, his hands on the edge of the desk.

"Then there is the forensic evidence, weak I'll admit at the moment but my Deputy tells me it's amazing what they can do nowadays" the Commander added.

"Tell me" Dawson enquired "how do you intend to take us into custody then".

"Small matter of a couple of hundred armed Security Officers ready to go at my word of command".

"Problem is how are you going to give your word" Dawson began as a gun appeared from behind the curtain of the window directly behind the Commander and was pointed directly at his head "in your newly found position as a hostage?"

"I hate it went that happens" the Commander responded now resigned to a last minute change to his plans. He turned to see who was holding the gun and deep down he was not that surprised when Redman emerged from the shadows, the gun till pointing straight at him.

Dawson quickly stepped over and took the Commander's gun from its side holster and chucked it on the desk out of immediate reach.

"Kidnapping as well?" the Commander enquired.

"Oh no, just another murder charge" Dawson coolly responded "Thank you Redman". With that casual aside, Dawson calmly picked up his coat off the nearby chair and departed the room.

"Sorry about that" Redman responded as he put the gun down "only I had to ensure that Dawson and his friends got out of here unmolested".

"May I enquire why?" the Commander asked.

"You'll see".

-----

"Lima Tango Two from Lima Mike Three Four One". Tracy's radio was still perched on the seat of the motorbike which along with about thirty other Security Service vehicles and over a hundred Security Officers, many of them now in full body armour, was swamping Berkeley Square just a few hundred yards from Green Park and Piccadilly.

"Lima Tango Two, go ahead" Tracy responded.

"We have movement at the back door of the parking garage, looks like the pigeons are fleeing the coop" came the response.

"Roger, thanks" Tracy responded before turning to Fuller who was watching the area's CCTV cameras through the screens fitted inside the Mobile Operations Unit, now a very battered looking vehicle indeed following its earlier exploits.

"Why do they always use the word pigeons?" Fuller asked aside.

"Probably been watching too many 1960's British spy movies" Tracy concluded "Anyway looks like we have some action on the plot so we had better look lively" she added.

"Lima Tango Zero Two from Zero One" the Commander called.

"Go ahead"

"Are you in Berkeley Square yet?" he enquired.

"Myself and the entire cavalry".

"Kick the doors in now!" the Commander ordered.

"On our way" Tracy turned and looked down the road that led from the Square to the junction of Piccadilly at the Ritz Hotel, where two armed units of officers forming Strike Team one were ready for the word, whilst another two units forming Strike Team two were in a side street on the other side of the target building.

"Strike Teams one and two" she paused and took a deep breath "Go! Go! Go!"

Within moments the four vans had pulled around the corners, the roar of over revved engines echoing off the buildings. What few people were still around at that time of the evening either stood and stared at the spectacle or instinctively made for cover as the vans all pulled up immediately outside No, 104 Piccadilly.

Only a few moments later, the two strike teams were in the building, high power semi-automatic rifles pointing straight ahead as they made their way methodically through the eight floors of the building.

As they arrived, their quarry were wisely leaving by the back door as observed by the Officer that Tracy had placed near the building overlooking the doorway, who quickly reported back the news

"They are legging it!" he over enthusiastically announced over the radio.

"Come again?" Tracy enquired.

"We have a three vehicle convoy leaving by the back entrance of No. 106".

"Sneaky buggers!" Fuller commented.

Tracy ran over to her motorbike and jumped on. In an instant she had got the engine started and was weaving her way through the Security Service vehicles that were parked fairly randomly around the Square area.

When she pulled up outside the back door of 104, the property they had been watching, there was, as had been reported, no sign of activity but she did make out two figures emerge from the car parking exit of the rear of 106, about two hundred yards ahead.

The Commander flagged her down and she quickly stopped alongside, Fuller also arrived behind her in a Patrol Car and leaned out of the passenger window to see what was happening.

