

H6



WELL...AS
YOU'RE HERE

David C Jaundrell

These books are dedicated to
Banner
(Wendy Mansell)

Acknowledgements

For their continual patience

Adrian Frost	Grosvenor Casinos (Rank Group)
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Kenneth KK Downing	Guitarist – Judas Priest (H6)
Liam Bell	Head Gamekeeper – Millichope Park
Mark Corbett (Dr)	Molecular Biologist
Mickey Wernick	Professional poker player and gambler
Mike Siveter	Pest control
Neil Amis	Paramedic
Neil Channing	Professional poker player and gambler
Roger Higgins	Ladbrokes
Roger Tucker	Ex Prison Governor

Steve Hindley

And the creatures in his dining room

Tony Cox

And

Bank of England

Bell Helicopters

Christie's

Ferrari Dealer

Israeli Embassy

Landowners Association

Lear Corporation

Mercedes Dealer

Natural History Museum

Sotheby's

Telford Crematorium

US Treasury

Main Characters

Adrian	Managing Director of J J Casinos
Allan (Scotty) Scott	Divisional Chairman of J J Group
Andrew Stone	bad egg
Andy Pandy	Friend of H
Annie	Woman
Beatrice	Annie's daughter
Ben	Son of James and Benshima
Benshima Reyes (James)	Wife of H. Daughter of wealthy Colombian business family
Charlie Brown	Son of Hubert
Cleggy Jenkins	Ex gambling industry executive.
David Brown	Son of Charlie
Dear Diary	Anon
Ehwun	Half sister
Eric Brown	Son of Hubert
Fabian Perez	Painter
Gavin	Martial arts expert
Geoff	Gargoyle
Harry Cohen	Head of family entertainment Group
Healthy eating	Anon

Henry	Friend of Andy Pandy
Hilda	Madam
Hubert Brown	Head of criminal gang
J J Group Ltd	Holding company for James companies
James Crowley	Manager JJ casino
James James (H)	Owner of Night Clubs, Betting shops, Casinos, Security companies
Janna Janasis	Property developer
Jerome Nelson	In charge of 'doors' at J J Nightclubs
Kath Crowley	Wife of James
Kenneth KK Downing	Guitarist Judas Priest
Larry	Drug dealer
Lords and Ladies	Rattus norvegicus
Marie Brown	Daughter of Hubert
Mary Brown	Daughter of Hubert
Mickey Wernick	Professional Poker Player and gambler
Neil	Paramedic
Neil Channing	Professional poker player and gambler
Pat Wilson	Lucky man
Paul Turner	New boss of J J Security
Pope Julius III	Head of criminal gang

Rob	Man in club
Roger Davids	MD JJ Betting Shops
Sammy the Search	Acquirer of information
Sebastian	Marketing expert
Valerie	Selling a company to H

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Chapter 1

Healthy eating.....

Donald Watson is my God

I am a vegan.

You should be a vegan.

I enjoy all kinds of plant foods; fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, seeds, beans, lentils, split peas..... And fungi are good; mushrooms and the yeasts. Food made from them is really ace.

Of course, *as you should*, I choose not to eat any foods derived from living or dead animals.

Animals are sentient beings and should be treated as independent species and not 'property'. That being so they should not be used or killed for food.

QED.

That means no meat of any kind; no red meat, poultry, white meat or fish. I also exclude animal milks, no eggs, no honey, nor any other animal by product...

Good, eh?

That's healthy eating for you.

Having said that I am partial to the occasional piece of human meat.....

Chapter 2

The lake

H sat on the tiny bench that nestled in the gentle sweep of the land as it went down to the lake. It was exactly how the Lord had said it would be although he wasn't there to see it finished so H gave it to contractors. About four hundred yards by two hundred; almost an ocean....

It was stocked by several varieties of fish which the contractors had supplied along with varieties of water plants including bull rushes which looked majestic in the late afternoon sun.

At one end the contractors had built a small, auxiliary pool, twenty feet higher than the main lake and water, carried underground from the lake, cascaded down large shiny boulders in a heavy but gentle pouring of water.

Near to it six black swans were sticking their long necks in and out of the water for plants and small water beetles and insects. The swans had been clipped which meant they couldn't fly away. H was troubled with this fact but the contractors had offered them to him from another place where they had already been clipped and H felt that if they couldn't have freedom he could, at least, give them a good home.

Down the other end of the lake he had built, well the contractors had, a wooden building that stood half on a jetty that overhung the water and had large glass windows and a large lounge and kitchen and dining table. If you were going to have things of wonder you should at least enjoy them.....

Moored to the jetty was a rowing boat and H spent a little time every day rowing as fast as he could from one end to the

other. It was good for exercise and excellent for punching strength in martial arts.

Today was not a day for enjoyment; today was one of those days when H questioned his sanity and his reason for being alive or more correctly why he shouldn't just be dead?

It was one of those days.....

One of those days when nothing made sense, confusion reigned and fear kept opening dark doors into dark places you didn't really want to go. His intellect told him it would be gone tomorrow but his intellect held no power in this company. In this company all bowed before its power....

H was struggling with Benshima. Well not with Benshima actually...with sex. It was certainly true he could give her as many orgasms as she wanted but he was just performing. It was for her. It wasn't for him. And it had been months now since they had had intercourse. He tried, he tried hard. He got hard but as soon as he entered her vagina his body shut down. In the past he had fucked half the world but now, now he didn't have to, now his brain had told him to give it a rest.

H to brain. Until?

Brain to H. Who knows....?

And so little Jimmy, who had today replaced H, who had been sexualised at a very early age, was lost. If he stopped having intercourse with Benshima she would go.....

But he had, literally, stopped having intercourse with her *but she had stayed*.....?

It was all beyond him and he had no idea why he struggled with making love to Benny? What had unremitting brutality and sodomy from his father to do with him making love to Benshima? All those years ago?

He couldn't see it.

Which left her.....

But what the hell did his sadistic, cold, heartless, pathetic, emotional pygmy of a mother have to do with this?

Confusion overwhelmed him, then fear and panic, and tears filled his eyes. He shook his head as though that would help clear it but..... His face creased in anguish. His mouth wide open and pulled back in a silent scream, his eyes huge as only a tiny terrified child's can be. The tears turned to sobs and his chest hurt as it searched for air. A searing pain permeated his neck and shoulders and went down his back. Incredible pain.....

Pain from a long time ago.....

If he was living the events and confusion, if not the actual visual memory, of a long time ago then he would also live the pain that went with it...

He cried and sobbed but there was no sound from his mouth. Old habits died hard. Better to kill the sounds than get killed yourself by attracting attention... The fear and confusion intensified and he was panic stricken. There was no escape and, as always, perhaps with anyone for whom there is no escape, there is only one escape....

With tears stinging his eyes James looked down to the water's edge, and into its clear depths. Searing pain racked his whole body. Incredible pain, real pain, illusory pain, inflicted pain, self inflicted pain....

He saw a large trout amble by, slowly swishing its tail, oblivious to the violent confusion that whirled in its protector's head above him. Looking slowly over to the swans he watched as they majestically sailed on their imperious way. How could he leave that? What would death replace that with....? Sweet fuck all....

He didn't feel the hand on his shoulder or the arms encircle him but he heard her voice...

'James,' she said gently, 'it's ok, I'm here...you're safe.'

He turned and looked at her and shook his head. 'I'm not,' he struggled to say, 'I'm not.'

She cradled his face and kissed him gently. 'You are....you are.....quite safe...safe with me...safe with Ben....'

He shook his head again. 'I can't make love to you,' he said quietly and sobbing racked through him, his mouth opened wide and he let out a low wail like a wounded animal.

'James, my love,' she said softly, 'it makes absolutely no difference to me if we never make love again. I agreed to live with you *before* I slept with you. I wanted to be with you and marry you from the first time we ever met, in the restaurant.'

He looked into her eyes and she saw the scared child.

'You'll go,' he said desperately but his huge wet eyes were pleading *don't go, please don't go*.

'I will never leave you. In fact I'll do you a deal. If you want to die, now, in there,' she pointed to the deep, silent, waiting water, 'I'll come with you.....'

It hit him like a hammer blow and he shook his head violently. 'No!' he shouted.

'Why not?'

He had no answer. He should have said, 'Ben' but that didn't cross his mind. His face mirrored the confusion as, for the child, there was no logical explanation. Tiny children don't do logic; at least not a logic that an adult would understand. Tiny children are either safe or not, protected or not, living or struggling to survive... The pain now overwhelmed him and he slumped. Sitting, hunched, he held his head in his hands.

His mind played a cruel trick and he heard his mobile ring, and he answered it and they told him his wife was dead and he felt the overwhelming feeling of utter loss; of abandonment; of hopelessness; of fear, of terror, of death..... If she died he was dead.....a tiny child with a dead mother and a brutal father.

Another Peter Connelly or, as he was known when his tiny body could take no more, Baby P...

All he knew was if someone had to die it had to be him. Not her. Whatever fate was to befall them it had to be him that was exposed to danger...not her.

She was sacrosanct...he was expendable.