"Fuller?" the Commander called "Take Mr Redman here and sling him somewhere safe for the moment, I want to talk to him later". Fuller got out of the car and helped bundle the confused Redman into the back seat.

"Want a lift?" Tracy enquired knowing full well that this would probably send a shudder down the Commander's spine. Riding with her when she was on four wheels was usually an unsettling experience and although she was a genius on two, he did not exactly relish the prospect that was on offer here.

"All right" the Commander capitulated "lets get this over with". He clambered aboard behind Tracy and held on for grim death as she rode off down the small side streets towards the Park Lane area.

The convoy of three vehicles looked distinguished. Two smart dark coloured saloon cars travelled in front and behind of the main vehicle, a large Mercedes minibus, it's

blacked out windows hiding the occupants from any prying eyes of the outside world.

Not that there were many people around to see this little convoy as it rounded the Wellington Memorial roundabout and headed down towards the Victoria and Westminster area of the City.

Parliament Square was almost back to its normal self, following the efforts of the local council at clearing up the mess left by the previous day's protests. The streetlamps cast their shadows on the quiet streets as the convoy left Victoria Street, rounded the square and passed Westminster tube station.

The distant sound of a helicopter hovering overhead failed to attract the attention of the vehicles occupants as they began to cross the bridge, the semi-soundproofing effect of the plush well appointed interior blocking out much of the sound that was reverberating through the air outside.

However the interior luxuries couldn't prevent the dozen occupants of the mini coach from being thrown violently forward when the driver of both it and its two escort vehicles slammed on the brakes suddenly, swerving to a stop almost exactly halfway along the bridge's central span.

"What the hell is going on?" Dawson demanded to know as he clambered forward towards the driver's seat.

"We have a minor problem" the driver announced and gestured forward. The road across the bridge where it met the far end was completely blocked by over half a dozen Security Service vehicles, all with lights flashing. In front of them around two dozen armed marksmen with their weapons pointed in Dawson's direction.

"Brian!" Dawson exclaimed, "What's behind us?"

"Full set of fuzz behind us as well!" came the unwelcome confirmation from the rear of the vehicle.

"Get out of this one" the Commander commented as he viewed the blockade from behind through a pair of binoculars.

"Having fun?" Jennifer enquired as she walked up and joined the Commander and Tracy on the bridge, about fifteen yards along from the north end.

"In a minute maybe" the Commander responded, "What are you doing here?"

"Oh I was in the neighbourhood" Jennifer shrugged her shoulders casually.

"You are supposed to be resting!" Tracy replied.

"Yeah" Jennifer responded as she took the binoculars from the Commander and looked through them "That's what the doctor kept saying".

The Commander mused on the Cavener family stubbornness before returning to Tracy's motorbike behind them and picking up the radio.

"Lima Tango Zero One to all units" he announced "All ARU's move in slowly towards the target".

At his signal, a dozen armed officers, all with guns drawn and pointing straight ahead proceeded onto the bridge from each end. Overhead, a Security Service helicopter hovered directly above the stationary vehicles, keeping the scene illuminated through its spotlight.

Tracy, Jennifer and the Commander led the north end team onto the bridge. Typically the Commander hadn't bothered with any body armour unlike everyone else. Tracy was always convinced that the Commander probably thought he was indestructible. More accurate would be that he could not wear it without feeling very uncomfortable.

Fuller arrived on the scene and parked up his borrowed patrol car in Parliament Square. Alongside, trapped in the small traffic jam that was starting to build through that section of the City, was the armoured Land Rover of the Bomb Squad.

"Evening" Fuller called "Come to watch the excitement?"

"I was passing by and thought I'd drop in" the Bomb Squad Chief replied from the passenger seat of the vehicle. Fuller got out of the patrol car and locked the vehicle to prevent Redman, secured in the rear, from escaping.

"Looks like the Chief has got them this time" Fuller commented as he was joined by the Bomb Squad Chief in the roadway, a distant view of the bridge ahead and the scene unfolding upon it just visible in the illumination of the helicopter searchlight.

"Oh by the way" the Bomb Squad Chief added "we totted up the explosive we have found today and we are twenty pounds short somewhere".

"Meaning?"

"Meaning someone in the explosive supply chain has been keeping some back for a little extra curricular activity I reckon" he responded.

Redman was becoming increasingly animated in the back of the car as he strained to see the time on the dashboard clock and was making worrying gestures towards Fuller.

"What are you mithering about now?" Fuller asked as he opened the rear door to see what the problem was.

"What time is it?" Redman demanded to know, clearly agitated.

"Almost eight thirty, why?" Fuller replied casually until a sudden moment of realisation came over him.



"In the van!" the Commander called, his gun pointed straight at the side door of the vehicle. "Open the doors slowly!"

The side door slid open and Dawson appeared in the opening.

"Good evening again Chief Superintendent" he replied coolly "I take it this is not a social call".

The Commander stood about ten feet away, Tracy and Jennifer right behind him as the other armed officers surrounded the vehicles.

"You are under arrest" the Commander announced.

"I think not" Dawson replied, "There would appear to be some misunderstanding here".

"For a chap who is surrounded by armed Security Officers and has no way out other than a one way trip to jail" the Commander commented as he lowered his weapon "you seem to be awfully relaxed".

"You forget who I work for" Dawson responded, "I represent the United Kingdom Government. All right, my Department does not appear in name on any documents, committee papers or accounts but we hold more power in this land and abroad than the Prime Minister himself".

"Cobblers!" the Commander retorted, distinctly unimpressed.

"So therefore given my position, may I suggest you withdraw and let us get on our way?" Dawson suggested.

"Over my dead body!" the Commander retorted.

"You may be surprised at just how easily that could be arranged".

"A threat?"

"Merely a statement of fact, we have influence in all areas of power and there is more to the Omega Division Service than just my Committee" Dawson replied, again still appearing relaxed and casual "Although I would hate for you and your lovely Deputy to miss your wedding tomorrow. I hear it should be quite a good event".

"I didn't know you were invited" Tracy responded but then had to break off as her radio sparked into life.

"Yeah go ahead" she replied.

"So what in particular makes you think I am going to let you just stroll away as if nothing had happened?" the Commander continued to enquire.

"Who said anything about strolling away?" Dawson looked down at the briefcase at his feet "I just said we would never be taken into custody".

Tracy meanwhile was all of a sudden noticeably agitated as she looked at her watch. A growing expression of realisation and horror suddenly came across her.

"We have to go!" she suddenly announced.

"What?" the Commander responded. He was already slightly confused by Dawson's last remark, this just added to the mystery.

"Bye!" Dawson called, a cold smirk across his face as he closed the van door.

"Would you mind explaining that?" the Commander enquired as he turned to Tracy.

"Twenty pounds of explosive unaccounted for, Redman was the handler and he is looking nervously at his watch back there" Tracy quickly replied recounting the message she had just received from Fuller.

The Commander was starting to cotton on to the urgent subtext here and began to step back from the vehicle.

"Come on!!" Tracy urged as she pulled him and together with Jennifer, they attempted to make a swift exit from the scene but the slewed angle of the escort vehicles in front and behind the mini coach made a rapid escape tricky.

"Get out of here!" the Commander called to the ARU Officers and at his instruction they made for the nearest end of the bridge.

"Come on, we'll have to jump!" Jennifer called as they reached the bridge parapet and the sisters started to climb over.

"There is something I should tell you two" the Commander announced, now feeling somewhat nervous as he joined them perched on the precipice, looking down at the cold, dark and murky River Thames below.

"This is hardly the time for personal revelations love" Tracy replied.

"I can't swim!" the Commander announced.

"Never too late to learn!" Jennifer called as both Tracy and herself, either side of the Commander, grabbed an arm each and the three of them jumped, quickly plunging to the river below.