It was all too much and his brain decided he had had enough today and so it switched his past off and he felt a massive tiredness envelop his body. The pain went to be replaced by heavy muscles that he knew he could never move. He let out a long breath and his head slumped to his chest. Sitting by him she enclosed him with her arms and softly kissed the side of his head.

'I love you so much,' she said softly, 'so much...'

He nodded but a part of him found it hard to believe that anyone could love him and not hurt him.....one day. And it was perhaps that day, when Benshima left, that made him want to die now or at least not live, which was different. In fact if he could have expressed himself, understood the difference, he could have told her he didn't want to die, but at times living was unbearable....

Why wait? Why have all this happiness, any happiness, to have it taken away? Why wait when a tiny voice is saying, 'They don't really love you...but you have nothing else. And without them you will die....you are too tiny, too dependent on them.....without them you will die.....but they are killing you as you live....for their pleasure.'

His brain, realising that he was slipping back into self destruction, forced him to cry and Benny held him tightly....very tightly.

'Come on, my love,' she said, 'let it go now....let it go.....'

After several minutes he took several deep lungfuls of air and they stood up. He stood quite still and looked at her. The six foot

three man's man, built like a Greek God and the five foot six woman's woman, who could have been the fourth Grace....

'And they think I'm the hard man,' he said slowly. She said nothing. 'And yet you have the strength to put up with me.'

'James, I don't actually put up with anything. You are a decent human being although I say that with a degree of.....' she thought for a second and grinned, 'latitude.....as some may not agree if they are still capable of talking at all; a loving husband and good father....'

'It sounds like an obituary.'

'.....And I don't struggle with you,' she continued, 'you struggle with you.....and them. And it isn't an obituary, if anything it is a testament to a life you lead and a person I know and love but sometimes you don't recognise.'

He looked sad and she saw the confusion return to his eyes.

'Let's go and get a cup of tea,' she said to break the cycle.

He nodded and then held her shoulders and looked into her face. *A safe face with safe eyes....*

He pulled her close within his athletic frame. She rested her head on his chest and he put his arms around her to keep her safe.

'Do you remember when we first met?' she asked, 'In the restaurant?'

'Of course.'

'Do you remember what you said to me?'

'Roughly.'

'I do.'

'You do what?'

'I remember.'

'What I said? You mean in essence?'

'No....I mean I remember it. You said, *This is difficult to explain so I will make it simple.....I don't know you, have never met you, never spoken to you, know nothing about you.*

However.....I would like to know you, be with you and I would like you to be with me. If you can do that, and you're comfortable, I will take care of you and make you safe for the rest of your life.....that's what you said.'

'Yes I did. That's exactly what I said,' he said in amazement.

'Then let me tell you something that I could have said when we met;

This is difficult to explain so I will make it simple.....I don't know you, have never met you, never spoken to you, know nothing about you. However.....I would like to know you, be with you and I would like you to be with me. If you can do that, and you're comfortable, I will take care of you and make you safe for the rest of your life.....'

Chapter 3

Dear Diary 1

I have seen him...the man of my dreams.

Can you imagine, dear Diary...*can you?*

I don't care what you say, you can't....

I have only been in my new job for three days. Three days! And in he walks. You should have seen him. Tall, handsome, elegant, masculine.

Everything I could possibly want in a man. And in spades; which is quite funny as I work in a casino.

His name is James and he is our new boss. And he has this... authority, this presence. It's overwhelming and my heart sang with joy at his presence.

I am told he is married but I don't think that will get in our way.

If you are meant to be then you are meant to be...

James.....so masculine, so.....me

Goodnight, Dear Diary

Sleep well. I will.

After I.....he.....has pleased me.....

Chapter 4

Pope Julius III

If it's got wheels or a cunt you just know it's going to give you trouble..... (Colin Dale c2009)

The Pope had never heard of Colin Dale or Colin's famous phrase but it applied to him perfectly. Colin Dale had coined the phrase from years of experience riding women and their mechanical four wheeled counterparts. Pope Julius III knew it was so as his woman, one of his women, one of his many women, he was fairly sure it was this one, had just given him crabs; and his car had developed an intermittent electronic fault that was driving him nuts! Nuts – crabs.....about fucking right.

He had sorted out the crabs and the girlfriend using roughly the same method. For the lice that were scampering around his bollocks and looked like a crustacean night out at the beach he had gone to a late night chemist and bought Permethrin, an over the counter treatment. He went home, washed his pubic hair, applied the mousse and left it for twenty minutes. Although nothing moved after twenty minutes he repeated the process. At the end of that he was sure that all the little fuckers had snuffed it and so he combed the dead bodies out of his pubic hair and then had a good shower.

He went round to the woman, a demure and petite girl who unfortunately had a thing for rough men, as her covered up bruises would show, and as she opened the door he head butted her and then dragged her to the bedroom. As she tried desperately to escape he punched her viciously on the side of the jaw and she dropped instantly and lay quite still. He ripped off her clothes, red

from her broken, blood gushing nose, picked her up and threw her on the bed. He took the bottle of sulphuric acid from his pocket and started trickling it down on her. Starting just below her navel he trickled it in circles until her lower abdomen, vagina and top of her legs were burning. He waited long enough to see the permanent damage the acid would do and then went in to the lounge. He scoured the place for gifts that he had given her; mobile phone, iPod, jewellery etc and stuffed them into a Tesco bag he found in the kitchen. Hitching that over his shoulder he unplugged the 42" plasma and carried it to his waiting car.....

On the way home the recurrent electronic fault kicked in and his windows slid noiselessly down and the belting rain whipped in. Pope Julius III was a man of strong will and he ignored it.....however he had sorted out one cunt that was giving him trouble and this would be the next....

Chapter 5

Moving on up...

It had taken a lot of work, a lot of research, a lot of to-ing, a lot of froing, a lot of hard negotiating and last but not least a lot of money, in fact about fourteen million pounds of money but Ade managed to buy another eleven casinos.

So now twenty casinos. The nine in the J J Casinos stable were all profitable, some more than others but all now making a good return. In fact after the problems of the smoking and the credit crunch when there was a big dip and then the law change that allowed twenty four hour opening Ade had managed to get it back to the same sixty million turnover, ten million profit which was no mean achievement.

Of the eleven they had bought four were making a good return, five were adequate, one was just scraping and one was dire but in the right location to be turned round.

The combined turnover for the extra eleven casinos was £45m with £3m of profit. Ade had done all his sums and was sure he could improve that in year two to £65m and £11m profit giving a total in year 2 for J J Casino Group of approx £130m turnover and £20m+ profit.

Less another £100,000 a year for Ade for all his hard work and the new Group size. £350,000 a year plus a 5% share of the extra profits if he reached his targets..... It would make him a lot of money but he was worth every penny – more than likely more. If you've got someone good make sure you keep them.

H remembered a story that Scotty had told him about one of his many jobs and many employers and some, assuming Scotty was telling it as it was, were complete arseholes. Scotty had run

one family company for two years, increased profits, increased turnover and reduced costs. One day he was called into the owner's office and told he had decided that turnover should be doubled so that he could sell up. As the owner didn't actually work in the business himself that meant Scotty would be doubling the turnover. Scotty said that was fine but as he was building up the company to sell could he have a percentage of the extra sale price between now and the new sale price? Now the owner currently took about a hundred and fifty thousand a year out and the company made about half a million as well so he was doing ok especially as Scotty run it. And maybe he could get about four million for it now and perhaps ten if Scotty doubled it. So an extra six million. If he gave Scotty ten percent that gave him a nice £600,000 thank you. H remembered vividly what the owner had said to Scotty, 'Why the fuck would I do that?' Poor Scotty. The next week he handed in his notice to go to another job he didn't have. And now here he was, earning H money, appreciated and happy.

It's not that difficult, thought H.

Look after the people that look after you....and destroy those that try to harm you.

Chapter 6

Silence

Annie drummed her fingers in her two up two down lounge and waited impatiently for Zoe.

‘Where the fuck is she?’ she demanded of her two friends sitting on the small sofa.

‘Who fuckin knows?’ replied Becca.

‘She’ll be here, give her a minute,’ chimed in Alex. ‘She will.....’

‘She’s got five fuckin minutes and then we go,’ declared Annie as though to her troops. ‘Fuckin go. Wine, men and good prick if we’re lucky....’

They all giggled.

Annie’s daughter was essentially ignored as she could contribute little but they would take her with them anyhow...

They won’t introduce me so I may as well introduce myself. I am Beatrice.....and I am blind and mute but I can hear. And my ‘sense’ is quite good.

I’m not complaining; that’s the way it is.....

Mom is a bit too free and easy when she gets drunk I’m afraid. Actually anybody can fuck her and most have. That’s my mom. She’s not so much the town bike as a one woman Tour de France.

So how am I talking to you? I’m not really. I’m sending you my thoughts and hope you receive them.

I’m doing that because I get quite lonely. The girls take me with them, it’s true, but I can’t take the fags, and booze, and

occasional E, and the fucking like they can.....

The knock on the door heralded the arrival of Zoe and they all got up and looked at each other.

‘All kitted up?’ asked Annie.

They nodded.

Ultra low blouse, push up bra, hint of nipple, ultra high skirt.....

All kitted up.....

Chapter 7

A very efficient business model.....

Malc Sneade, the new Birmingham cashier, was explaining the way they did it where he worked before. His eyes were shut and he was gone.....back there.....where he used to be.....

Forget Madoff, forget Ponzi, we've got a little thing going that makes them look like amateurs. And nobody's twigged. Well ok a few have but the main thing is there are enough people out there that either haven't twigged, don't want to twig, are incapable of twiggling or have twigged but go along with it anyhow. I know, it amazes us as well. We often think there should be a joke there about Twiglets but it doesn't work....

Well we've been pulling this scam now for a number of years and although it's not quite as financially rewarding as it used to be we're still, if you look at the books, raking it in. Of course you can't actually look at the books....it was merely to emphasise a point and not an *invitation to treat* or as our American colleagues would say an *invitation to bargain*.

No, it wasn't really an offer you could take me up on.

My masters would hardly like you delving around in our drawers now, would they? That was quite good don't you think? Delving around in our drawers? Going down to the things that aren't mentioned?

Hardly applicable but quite whimsical in its own little way.

So anyhow, this year is not so good what with the Credit Crunch and all but we're holding up. Over the years we have managed to move most of the cash into property. Good, eh? All

that cash moved into property; high grade, commercial and private property. Oh yes we're pretty savvy you know.

We always thought, those of us who understood the actual game we were in, that we would have been twigged by now, but no. We're still getting away with it.

As I said before it amazes us, but so much in this daft world does....

A much better week this week, donations went up. We call them donations but they're really investments. The people donating are looking to us to keep them safe. Yeah right; but that's what they're supposed to think and so it shows we're doing a good job. Occasionally someone twigs and kicks up a fuss but it soon glosses over and the money keeps coming in.

And this week is a lot better because it's always the same when the PR Department manages to get one of our Executives on the tele. A couple of minutes, a good sound bite and more arrive to sign up. In the early days we didn't really need PR and we got our customers through friends of friends, and then colleagues of friends and then it grew quite quickly.

But now you have to have a good PR Department as there are scams like this all over the place. Most are just mom and pop scams but if you don't have a continual PR presence they constantly peck away at the fringes and they take away people's hard earned cash....that should have gone to us.

We have branches everywhere. Of course people don't see them as Branches they think we are a legitimate organisation. They haven't twigged. Get it? Branches? Twigged?

Anyhow, seriously, to our knowledge we are one of the most profitable business models in the world. The biggest, the one they all look up to, the Italians, is just light years ahead. Our guys did talk to them to see what we could learn and also see if we could join them but they weren't that interested and the price for joining

the club was a bit too high so we backed off and continued doing our own thing.....

Ah...got to go now...an investor.

He smiled graciously as the old lady put £5 on the Collection Plate.....

Chapter 8

Pope Julius III 2

Julius was known as The Pope for no reason other than he liked it. It smacked of authority and obedience and pomp and ceremony. And, of course, his name was Julius. Actually it was Julian but that was somewhere in the past.

Now he was a thirty four year old criminal mastermind in the making. He had built himself up from a one man band doing well, to a team doing better, to a small army doing really, really well. He had the cars, the home, the money but....and it was a *but* that he was currently addressing, he didn't have a manor. He didn't have a manor like the Browns.

But, it was another *but*, Pope Julius also knew he never would. Some people did and some people didn't. Pope Julius until recently thought he would. In fact he was sure he would. Get big enough, get powerful enough and take the Browns from them. Destroy the Browns and take over.

That was the embryonic plan.

That was what he was slowly moving towards.

And then...

And then...

And then he met.....*The Man*

And instantly The Pope, who so desperately wanted to be *The Man*, knew he never would. He would do very well; be rich, be feted, but.....another of those fucking *buts*, not be *The Man*.

He had met *The Man* a while ago; or rather The Man had met him. He had appeared from nowhere and there he was sitting next to Julius in his car with a gun in Julius's ribs.

‘I want to talk to you,’ he had said and his eyes pierced into Julius’s. ‘Yes or no?’

And Julius had, for reasons he couldn’t quite explain, agreed, and The Man put the gun down and talked. At this point Julius, being the hard and devious bastard that he was, would just have shot him or stabbed him.....but he didn’t.

He listened.

To The Man.

After the talk, which lasted nearly an hour, The Man shook Julius’s hand and left....

Pope Julius III was a leader of men. His gang were loyal due to his ruthlessness but also he looked after them. If they got hurt they got treatment. If they were ill he helped. If a member of their family was ill he helped. If they needed money he helped.

Pope Julius was a leader of men but when he met The Man he knew he was looking at *his* leader.

Pope Julius would be number two in a much bigger gang, The Man had assured him. Much, much bigger, when they combined and took down the Browns....

Chapter 9

Dear Diary 2

Love is so wonderful, dear Diary.

It is. It truly is. I had no idea. It's true I've had the odd boyfriend; quite odd at times, but this.....

You search your whole life for this.....

It's like a cocaine rush (I think) or a perpetual orgasm. Yes, one long, mind contorting, body convulsing orgasm.

Can you imagine that, dear Diary?

Today I dropped something on the floor as he passed and he stopped and picked it up for me.

Our eyes met.

You should see his eyes, dear Diary. They look at you as though they own you. Oh my God those eyes.

And they invited me in. Come in to my world they said.

And then he smiled as he gave to me whatever it was I had dropped. And I know what that smile said. He didn't have to say anything; I know what it said...

And his hand touched mine.....flesh against flesh

Tonight I will sleep with James

He may be with his wife.....but he will be making love to me!

Chapter 10

Silence 2

Hello.....it's Beatrice

I know it's you.....

Could you tell me your name.....?

That's a nice name

I'm struggling a bit today; I'm a bit tipsy.

Too much wine I'm afraid. It's bad for me but....well there you go.

Isn't wine a bugger? It doesn't take much to really start me spinning.

My head.....wow.

And then the sex which sort of knocked me about a bit

I think I need to sleep.....just too woozy

And bruised and battered

Could we talk again.....?

Good

Ni ni

Chapter 11

The family - Hubert

Hubert had been in the casino nearly an hour and a half and had lost, and drunk, steadily. As he lost one fistful of money he would rummage around in his pockets and out would come another wad.

Hubert wasn't a gambler, in fact he rarely gambled, but for some reason he had gone to the casino where his sons usually went and where he usually watched and had a drink.

But Hubert didn't like losing. Especially when he was drunk. Hubert was a dangerous bastard when he was sober but one extra mean fucker when he was drunk. And when he was drunk he didn't expect some inanimate spinning wheel to beat him, or some child like urchin rake his chips from him.

He put another hundred on a random number. It was random as his sight was blurred and his movements becoming awkward. He thought he put the money on 17 red but actually put it on 14 black. When the wheel stopped spinning he watched his 1 in 37 chance get raked away again. He was going to argue but he couldn't remember what he had put his money on....?

A lady standing next to him said, 'You're not having much luck today....'

His head slowly turned to the voice. 'What?'

'I said you're not having much luck today, are you?'

'What the fuck,' he exploded, 'is that to do with you? Who the fuck are you, my fairy fucking Godmother?'

'I was only.....'

'Fuck off, you slag!'

‘There’s no n.....’

Hubert’s hand went back to slap her hard across the face but then it stopped and wouldn’t come forward. The woman quickly backed away and Hubert swivelled to look at the person who had held his arm but had now let go and moved back a pace.

‘Hello, Hubert,’ smiled H.

Hubert took a swing at H but he moved out of the way and Hubert nearly swung himself off his feet.

‘Come on, Hubert,’ said H, ‘there’s no need to fight. You’ve just had a bit too much to drink, so why don’t we get you a taxi and you can go home and sleep it off?’

Hubert took another swing at H but missed again and fell over. He struggled to get up and through bleary eyes looked at H. ‘I’ll fucking have you, H.’

‘No, you won’t, Hubert. You’ve just had too much to drink and next time you’re in we’ll sit down and we’ll have a coffee together...’

‘Fuck you!’

‘Shall I ring Charlie?’

‘Fuck you!’

‘Ring Charlie to come and pick him up,’ H said to the Floor Manager standing by him.

‘Fuck you,’ mumbled Hubert and then curled up on the floor and passed out.

Half an hour later Charlie, one of his two sons, arrived and they helped him get Hubert into his car. Charlie was another hard, mean bastard but he thanked H for looking after him and offered to pay for any damage.

Hubert slept on the back seat all the way back to his large, expensive, security gated house in the leafy suburbs where Charlie dragged him in to the lounge and dropped him on a sofa.

Hubert's wife, Charlie's mother, looked on bemused as she had seen it before. Charlie just shrugged, turned and left.

After a few minutes Hubert stirred, opened his eyes and saw his wife looking at him.

'Come here,' he slurred.

She didn't move.

'I fucking said come here,' he screamed.

She moved over to him and stood by him.

Putting his hand up her skirt he tried to get his hand in her pants but she had tights on. His eyes were getting heavier again.

'Take.....your.....pa....' and then he rolled back and passed out again.

His wife went to the drinks cupboard and poured a glass of whisky. Going back to him she cradled his head. 'Drink this, it will make you feel better.'