They had barely touched the rippling surface of the water when a huge explosion erupted from the mini coach on the bridge, instantly engulfing it in a ball of flames and flying debris that in an instant covered the whole width and much of the length of the bridge.

Everyone in the area reacted instinctively, officers on or nearby the scene flung themselves to the ground or ducked behind anything to hand for cover whilst the helicopter hovering above, quickly pulled away, only narrowly missing the outer fringes of the fireball as it erupted.

After only a few brief moments, the initial shockwave and flames subsided, a few pieces of debris clattered to the ground, many some distance away from their origin, the now blazing charred remains of a vehicle chassis, split into several not particularly large pieces in the centre of the bridge.

The charred and twisted debris continued to burn gently with the exception of those bits that plunged into the river below, the sound of splashing being about the only noise now accompanying the last echoes of the explosion itself that was still hanging in the air.

Fuller was the first to run onto the bridge, reaching the site of the devastation, he made a quick survey of the mess before turning towards the now badly bent parapet and looking down at the river below.

"Is there anybody down there?" Fuller called in the direction of the wet murky darkness below.

-----

"The Home Office has blamed Irish Republicans for the car bomb that exploded on Westminster Bridge earlier this evening, killing the twelve occupants of the vehicle and injuring three Security Service officers who were investigating the incident" the newsreader announced through the television in the Commander's office.

"No surprises there" Tracy commented as she turned to the Commander who was seated behind his desk trying to put together the final report on the case.

"Amazing how many mysterious terrorist incidents get blamed on the poor Irish isn't it" he responded.

"Governments change, the lies stay the same" Tracy commented.

"Nice quote, where did you get that from?"

"I heard it in a film once" Tracy replied as she joined the Commander and perched herself on his lap, putting her arms around him.

"So what happens about Garforth then?" she asked.

"Well technically he was originally freed perfectly legally, I checked with our legal guys" the Commander cast his eye over an official classified file on the desk in front of him. "And we cannot charge him with anything else due to what little evidence we do have being unsafe".

"So he is a free man then?"

"Well the Witness Protection Division are going to give him a new identity and relocate him, probably abroad I expect".

The Commander let out a long sigh "I seem to be getting through uniforms like you get through motorbikes" he commented as he looked across at the sodden mess that was his uniform, lying slumped over the radiator below the window.

"As long as you still have your best one" Tracy replied.

"What for?"

"Tomorrow?" she reminded him.

"I nearly forgot"

"What!"

"Only joking!" the Commander added leaning across and kissing Tracy on the cheek.

-----

"Right then, is the world ready for this?" Tracy asked from behind the office door.

"Knock em dead" Jennifer called.

"Do you think I should take my gun?" Tracy enquired as she popped her head around the edge of the door with a quizzical expression.

"No!" both Jennifer and Fuller immediately responded in unison.

"Ok, just a thought" Tracy replied as her head disappeared back behind the door again.

"I don't know, an hour before her wedding and she is worrying about whether she is going to be called out on duty or not!" Jennifer commented to Fuller as they stood together out in the corridor, the former in full bridesmaid dress of cream lace, the latter in his usual Security Service uniform as he had volunteered to watch the office whilst most of the staff attended the wedding.

"Ready!" came the call from behind the office door.

"Brace yourself" Jennifer advised Fuller.

Outside the main entrance to the Holborn offices, a small crowd had gathered. Some press, a few locals, some Security Service officers who had just happened to be passing at the right moment plus some passers by who stopped to see what all the fuss was about.

Fuller appeared through the doors, a camera in his hand and joined the front row of press photographers awaiting the imminent appearance of the Bride.

They did not have to wait much longer as a minute later the doors opened again and Tracy appeared in the doorway, her appearance causing a momentary silence of awe to descend over all those awaiting her arrival.

"Wow!" was all Fuller could manage as he, along with everyone else, set their eyes upon Tracy and her wedding dress, a beautiful canopy of white and cream satin lace that flowed down to an exquisite train behind her.