Slowly, eyes still closed, he drank the full tumbler of finest whisky and slumped back again, dead to the world.

She moved to a chair next to him and turned on the tele. After fifteen minutes she turned off the tele, moved over to Hubert and, although she was only slight, dragged him off the sofa and he fell with a soft thud on the floor.

Making sure he really was dead to the world she then went to her room where all her clothes hung and the shoes sat in racks and picked a pair. They were a bit like trainers. Low heels, comfortable...ideal for what they were designed for.

Going back to Hubert she checked again but it would be hours, if not days, before he woke up and so she stood by him and kicked him hard in the ribs. He moaned. She kicked him again. This time it was more of an aaaaggghhhh than a moan. She gave him one more for luck and then went back and put the comfortable trainers with their steel toe caps back in their box.

Then she went to bed.....

Chapter 12

J J Security

Paul Turner lay on his back looking at the blue sky through one eye. Wisps of cloud slowly moved across and the hot sun beamed down at him. You'll be burnt out soon, thought Paul; I bet you've got no more than another eight or ten billion years and then you'll be fucked..... He watched as a high flying jet left a trail above him. Well, they missed the ash, he thought, better to be in sunny climes and can't get back rather than the opposite. He tried to move to a more comfortable position but the pain shot through him. Bastards!

'Keep still, mate,' said a kindly fellow with long fair hair and ripped jeans to his right.

Paul grunted.

In the distance he heard an ambulance siren. That'll help, but more than likely they'll go straight past to an illegal immigrant who's stuck up a tree trying to get to birds' eggs.

The ambulance parked nearby and the medics came over to him.

'Scuffle, pal?' one asked jovially.

Paul slowly nodded.

'Was she worth it?' he carried on as though it was a double act.

Paul smiled a wan smile but the pain creased his face as he did and immediately washed it away.

'The police on their way?' said the medic over his shoulder to no one in particular.

'Yeah, rang them at the same time so they should be here tomorrow or the next day...maybe....but unlikely.'

The medic decided not to get involved in what the police did or didn't do as he knew they generally did fuck all except crowd control, especially when there were no crowds. Recently he had passed an accident on an island. Two cars, no one hurt, no biggie, but four police cars and two motorcycles. Standing there, dark glasses, waving their arms like spastics. And they'd blocked off most of the road as well, fucking everybody up. What dicks!

He went through his checking procedure while Paul lay there. After ten minutes of checking this and checking that and 'does this hurt?' and 'does this hurt?' and 'sorry....' he came to the conclusion there was no major damage. Fractured ribs, possibly fractured jaw, multiple contusions, eye that was black, swollen and shut.....for some reason the song 'young, gifted and black' shot into his brain...'black, swollen and shut...' he shot it out again....grazed skin from the tarmac....

That was about it. He'd had a good going over but he'd be fine....

'Who did it, mate?' he asked although he didn't really care. If he'd wanted to know he would have been a copper.

'Two Asian fellas,' mumbled Paul.

He nodded. *Let's not get any farther into this conversation...*

'Come on,' he said, 'we'll take you to A & E and then can give you a better going over....so to speak.'

Paul shook his head. 'Got to get to a meeting.'

'We can't let you do that, mate.' Paul looked at him. 'Ok, we can, but you'd be better off getting a proper check-up. By proper I mean, of course, a more *exhaustive* check-up.'

Paul tried to get up but the pain was overwhelming and he gave up.

'Look, mate, we can truss you up a bit to make you a bit more comfortable but if we do you have to sign a bit of paper to say you're leaving of your own free will. Want to do that?'

‘Yes.’

When they left with their bit of signed paper his head was bandaged and more great swathes of the stuff were around his painfully throbbing chest. They had given him Ibuprofen and he had a packet of twenty in his pocket. As the man had said, ‘You’re going to need em, mate,’ and he was right. Fuck, he hurt. He was leaning against the back door of the car and moved to open the driver’s. ‘Ow, ow, ow, ow, ow, oooooowwww,’ he ow’d to no-one in particular. He felt sick and a bit faint. Fuck!

‘You all right, mate?’ said a voice behind him. He slowly turned to see the same blonde man who had rung for the ambulance. A look of concern was on his face and it seemed quite incongruous with the man standing there. He should be with biker chicks, wearing a Nazi helmet, smoking pot and beating people up at Rolling Stones concerts. But here he was looking quite concerned and attentive.

‘I’m fine,’ said Paul.

‘Don’t think so, mate.’

‘Have to get to a meeting.’

‘Where is your meeting?’

‘Only a couple of miles away.’

‘I’ll tell you what, I’ll take you to your meeting and you get them to bring you back to your car after, eh?’

Paul immediately looked for the angle. It was his car. A nice silver Jag would sell quite well somewhere. Take him to the meeting, come back, nick car, sell car, buy more dope, fuck more biker chicks.

‘It’s ok, thanks.’

‘Mate, if your meeting is so urgent that you couldn’t go to A and E it seems to me you ain’t got much choice because there’s no way you can drive.’

Paul thought quickly. ‘I’ll get a cab.’

‘Mate, you can if you want but I’m offering you a lift. Why fuck about?’

Paul’s energy was evaporating rapidly and he couldn’t stand much longer. He had to get to the meeting and as long as the man didn’t kill him and only came back and nicked the car well so be it.

‘Ok. I just have to get the keys out of my car.’

‘I’ll get them, mate.’

Oh fuck, thought Paul, I tell him the keys are in the car. Man, you are soooo fucked. Biker man opened the door of the soon to be stolen Jag, reached in, took out the keys, locked the Jag and put the keys in Paul’s jacket pocket. ‘Come on mate; to the meeting.’

Paul leaned on him and the man took him slowly across the road where Paul could see a large black Kawasaki bike. He’d never make it, would just never make it...he’d fall off after fifty yards.

‘I’ll never stay on,’ he nodded to the bike.

‘Neither would I, mate. That’s mine over there.’

Paul saw the gleaming silver Bentley Azure with the black windows. Shit! ‘That’s yours?’

‘Don’t sound so surprised, mate; it’s a touch insulting.’

‘Sorry. Didn’t mean to be insulting.’

‘It’s ok. You’re not oozing blood, are you, mate? I only got it yesterday and the white leather seats are pristine.’

‘Don’t think so.’

‘Ahh, who gives a fuck. They can always have it back and clean it. I’ve got another at home.’

They gingerly got Paul into the Bentley and Biker man who was now Bentley man pulled out into the traffic.

‘What do you do....for a living?’ asked Paul as they whisked through London.

‘Make a fuck awful load of noise, mate...in fact listen to this.’ He turned on the car’s 20 channel 2,200 watt NAIM audio system and Paul’s ears stung and his face creased again with pain. After a few chest pounding beats Bentley man turned it off again. ‘Good, eh, mate? I bought it for the sound system....well not quite.’

They stopped outside JJ Casino and the man helped Paul into Reception.

‘Gotta go now, man,’ he said, ‘greens to sort out. Nice meeting you. Give my regards to H. Tell him KK sends his love....’ and with a huge grin he wheeled round and was gone.

Paul hadn’t thanked him so he started to shout after him but before the sound came out he involuntarily heaved and was sick on the marble floor.....

Chapter 13

Hubert 2

Hubert awoke from his drunken stupor nearly eighteen hours later. He was in the spare bed where his sons had carried him several hours earlier and his head hurt, for some reason his ribs hurt like fuck, he had wet himself and been sick on the pillow. What a fucking mess. He dragged himself into the en suite, turned on the shower and got in to try and feel human. He found he couldn't stand steadily so he sat down and let it cascade over him.

After fifteen minutes of refreshing hot water he started, with great difficulty, to take his clothes off.....

Half an hour later, tea time, he went downstairs in his dressing gown and to the kitchen table where he sat down.

‘Tea,’ he said to his waiting wife. ‘Bacon, eggs, sausage....everything. I’m starving.’

She went to the fridge.

‘Well....?’ he said.

She looked at him but said nothing.

‘All right I got drunk. I don’t often get drunk. I rarely get drunk...’

‘But when you do, you make up for all the other times you don’t.’

He sighed. Women.....can’t live with them, can’t.....live with them. ‘Just do the food...’

It arrived with another large mug of fresh tea and he started eating. Fucking wonderful. A proper English breakfast. Fucking

wonderful. The piece de resistance were the sausages. Even though they sold sausage, of course, in their eight butcher's shops these were rather special. In Shropshire years ago they had seen a farm shop on the side of the road and gone in to buy a pork pie or two to eat in the car. The meat looked superb and he ended up buying a load of all manner of things; especially pies and sausage due to the sales patter of the person behind the counter.

And when, in due course, she cooked the sausage, it was magic. No fat spurting out; none of the white liquid that escapes as you cook it and looks like pus from a wound; nothing. Just meat and a wonderful taste.

So now his wife just rang them up as and when and they sent a batch down. Good old Whitegates Farm!

As she started to clear away his plate she knocked his arm and some tea spilt. His big hand circled her neck and held it gently but firm. 'Careful, my love.....'

Chapter 14

War Games

Andy Pandy and several friends and colleagues from his Taxi business were gathered in the White Swan waiting for the pub quiz to start. It was a once a month occurrence and looked forward to with excitement and trepidation. Excitement because it was great fun and trepidation because it did, occasionally, get out of hand.

One month the 99 Change Hands team disagreed with an answer supplied by the Foreverus Erectus team and it was settled after a few minutes of reasoned discussion at the end of which several accompanied the ambulance to hospital.

New rules were hastily introduced by the Landlord and from that point on, during the quiz, all weapons had to be left behind the bar....

A young man with glazed eyes wandered over from the bar and sat at Andy's team's table. Andy didn't know him and from the looks on the other faces neither did anyone else.

'Fucking Helmand,' he slurred, 'what a load of shit.'

They looked at him. He looked about right. He had the age of someone who could have been to Afghanistan; certainly lean enough. His eyelids were slow to move up and down and he had obviously had one too many. *I would have had more than one too many*, thought Andy, *if I had been to that shithole*. The man's glass was low and Andy shouted over to Tommy, 'Whatever he's having, please, Tommy.' Andy looked at him. 'What's your name?'

'Joey.'

‘And keep em coming for Joey,’ shouted Andy.

‘You sure, Andy?’ asked Tommy.

‘Yes, Tommy, quite sure.’

‘I hate fucking Helmand,’ continued Joey, ‘the most God awful shit, man. Fucking God awful. Nobody should ever have to experience that shit.’

The table had gone quiet and they were listening to Joey. He was rambling and half drunk but someone who’s been to the hell hole that is Helmand Province in Afghanistan was allowed to ramble.

‘I much prefer Heinz Salad Cream to that shit.’

His drunken eyes drooped and he hardly felt it when he landed on the pavement outside.....

Chapter 15

Dusk till Dawn

H wanted to see the Dusk till Dawn Poker Club in Nottingham and he knew Neil Channing was running his Black Belt poker Tournament next weekend as Neil had sent him an email saying, ‘Only 140 dollars! Even you can afford 140 dollars, H,’ so he arranged for Benny to join him for a trip. He would go to their Birmingham casino first, Benny would shop, and then around five or six o’clock they would head the twenty miles or so to Nottingham. Assuming, of course, the Merc could carry Benny’s ‘shopping’.

On the way H said, ‘I watched a documentary the other night, I think you’d gone to bed, about surfing...’

‘Yes?’

‘There was something amazing in there; well it was amazing to me. There was a little lad called Laird....I can’t remember his last name....he was only about four or five I would think, and his dad had left him and his mother before he was one year old.....’

He paused and Benny could see him struggle.

‘.....Anyhow little Laird is on the beach in Hawaii doing body surfing when he meets a man and talks to him. Laird invites the man to join him and the man, who is a surfer and board builder I think, does. The child and the man instantly bond and after they have finished in the sea little Laird takes Bill Hamilton home to meet his mom....and he falls in love with her.

‘And not only do they live happily ever after, little Laird, now Laird Hamilton, becomes the greatest big wave surfer in the world.....’

She waited.

‘I like that.....I like happy endings.....’ he said softly.

She gently caressed his face.....

They arrived about six o’clock; the big Merc’s sat nav bringing them to the door. Nice big car park, thought H; impressive.

In the reception they signed in using two lap top computers. Then they had to show either a valid passport (H - no, Benny - no), valid driving licence (H - yes, Benny - no) or a citizens card (both definitely no). So Benny didn’t exist. The receptionist rang for Simon ‘Aces’ Trumper, the Live Poker Director, and well known poker player. Simon arrived, H told him who he was and he was essentially there to see Neil Channing and have a look round. Simon signed Benny in and took them inside to the huge poker room. He pointed to Neil Channing sitting with his back to them over in the distance.

‘He should,’ Simon said, ‘be having a break in...,’ he looked at a monitor, ‘about fifteen minutes.’

‘I’ve seen you on the tele,’ said H to Simon. ‘Late night poker, things like that.’

‘That’s me.’

‘How come you’re here?’

‘I retired from full time poker and came here to help set it up. It’s been, as I’m sure you know, a phenomenal success and I enjoy it immensely. I still do some tele and in fact I’ve just got through to this year’s final of Late Night Poker.’

‘And don’t I remember you also used to be in business?’

‘I did, but I’m afraid poker got in the way...’

‘I can see that,’ said H.

H looked at the monitor. ‘If you’ll excuse us I’ll just get us a drink and wait for Neil, but perhaps we could talk some more before I go?’

‘Sure.’

H bought the drinks and he led her to Neil’s table. After a few moments Neil looked up, saw H, and nodded, then went back to his cards. H watched the last hand being dealt and Neil took ages to make a decision. After what seemed like more ages, one of the players sighed, folded and went, Neil raised. The man to his left called, the next folded.

The Flop came Ace, Ace, Jack.

Neil bet and the next player called.

The Turn produced a seven.

After some deliberation Neil checked and so did his opponent.

The River showed a queen.

After more deliberation Neil put in a decent sized bet and the man called.

Neil had King, ten, to give him ace, king, queen, jack, ten *straight*

His opponent had Ace, two for *trip Aces*.

The chips went to Neil.....

Neil got up and shook H’s hand and was introduced to Benny. Benny had insisted she ‘look good’ and she looked stunning. For a moment Neil’s eyes agreed.....

‘Sorry about the wait, H, but the guy three from my left and last to act in that hand is very aggressive. But he had ordered his meal and they had shouted out his ticket number over the tannoy and I thought *‘the longer I prevaricate the more his meal is getting cold’*; so I hung on and hung on until he just folded and rushed off to get his food. Once he was out I thought I had a good chance of taking it with a raise but laddy on my left called which was a nuisance. Called a raise with Ace two! Even you wouldn’t call a last hand raise with Ace two, eh, H?’

H shook his head knowingly. ‘Heavens, no.’

‘He didn’t raise the flop, or raise the turn and gave me a free river. Having said that I suppose he played it rather well....’ A grin swept his face.

They chatted for a few minutes about this and that and then Mickey’s name came up. Mickey Wernick had been quite ill but he had, to a large extent, recovered. But they both knew that illness tired out a poker player and so they silently wished him well....

Neil took H to a group of young people and introduced him to Jake Cody who, again, H had seen on tv. Jake Cody was what is known in young poker circles as a *phenom*. Jake was a polite young man of twenty three who had already won more than three million dollars!

After a few minutes with Jake, Neil introduced him to Sam Razavi; another highly successful young poker player in both tournaments and high stakes cash games.

In due course Neil wandered off, leaving H and Benny to meander round the tables. H felt a bit like a child as he looked everywhere to see if he could spot people that played on the tele.....

In due course his eyes alighted on Nick Wealthall who was the presenter of Poker Stars UK and Ireland Poker Tour. H watched this regularly on tv and Nick was known for his quips, some, true, were debatable, but he did have a way with words....

H moved away from Benny and introduced himself and Nick was kind enough to chat for a few minutes then had to go to his table as the break was just about over.

When H took the few steps back to Benny her eyes told him he had cocked it up.

‘Who was that?’ she said.

‘It was Nick Wealthall; he’s a poker presenter.’

‘And he knows who you are?’

‘He does now.’

‘Does he know who I am....?’

Ah shit! A rock and a hard place

H took her hand, led her to his table, waited for him to fold, tapped him lightly on the shoulder and said, ‘I’m ever so sorry, Nick, but I didn’t introduce you to my wife, Benshima....’

Nick stood; his face beamed a welcoming smile, and held out his hand. ‘It’s a pleasure to meet you, Benshima.’

‘Thank you,’ said a relieved H and they wheeled round and left him to his game.....

They had a meal. H had a beef burger with chips and Benny a veggie burger with chips; she tipped up the plate and put the chips on H’s plate.

‘I can’t eat all those,’ said H and then proceeded to eat all those....

As they finished the meal Aces Trumper asked them if they had seen a wall full of caricatures of poker players? He took them through the vast lounge and there they were. Maybe thirty or forty of the world’s best beaming down at them.

At nine o’clock they decided to leave and go back to Birmingham. Just before the main doors four men watched them with interest and H didn’t miss it.

As they went to the car park the men followed and as H and Benny neared the Merc one of them said, ‘We want to talk to you.’

H turned, saw they were in a semi circle, positioned himself immediately in front of Benny, and took on the defence / attack stance. It wasn’t obvious, but it may be in a minute.....

‘Are you James James?’

‘Yes.’

‘Do you own the J J Casinos?’

H forced his body to relax even more. The more relaxed he was the quicker he could strike. It would be very soon....

‘Yes.’

‘And do you own this place...?’

‘No.’

The man turned to his mate on his right. ‘I fuckin told you! Didn’t I fuckin tell you?’

His mate said to H, ‘Are you sure you don’t own this place?’

‘I don’t. I think Rob Yong does....?’

‘You’ve just lost me a tenner,’ he replied. ‘Shit! Could you go back in and buy it?’

H laughed.

‘Ok, mate, thanks,’ said the first and off they went, back into the club.....

On the way back H found himself amazed. Truly amazed.