The press and the public filled the air with camera flashes as they took their pictures, Tracy standing framed in the doorway like a Princess awaiting her Prince Charming.

After the initial hubbub had died down, her two bridesmaids joined her, her sister Jennifer and her cousin Michelle, both dressed in complimentary bridesmaid dresses. They took up their positions behind the smiling but understandably nervous bride before they moved off.

Fuller and a couple of officers from the Traffic Division stopped the traffic in Kingsway in both directions so that the Bride's party could cross the road safely, an inconvenience that the motorists and bus drivers who were stopped, seemed more than happy with when they saw the circumstances.

Turning left, the party made the short walk to the entrance to Holborn Underground station fairly swiftly, and their progression was made all the speedier as the Station Supervisor had specially kept clear one of the entrance gates exclusively for the Wedding Party.

The access gate through the row of ticket barriers was formally opened by the Station Manager who saluted Tracy as she passed through, before they headed for the No. 5 escalator which had only just been re-opened following extensive refurbishment work.

The intermediate landing at the bottom saw the party turn right and head for the second set of escalators down to the Piccadilly Line, the middle escalator of the bank of three having being kept clear specially for their progress.

A further set of steps led to the Piccadilly Line's Westbound Platform where at the bottom, the Station Staff in full blue London Underground uniform, were forming a guard of honour leading from the portal in the platform wall to the edge of the platform.

The station staff all stood to attention in the best military tradition and saluted Tracy as she arrived on the platform. She acknowledged with a slightly embarrassed look the honour before looking up at the electronic next train indicator that read 'Special Wedding Service' where normally there would have been the far less exotic destinations like Heathrow or Rayners Lane.

People on the platform along its entire length strained to see what was happening as the specially prepared three car train of preserved 1938 tube stock, its newly restored

red finish with traditional gold leaf London Transport fleet names and car numbers, arrived in the platform, the middle door of the centre car stopping precisely in front of Tracy and her attendants.

The doors slid open and Tracy boarded the train. She was somewhat surprised at all this, she had had no idea about any of these arrangements at all, and she had her sister to thank for much of it.

Being old design stock, there was none of the customary alarm signals to herald the closing of the doors, just the sliding metallic sound and characteristic clunk as the two leaves of the doorway met in the middle.

With a hiss of released air from the braking system, the train pulled away, many of those on the platform waving it off on its journey even though many had no idea quite why.

-----

As an old friend and colleague of the Commander from his days as the Commanding Officer of the Security Service based at Haychester, Commander Al Longton was inevitably his first and only choice as Best Man.

Both he and the Commander were now present and correct in full ceremonial dress uniform at the location for the wedding that Jennifer had carefully arranged in almost total secrecy.

Only those who needed to know had been let in on the secret and Longton being the man who had to ensure that the Commander got to his wedding on time, was one of them.

"So they made you acting Commander I hear?" the Commander enquired as the blue and red Docklands Light Railway train rounded the sharp corner between Westferry and West India Quay stations.

"Well when Commander Jameson went on maternity leave last month, the Administrator General apparently received a recommendation that I get the job" Longton responded.

"Glad to be of service" the Commander replied "Now where the hell are we going?"

"You'll see Sir" Longton replied with a wry smile as the two officers surveyed the unfolding scene of the London Docklands district from the comfort of the rear window of the train.

As they pulled into West India Quay, the Commander looked across at Longton to see if he was showing any signs of alighting.

"Next stop" he confirmed.

A short distance was all that needed to be traversed before the train arrived beneath

the large modern glass train shed of Canary Wharf DLR Station, sandwiched in the gap between the large Canary Wharf Tower building and another seemingly always growing development of office and shopping accommodation on the opposite side.

The smart ceremonial dress uniforms of the two officers contrasted with the normal everyday wear of the general Saturday morning public that they passed through on their way out of the main Canary Wharf complex, Longton leading the way although by now the Commander had guessed correctly that the east end booking hall of Canary Wharf Underground Station was their destination.