Neil Channing had been so aware of what was happening around him that he played very slowly to make sure a man had to go for his food before it went cold....and by so doing increase his chances of winning.....the odds went from 3 - 1 to 2 - 1.

That’s what made you a successful pro.....like Neil Channing.

Chapter 16

The family - Hubert 3

One of Hubert's people rang H's office and asked them if he would be there on a particular day at a particular time. After a few moments checking, they said he would.....

Hubert sat by the bar but drinking coffee when H came down and sat by him.

'Afternoon, Hubert.'

'H.'

H ordered a large latté and waited for Hubert to speak. Better to let Hubert speak first as who knows where this would go?

Hubert looked him square in the eyes. 'Sorry about the other night, H. A touch too much of the hard stuff....'

'It's not a problem, Hubert. It happens....'

Hubert nodded slowly several times and licked his lips.

He looked at H again. 'You do understand the rules, don't you, H?'

'I think so, Hubert, but if you'd like to clarify them so we both understand....?'

'Ok. It is remiss of me to cause a fuss in your establishment. As you know it's only the booze talking. But it would also be remiss of you to.....,' he paused to let H answer.

'To.....demean your status in front of our clients...?'

Hubert nodded. 'Nicely put, H. Yes, my status. I don't want my status demeaned.'

'It hasn't been, it won't be. We have known each other for a number of years, Hubert, I think we can rely on each other, don't you?'

Hubert nodded.

‘But...’ said H

‘Ahhh...the but...’

‘You also understand that I.....’ H paused to let Hubert answer.

‘Must not have your status demeaned in your premises...?’

H nodded.

H held out his hand and Hubert shook it.

H ordered two more coffees and they chatted for a few moments and then Hubert left.

H watched him go and let out a long breath. Good. Could have been much worse. H had a lot of respect for any one who could come back and apologise for something he had done. Especially when their name was Hubert Brown and he could have had H killed quite easily.

Yes. It could have been much, much worse.....

Chapter 17

Healthy eating 2

I've been a vegan many years and it started quite by accident. Two things happened; first I read this article about how good non meat products were for you and, as I'd had a lot of headaches for many years I thought I'd give it a try and then secondly one of those bizarre things that happen I slipped with a knife and cut a good old piece of skin off my finger.

Still being a meat eater at that point and in the middle of frying sausages so for some reason I put my bit of flesh in with the sausages just to see what it would taste like.

Of course it was only a tiny amount but I was surprised how good it was.

So after that I researched the vegan thing and over a period of weeks cut down more and more on meat until I only ate fruit and things and the occasional human flesh.

Works for me....

Chapter 18

Dear Diary 3

How is it going you ask?

It is going well.

We now have an unspoken understanding. It is more spiritual than physical at the moment but it is there. Oh yes it is there.

I know it, he knows it.

From across the crowded casino if I catch his eye he smiles.

I have downloaded a song from South Pacific.....

Some enchanted evening

When you find your true love

When you feel him call you

Across a crowded room,

Then fly to his side,

And make him your own

Or all through your life you

May dream all alone

Once you have found him

Never let him go.

Once you have found him

Never let him go

Never let him go

Never let him go.....

NEVER LET HIM GO.....!

Good night, dear Diary

Chapter 19

Lucky H

H looked again at the History on the poker screen. His face scrunched up, like a child that has just seen a magic trick but can't work it out. And so he sits, and stares, and puzzles....

And shakes his head.....

And says....

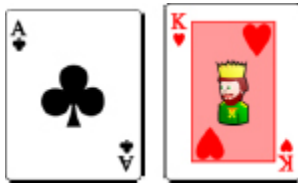
‘Fucking, fucking, fucking bastard, fucking asshole, fucking, fucking, fucking, fucking.....,’ he paused for breath, ‘bastard, fucking bastard, fucking, fucking.....’

He looked again at the screen.....

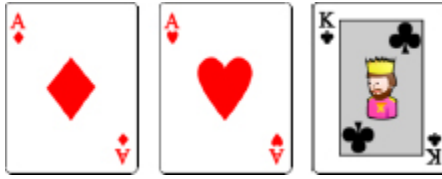
After months of bad luck.....losing 90% of the races, 70% of big pair versus small pair, and every lucky bastard hitting a flush on the river, he had actually got an unbeatable hand....

Unbeatable!

He held



And the flop had been



Full house!

On the flop!

Nobody could hit quads as H had an ace and a king and there were no straight flushes out there...

At last - thank you fucking God!

Please let someone have an ace or, better still, be slow playing a pair of Kings.

There were only two in. H had limped in, one had raised, the other called and so did H. Oh joy.....

The turn came and it was



That was no help to anybody unfortunately as they obviously held an Ace, possibly K K or a K, or even Q J

The first player checked, the next put in a big raise, H called and the first player, after a long pause, folded.

The river brought out another 3.



Again no use to anybody so the other player must have K K. So he had Kings full and H had Aces full.

At last.

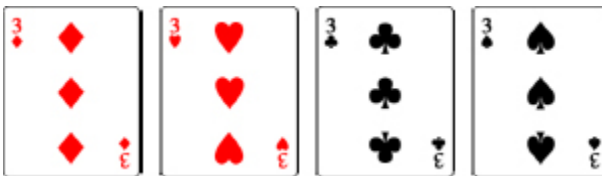
Not only win a hand but with a good amount of money in.

If he had Kings full he would obviously go all in. And he did!

H snap called for all his remaining money and found himself where he was now; staring at a History of the hand and all his money gone. Again.....

‘Fucking, fucking, fucking bastard, fucking arsehole, fucking, fucking, fucking, fucking, bastard, fucking bastard, fucking, fucking.....’ he said again to a God in a heaven who either wasn’t listening or who had set the whole thing up.....

The player’s cards in front of him showed his hand.....



Quads!

He had somehow, the fucking moron, called a raise on an A A K board with 3 3. And then picked up a 3 on the Turn and then another 3 on the River.

So...on the flop H was mathematically a 100% favourite

On the Turn he was still a 98% favourite

And on the fucking River - he had fucking lost!

‘Fucking, fucking, fucking bastard, fucking arsehole, fucking, fucking, fucking, fucking, bastard, fucking bastard, fucking, fucking.....’ he said to the same God who was now aware of H’s plight and giggling hysterically....

Benny walked in. ‘Losing?’

Benny had a habit of walking in when he was losing. It wasn’t that difficult; this had happened for months.

‘Look at this!’ he said pointing to the screen.

‘Hmmm,’ said Benny.

‘Hmmm? What do you mean, hmmmm? I had a Full House on the flop!’

‘Oh dear.’

‘And he picked up Quads!’

‘Oh dear.’

‘Oh dear...? Oh dear....?’

She looked at him, trying hard to keep a straight face. ‘Very bad...very, very bad.’

He looked into her mischievous eyes, her face that had merriment so near the surface, and burst into laughter. He pulled her close and snuggled up to her bosom.

‘Fuck it,’ he said.

‘It; or me?’

‘Let me answer that properly.... I am done with this. I have lost money over the last few months and it is now silly. I do this for fun, not to make money; although I don’t want to lose. This is really about winning. Not making money. We hardly need money... So if lady luck won’t give me a break then I will take one myself. Stuff it!’ He paused. ‘In answer to the second part....’

He took her hand and sat her on his lap. Moving her hair from her face he kissed her softly; then holding her head gently he

kissed her forehead, moved to her cheeks and then on down to her neck.

Moving her head back to expose her neck fully he kissed her several times, then opened his mouth wide and gently enclosed it round her throat. Her mouth opened in pleasure as he closed his teeth softly until they bit, just a little, into her throat....

He held her there, like a lion suffocating its prey, but in this instance the victim was quite willing....

He let her go and she moaned. He thought it was the most wonderful sound in the world; his wife in pleasure....

‘Christ,’ she said, ‘I know what I want.’

She got off him, moved the swivel chair round and kneeled in front. ‘Take your trousers off.’

James did as he was told but still felt that a man sitting there with just a shirt looked a bit silly...

‘Take your shirt off...,’ she said.

He did as he was told. She kneeled between his legs, took his cock in her hand and wiped it lovingly across both cheeks. After doing that several times she kissed it and then licked it with her tongue. James watched....

‘Take your blouse off.’

She looked at him and smiled. ‘I hope you’re not going to stare at my bosom?’

‘Certainly not; what do you take me for?’

She looked at his dick. ‘About half a pint.’

‘If only....’

She sucked him for several minutes, getting it as far in as she could and then stood up.

Slowly, one by one, she removed her clothes. James watched her; transfixed by her beauty and erotic movements. She watched his face as she did so, marvelling that this man, who had the kind

of looks, and money, that could have most women, only wanted her.....

James' hand moved to his penis and slowly moved it up and down. 'Christ....'

She stood there naked; looking beautiful, looking fertile, looking.....? The technical term would be 'extremely fuckable'.

She stood upright, opened her legs, opened her hands wide and cupped underneath her breasts. She started a squeezing, milking motion...

'Christ.....' his hand pumped a little quicker. 'Christ....'

She smiled at his wonderful discomfort. Moving to him she knelt either side of his thighs and slowly lowered herself on to his penis.

'You could have broken my hand.'