"Senior Manager of London Underground had his wedding here a few months ago in the section of the station they haven't opened yet" Longton explained "It gave Jennifer the idea, especially as you are not that keen on churches and all".

The main west entrance was their means of entry into the building, built in a cofferdam box set into the former dock itself. The only surface sign of its existence being the two huge scalloped shaped glass canopies at either end of the impressive cathedral like booking hall set above the deep level tube tracks of the recently extended Jubilee Line.

Nervous apprehension would be the best description of how the Commander was feeling as he descended into the bowels of the earth, there to meet his future fate as a married man.

-----

"Marvels of modern technology, you cannot beat it!" Fuller commented as he broadcast on the Control Room's main view screen, the live pictures from Canary Wharf's CCTV cameras overlooking the wedding ceremony that was taking place on the intermediate level entrance booking hall at the east end of the station complex.

"Pity we haven't got any sound" Commander Cassini commented as he sat down at the main desk in the room to watch.

"Well you can guess most of it I suppose" Fuller replied "Do you take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband until some nutter with a gun or a bomb doth you part?"

"Is it my imagination" inquired one of the duty despatch controllers in the room still sniggering from Fuller's last comment "Or is that the Administrator General on the second camera trying to attract our attention".

"Do what?" Fuller asked.

"He's waving at the camera like a loony possessed" Cassini observed.

"He's using sign language I think..." Fuller mused.

"Ring on desk, hurry" the despatch officer translated.

"Hasn't he heard of a telephone?" Cassini commented turning to Fuller behind him

only to find an empty space where he had just been standing and the sound of flat speeding footsteps hurrying away down the corridor outside.

"What the hell is going on?" Cassini called after Fuller as he disappeared from sight into the Commander's office.

Inside, Fuller started frantically searching through the mess of papers and files on the Commander's desk until he suddenly stopped when the object of his search fell to the floor, the jewellery box containing the two wedding rings.

He bent down and picked up the box, opening it he saw the two gold rings, both engraved with fine decoration and the name of their intended wearers.

"I hope that isn't what I think it is" Cassini commented as he arrived on the scene and saw what Fuller had in his hand.

"Yep!" Fuller replied flustered "I need some transport".

Down in the basement garage of the Holborn building, Fuller was understandably horrified to find the only three Security Service vehicles available where Tracy's old motorbike, which with its accident damage was totally unusable, the burnt out remains of the Commander's patrol car from where it had been wrecked the day before and the infamous old bus that was the Mobile Operations Unit.

There was no choice but to opt for the latter but Fuller stopped short in shock when he rounded the front end of the battered vehicle to be confronted with two engineers from the Garage Department dismantling the braking system and wheel hub on the back axle.

"Nice timing lads!" Fuller commented before making a swift exit up the access ramp and out into Molton Street, the side road that led from High Holborn past the rear of the Security Department building.

Nothing useable around there either it would seem so Fuller jogged up to High Holborn in search of a Taxi or indeed anything else he could use.

"Any joy?" Cassini inquired as he joined Fuller out in the fairly quiet High Holborn, the fact that it was a Saturday morning rather than a normal working weekday made a considerable difference to the through flow of traffic in that area of the City.

"We need a miracle!" Fuller replied now seemingly resigned to the fact that the rings were not going to make it to the wedding on time despite his determination.

"I think we just found one!" Cassini exclaimed as he pointed across the road at the only potential solution to the problem.

"I don't believe it!" Fuller responded as he ran across the road narrowly missing being run down by a No. 38 bus. On the other side of the road in a lay-by set into the north side pavement of High Holborn was stood the Department's brand new Mobile Operations Unit, its delivery driver still on board and sorting out the paper work for



the vehicle when Fuller started hammering on the double leaf glass doors.

"Keep your hair on!" the driver grunted as he reached down beside him for the door control switch. With a hiss, the doors slid open and Fuller clambered onto the front platform.

"Where's the fire mate?" the driver enquired.

"I need this vehicle" Fuller replied.

"Well sign here and she is all yours" the driver responded as he proffered a clipboard and a biro pen to Fuller which he took and quickly signed and dated where the driver was indicating.

The driver alighted from the vehicle onto the roadway outside, turned and tossed the keys to Fuller who by now was seated in the cab and looking over the dashboard and controls in the cab area of the vehicle.

"Enjoy!" the driver called before he walked away leaving Fuller to work out how to drive the thing. Despite being like its predecessor, based on a standard single deck bus design, there was a twenty five year difference in design. Although any London bus driver would have had no problem with it given that the only difference between it and the standard low floor single deck bus on the street was that the former didn't have a control room fitted inside and two sets of blue flashing light bars on the roof along with its other refinements.

"Thank you for purchasing the Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart" Fuller read from the manual "We hope it gives you many years of efficient passenger service".

He cut to the chase and flicked through the 500 odd pages to the drivers controls diagram. After a few moments studying the basics, Fuller had worked out what did what as far as what he wanted to do and started the engine.

Easily finding the blue flashing light and siren controls, he set off, slightly joltingly at first as he got used to the handling, out into the traffic flow which was still meandering through the area at a steady pace.

The sound of the siren soon made many drivers aware that the vehicle coming up behind them somewhat faster than the average London bus was not a London bus at all and certainly not average. Using bus lanes and swinging around the wrong side of traffic islands as he went along, Fuller made swift progress through the east end of the city and was soon approaching Dockland's, the upper parts of the tall Canary Wharf Tower building standing dominant on the skyline ahead.

The paved piazza area in front of the open entrance to Canary Wharf Underground Station made the new tyres of the Mobile Operations Unit squeal as it rounded the corner and was brought to a sudden halt, sending unsuspecting pedestrians scattering for cover.

Grabbing the small jewellery box off the dashboard as he left, Fuller disembarked

speedily and ran over to the bank of down escalators in the right hand half of the entrance, however with a considerable number of passengers proceeding down the two that were in service, Fuller decided to go against common sense and slide down the stationary banister of one of those that was out of use, a move that brought him to the bottom and the floor of the cathedral like cavern of the booking hall in a fraction of the time it would have taken by more conventional means.

Running through the crowds, he had to call out to various people to alert them to his presence and that he was coming through before he jumped over the ticket barriers and onwards right down to the far end of the station.

A climb up the stationary escalators to the upper intermediate level brought him to the wedding itself, the bride and groom in their customary place at the front and nearly at the end of their vows.

Fuller snuck down the left hand side of the congregation hoping he wouldn't be noticed but he stood no chance considering there were over a hundred ever eagle eyed Security Officers amongst the guests and by the time he had made it to the front and sidled up to Jennifer to pass the rings across, the entire congregation, half the station staff, the bride and groom and the registrar were all watching him.

Slightly embarrassed, Fuller passed the rings across and discreetly backed away, taking a vacant seat in the front row and tried his best to look inconspicuous as the ceremony continued.

As the rings were exchanged, Tracy's mother started to weep with joy whilst Longton started totting up in his mind who owed him their bet money for the office sweepstake but all thoughts by those present were put aside when the Registrar made the announcement they had all been waiting for.

"It is with great pleasure that I declare you Man and Wife" he turned slightly towards the Commander "You may kiss the bride".

The bride and groom did not need a second prompt and you could feel the entire room emit a combination of a sigh of relief and a huge cheer as the two embraced and kissed.

Near the front, there were three unexpected guests on the groom's side of the congregation, Garforth, a woman in an Australian Navy uniform that Tracy correctly assumed to be the Commander's sister and the three children's father who had been especially allowed out of hospital care for the occasion.

This was an historic moment, the first time in almost twenty years that all four surviving members of the Commander's family had been together again and Tracy knew it meant a hell of a lot to her new husband as they turned and together set off down the makeshift aisle back towards the main entrance of the station.