'You should have waited....'

'Old habits....'

She started lifting herself up and down...up and down.... James held his hands as though to force her away but just touched her nipples with his index finger, pushed gently on her breasts, then started to slowly rotate. Benshima's back arched, her head went back, her eyes closed, her mouth opened wide and her long hair cascaded down like a satanic waterfall.

Benshima loved this, lived for this....

Her body reacted instantly and in less than a minute she climaxed. She clutched his hands hard to her breasts to stop them moving while her body convulsed several times. When it had stopped she took in several lungfuls of air.

James started the circular motion again.

'Not again,' she whispered, but he took no notice. *Not again* didn't mean *not again*.....

Chapter 20

The family - Hubert 4

The violent smash of the fist on the table reverberated round the room. His two sons, two daughters, and his grandchild all jumped. Hubert Brown terrified anyone and that included those that knew him and were sitting round the table. Little Davey, the grandchild, who was not actually little anymore, six foot tall and nearly twenty four, was sitting on a chair against the wall. Not part of the meeting, but part of the assembly summoned by Hubert as in due course little Davey would be part of the family business and had to learn.....

Hubert was nearly seventy, his sons and daughters in their forties, but he still terrified them. Even though the sons were big enough and young enough to take him it would not occur to them to do so.

Hubert ruled. Hubert always had his own way.

And there were common bonds in this room. They were all related, they had all, without exception, been fucked by Hubert; and they all knew that Hubert, no matter his age, would kill you if you crossed him.

Hubert's face was red with anger and he looked at them all, squarely in the eyes, until his malevolence overwhelmed them and they looked away....

He got up and stretched his legs and then sat down again.

'We have,' he said, 'ruled this part of earth for many years. It may only be a very small part of this earth, a tiny part of this earth, but we have ruled it. By we, I assume you know that means me. And in the latter years you have helped. And over the last few years I have, as a loving father.....'

His one daughter, Marie, felt her flesh crawl at the thought of this *loving father*, and she would have been sick had she not trained herself not to be. *How she hated this man....*

‘.....invited you in to my little part of this earth. And you have prospered on the back of my efforts over the preceding years. You have nice houses, nice cars, homes abroad, money in the Bank.....’ he paused and looked at them individually again. ‘That being the case would anyone care to offer an explanation as to why it’s all going tits up?’ he asked quietly.

No one said anything.

‘Don’t be shy,’ he said sarcastically. ‘I want to hear these pearls of wisdom from you..... You seem so good at knowing everything about new cars and new houses, I just assume you know everything about our little problem and you are just too modest to share it with me....?’

‘Charlie; what can you add.....?’

Charlie was a big man who had worked in the family’s chain of butchers early in his life; one of their many legal and illegal enterprises. He was used to throwing sides of beef here, there and everywhere. He had strength. Physical and mental strength...but not here...

‘Charlie.....?’

‘I.....we.....it.....’

The smash of the fist on the table and his screaming voice exploded in unison

‘You fuckin cretin!’ Hubert screamed, ‘you are all fucking, useless cretins!’

At that point the door opened and his wife brought in tea and coffee.

‘Luv.....’ said his wife softly, ‘your blood pressure.’

He swivelled his head slowly to look at her. He would like to have killed her for interjecting but she was the only person in the

room, excluding little Davey, who was a touch moronic and talked little, who could get away with it.....just. And she was right..... *But being right didn't make it right. She would pay for that indiscretion later....*

She went out again.

He took a deep breath and looked down at the table.

‘We have to tighten up our act,’ he continued, ‘we are losing dealers to the opposition, we hardly seem to pull off a fucking simple robbery nowadays without it being a fuck up, the arcade money is dropping, the pubs are dying.....and so is our credibility....’

He felt his anger starting to boil again but reined it back, ‘so I want information and I have a job for each of you so that we have a proper background from which we go forward. I am not putting up with any more of this shit! I didn’t build this up to let fucking Neanderthals steal it from me so now the fight back starts. We have all the resources we need; we just need to point them in the right direction to annihilate the opposition. You got that?’ he looked round the table and they all nodded.

‘Ok, this is what I want you to do....Eric, you go to.....’

After giving out his orders they tramped out, leaving little Davey still sitting there.

‘What did you think of that, little Davey? Good or what?’

‘Good, granddad.’

‘Come round here.’

Little Davey got up and walked and stood by his granddad.

‘Look at this,’ said Hubert and undid his trousers and took out his hard prick. ‘That’s power that gives you one of those, little Davey. Power...’

‘Yes, granddad.’

‘What is it, little Davey?’

‘Power, granddad.’

He stuffed it, with some difficulty, back in his trousers.

‘Go now, little Davey. Have you got colouring books or something...?’

‘Yes, granddad.....’

As the lad opened the door Hubert said, ‘What gives you a hard cock, little Davey?’

‘Power, granddad.’

‘Good boy.....’

Chapter 21

Silence 3

Hello again

It's nice to sense you...

I feel good today but the beginning of the week was not so good.

Again....

Too much wine, a few fags, late nights, too much sex

It knocks you around a bit, all of that

I know, I know I shouldn't be doing it.

An under age girl having fags, booze and sex. But sometimes life doesn't give you a choice.....

Anyhow....today's good

Today I'm a bit serene. Yes, serene would sum it up

I'm sorry; I forgot to ask how you are?

I know I can't actually ask as I'm mute but it's implied.

You're my friend now and so I would ask about you, wouldn't I?

I'm going a walk in the park this afternoon...that will be nice. I will feel the sun and hear the birds and sense the jollity around me.

Yes that will be nice.....

Before you go.....thank you for being my friend

Chapter 22

JJ Security 2

H put down the phone, took his feet off the desk and waited for his visitor. Sarah opened the door with a man on her arm who looked like he'd been in a war. Head and chest bandaged, pale, didn't look well at all.

‘Make a play for you, did he, Sarah?’

She smiled and he tried to. H got up. ‘Ok, Sarah, leave him to me,’ and he helped Paul Turner gently down to an easy chair. A few seconds later a lady arrived with two coffees. ‘Lots of sugar,’ she said to Paul who mumbled a thank you.

‘You going to be ok?’ asked H.

Paul nodded but H wasn't convinced. He picked up the phone. ‘Doctor Ellis was downstairs a while ago. If he's still there would you ask him to come to my office please. If he's on a winning streak tell him we'll wait.’

A few minutes later Dr Tony Ellis arrived. ‘Winning streak? Were you having a laugh at my expense, James?’

H smiled. ‘Would you mind taking a look at my friend here? He says he's ok but I don't want him expiring here; it's bad for business.’

‘What happened?’ the Doctor asked Paul.

What happened? What happened indeed? Paul still wasn't quite sure....

Paul Turner worked in the security industry; had done all his life. Been with three of the big boys; the big boys being Group 4,

Mitie, Reliance – an independent, and Vision Security Group (MSG).

He was fifty two years old, an Area Director but he yearned to be the boss. He just wanted the opportunity to run something and in the company that he was in it wouldn't happen. He wasn't prominent enough, brassy enough or well connected enough and so he would always be overlooked. What they also overlooked was a man with amazing attention to detail, an analyst, a leader and a man who talked about profits rather than sales. But it was easy to be overlooked if you didn't get much chance to show your skills. He was out there, doing his thing. You had to be at Head Office where you could do fuck all but you did get noticed. You took the credit where you could and shit over people if necessary. Twas ever thus.....

He could have started up on his own but security now was a different world. Whilst the big boys still rented out the 'man on the gate', the 'front line' people, that wasn't where the margins were. On staff like that, called 168 jobs because it was 24/7 and there were 168 hours in a week, on a £100,000 turnover you were lucky to make a gross £12,000. And of course the big stores could play one company against another and it came down even more.

No, the money was in the big corporates. The companies that made big money and were willing to pay for good, sometimes highly sophisticated security. The Investment Banks, the Canary Wharf crowd, the City boys, the corporate event organisers.

In security companies that had predominantly 168 contracts you were looking at maybe 6% return whereas if you were doing a lot with corporate you could get up to nearer 10%. And that wasn't, as someone suggested, an extra 4%; it was a 66% increase!

So to start up now was ok if you wanted a tiny mom and pop operation but he didn't. He wanted to run his own decent sized operation.

And he had an opportunity. It was a slim one but one he had to seize. A man, Ted Davies, owned a company called Tigris Security. Paul had met him many times and although they were competitors they had become quite good friends. Ted, who was a little bit better off than Paul, had often invited him to a pheasant shoot or salmon fishing when the admission was affordable or Ted could hide some of it.

On one of those trips Ted had tripped on the bank and plunged head first into the river. His drowning screams had alerted Paul who managed to get downriver from him, waded in as far as he could and then extend his rod to the begging outstretched arms of Ted.

Back on dry land Ted coughed up as much water as he could and then they lit a fire and settled down on the bank to eat and drink and in Ted's case dry out. They had some wine, some of which Ted warmed over the wood fire and pretended it was mulled wine; and when they were quite merry they just rambled on about anything that happened to wander in and out of their heads.