The happy couple walked fairly slowly back through the booking hall, which gave the congregation time to overtake them and wait outside the entrance for their emergence back out into the daylight.

As the photographer took the pictures of the bride and groom who posed beneath the Canary Wharf Station sign, Fuller was on hand providing a steady supply of handkerchiefs to the Bride's mother who was now well away with tears of joy. She always reckoned this day would never come, especially as Tracy was the one hundred percent workaholic of the family, even compared with her twin sister.

It took quite a few minutes to get the group photograph together with the huge number of relatives from Tracy's family, the very small complement from the Commander's and the various other Security Officers and other guests. Indeed when they were all finally arranged, the width of people almost spanned the entire width of the wide station entrance.

With all this going on, the piazza area in the front of the station was a very crowded area but soon it was time for the Bride and Groom to depart, a procedure that began with the happy couple making their way to their transport which Jennifer had also arranged, a vintage double deck bus whose registration number 401DCD caused Tracy to momentarily do a double take.

"Right are you all ready?" Tracy called out holding her bouquet up indicating she was about to throw it. The crowd gathered together and many at the front looked on expectantly waiting for Tracy to throw the flowers to what tradition dictates will be the next person present to get married.

Tracy turned round so that her back was to the crowd before leaning forward and then throwing her bouquet over her head. Quickly she swung round just in time to see the flowers bounce off Fuller's head and into the outstretched hand of her sister Jennifer who once she had her grip firmly secured on it, gave Fuller a suggestive grin.

"I got to go" Fuller casually mentioned and made a hasty departure for the Mobile Operations Unit parked nearby with Jennifer in pursuit.

With the bride and groom safely on board, the bus pulled away with the crowd, now swelled by passers by looking on to see what all the excitement was about, waving them off.

An hour later and the newly weds were back in uniform, all plans for any honeymoon were off for the time being, there was simply too much work to be done, and with no Superintendent rank officer available to cover for them, they were going nowhere for a while.

Standing outside the Holborn office, Tracy looked into the eyes of her new husband and smiled, this was the happiest day of her life, a feeling the Commander more than shared.

"Will it always be like this?" she asked.

"What, being shot at and nearly blown to bits every so often so that the travelling public of the City can sleep safely on the Circle Line?" the Commander jokily replied as hand in hand they rounded the corner from Kingsway into High Holborn.

"I meant us" Tracy responded, reaffirming her grip on his arm.

"As long as you are always with me, I'll be happy no matter what life throws at us" the Commander replied.

"Give me a cuddle" Tracy urged.

The Commander looked around to see if anyone was watching, only a black saloon car parked up on the opposite side of the road was immediately visible. He turned to face her and hugged Tracy in his arms.

"I will always love you" he added reassuringly "I cannot imagine my life without you".

"I love you" Tracy responded in turn before she looked up at the glass panelled front wall of the Security Service building, noting that at least half the office staff and most of the officers on duty were watching them.

The happy couple waved and moved on down the road as a Routemaster bus on route 8 pulled passed them and paused at the bus stop directly ahead.

"Come on" the Commander urged taking Tracy by the hand and leading her onto the rear open platform of the bus.

"Where are we going?" she asked as they took the longitudinal bench seat over the offside rear wheel arch of the vehicle.

"To see what life throws at us" he replied casually.

"Hold very tight please" the conductor called as she pressed the bell push on the platform bulkhead twice to sound the bell in the driver's cab, this being the signal to proceed.

As the bus pulled away and crossed the road to access New Oxford Street, the smartly dressed male driver of the black saloon car behind them, started the engine and signalled to another similarly attired man standing on the corner of Bloomsbury Court who crossed over and got in the passenger seat before they drove off, at a discreet distance behind the bus.

*To be continued.....*

**(C) 2002 John M Upton - All Rights Reserved**  
**Revised edition: (C) July 2005**