In a more lucid moment Paul asked Ted why he had called his company Tigris Security? On the condition of complete and utter confidentiality Ted explained that he hadn't. It was supposed to be Tigress Security but the printer had either misheard or couldn't spell and when all the paperwork came back it was already Tigris. So that's what it stayed; Tigris!

So then Ted invented reasons why it was called Tigris. From the Sumerian translation of 'swift river' he would say. His company would be swift and reactive.... Then one day someone more learned than he told him that the word had also been adopted by the ancient Greeks and meant Tiger. Well fancy that..... A full circle....

In gratitude Ted offered Paul a job as his right hand man but Paul declined. What was the point? The man was always indebted

to you and in time he may regret that he had hired you. And then what? An uneasy, tense atmosphere? Unspoken words? 'You're only here because you saved my life?' And if the other staff found out you hadn't been hired on merit?

Maybe not....

And so life had gone on and they still went fishing occasionally but then the moment had occurred which they both knew could happen. Business got in the way. They were, after all, competitors and at some point one of them was going to lose something that was important to them and it may get in the way of their relationship. Well one of them did, blamed the other for underhand dealing and that was just about the end of that. They still spoke but it had changed and fishing and shooting were no longer an option.

But Ted was now dead. Had a stroke swimming on holiday in the Maldives and drowned. Poor Ted. He would miss Ted. But Ted had left a stipulation in his Will that first option to buy his company, should his wife not want it or if it had to be sold to cover any tax liabilities, would go to Paul.

Fancy that... The old bugger still cared.

And Ted had covered all the options. His company turned over about £63 million at around 8% which, given the current buying ratios would cost someone between £40 and £50 million.

Now Ted knew that Paul may struggle to borrow that and indeed he would be daft to as the interest payments would drag the company down so he also stipulated that if Paul had to find an outside investor who put up all the money then whatever the buying ratio was Paul would receive one part of the fraction up front and became Managing Director for a minimum 5 year term. Or put another way if the ratio was 8 to 1 then Paul got one eighth of the buying price and then ran it for five years.

It sounded good in theory but the ‘run it for five years’ could be got round in about two seconds but never mind...it was a starting point.

And so Paul had first pick but he needed the money. Paul’s up front money would be between 4 and 5 million so he didn’t have to get into bed with anybody he didn’t want to. His current company was an obvious choice...as if. He went to the Venture Capital boys but soon realised they would hound him mercilessly. And then someone mentioned James James who Paul had met briefly a couple of times at Trade do’s.

And he had talked to H. Paul wanted a shareholding but H wasn’t interested. He didn’t share his companies with anyone. And so they worked out a deal. They would pay eight times profits with one extra to Paul. H’s JJ Security company would buy it and they would be combined with a turnover of nearly ninety million. And Paul would run the lot.....

It all went through except for one slight hitch...

Paul had taken H to visit Ted’s wife, Valerie, who was at their, now her, villa in Portugal to negotiate the terms. The pair started at seven due to the economic climate and she went for ten. The negotiations dragged on and it was obvious it was not going to be concluded as quickly as they had hoped. She invited them to stay overnight and continue the next day which they agreed to do. Get it sorted now and then go home and get on with it.

Late that evening they retired and H was just going to sleep when he heard the door open softly. He looked into the dim light and watched as she came to the bed and sat on it.

She may have been in her fifties but her open negligee showed a woman, and a surgeon or two that had obviously looked after her body.

‘You’re offering seven,’ she said huskily, ‘I’d like more. You’re a big man...you can get it up....I bet you could get it right up for me..... I bet if you needed to you could get that up so high..... And if you did it would save you a lot of money....’

She stood up, and H watched as she shook off her negligee with her swinging 36 DD breasts and pulled back the sheets.....

Chapter 23

The family - Charlie

Charlie Brown, whose middle name was Augustus, while Eric's was Caesar, and reflected their father, Hubert's, dynastic, territorial and megalomaniac tendencies, left the home of his mistress a more relaxed man.

She wasn't really a looker; she was really a fucker, that's all he wanted, all he needed. It took him away, for a short while, from Hubert, from the family, from pressure, from hell..... To this woman who was nice to him and fucked like a train. It was true he was sometimes rough to her, sometimes more than rough, when his frustration and anger had nowhere else to express itself. He hit her, sometimes quite badly, then fucked her, then apologised, then begged her forgiveness and cried for her not to leave him.

She didn't.

There was an argument that she should have....but she didn't. And later that day, or the next, he would bring round flowers and some beautiful fillet steak with a nice bottle of wine which she would cook for them and he would be romantic. Until the next time....

But she put up with it.

Maybe it was all she had.....

It was all she had.....

Her life had not been easy.

Her parents had died when she was eleven, in a horrific car accident, when she was in the back seat. Hitting a lorry head on she was only saved by the fact that she was down on the floor

behind the seats trying to find a crayon and it cushioned her small body.

The fire that started immediately consumed her parents but she was dragged out. Her back still bore some small scars but her young body had healed the majority.

Social Services got her into the only accommodation they could which was a home for unmarried mothers which was surprisingly loving as she was adopted by almost all of them.....

At fifteen she had to leave and went and joined one of the unmarried moms in her new council flat.

Two years later when she was at work, the gas heater became faulty and her 'mom' and two children were slowly gassed to death.....

They let her stay there, although they shouldn't, but the papers would make something out of it if they didn't; and in due course, a few years later, she met Charlie.

He wanted her immediately. There was something about her that he couldn't resist; even though he was married. So he saw more of her, gave her presents, gave her money and fucked her.

And for some reason she was happy with that.....

Today when he was with her he was distracted.

'What's wrong?' she asked.

He shook his head but said nothing.

'Hubert?'

'Is it ever anything else?'

'Why don't you leave? Set up a business on your own? You would be successful, I know you would...' She also wanted to say 'and leave your wife' but that was a step too far. A step she had taken a while ago and it took a few days for the bruises to go down.

Even without the 'leave your wife' bit, she had gone too far and his anger rose.

'Shut the fuck up,' he shouted at her, 'you know fuck all!'

She immediately went quiet and waited and watched.

What would happen? On a good day he would just shrug it off but.....this may not be a good day.

She watched his face mirror his turmoil.

Charlie writhed in an internal hell that Hubert provided. Hubert was his father, but a bastard. Hubert provided largesse, which he often said he would take away. Hubert provided esteem, which he took from you in front of others with glee.

Hubert provided everything.....and he made sure you knew it!

But Charlie knew she was right. He had to escape. But just leaving wasn't any good, Hubert would see to that. It would be much better if Hubert left, so to speak.

Left for good...

Somehow.....

And Charlie knew how.....

Chapter 24

Pearl White

H arrived home and saw a white car outside their front door. Visitor, or visitors? Going in he found Benny in the lounge, reading to Ben who was on her lap.

He went to her and kissed her forehead.

‘How ya doing, Ben?’ he said to Ben, and shook his little hand.

Benny straightened him up and did a *gottle of gear* impersonation of Ben replying.

‘I’m absolutely wonderful, papa. I am taking afternoon refreshments within my studies with dearest mama....’

‘What are you studying today, Ben?’

‘Quantum physics, papa.’

‘Good one, Ben.’

‘Yes indeed, papa. May I enquire as to your day, papa?’

‘Not bad, Ben, thanks. Made a few quid here, a few quid there..... You know....’

‘Yes, papa. In fact I am told the shoe has increased considerably today, papa.....’

‘It’s the footsie, Ben. How many times do I have to tell you... it’s the Footsie...’

Benny quickly put Ben down on the settee and they both collapsed in hysterics. *The shoe.....* They laughed until tears filled their eyes and their stomachs hurt. *The shoe.....*

When a degree of normality returned H asked Benny whose car was outside?

‘Mine.’

‘Yours?’

‘Why?’

‘Why what?’

‘Why is it your car? We have three cars...?’

‘I saw it on a forecourt and it was pretty. And the top goes into the boot so Ben and I can travel the roads on sunny days looking for adventure with the top off.’

‘I could have got you one. Through the Group. Why didn’t you ask?’

‘It was there. I was passing. It was pretty. And, of course, I am capable of buying a car....’

H’s survival instinct kicked in instantly. ‘It’s certainly a nice car. Pretty. Can we look..?’

They went outside to the pearl white, Peugeot 308 SE CC with a 1600 engine and 4 speed auto box. Benny jumped in, started it and seconds later down came the top.

‘Nice,’ said H. ‘Pretty.....How old is it?’

‘They said nine months.’

‘The Peugeot garage said nine months?’

‘Yes, why?’

‘It seems a short time to suddenly change a new car...?’

‘Oh...it wasn’t Peugeot, it was Audi.’

‘It was an Audi garage?’

‘Yes.’

H decided to give up. It was all getting a bit surreal. And if that’s what Benny wanted.....that’s what Benny has. QED.

Chapter 25

Silence 4

Annie was standing against the bar next to a man who had his hand in her pants.

Zoe and Becca danced whilst Alex had gone somewhere with a fella; wall, car, flat, house.....

Wherever, whatever....

She didn't know the man with his hand in her pants. He had wandered over, he wasn't bad looking and had offered to buy her a drink, which she accepted. He thought the price of the Vodka and Redbull was a bit of a price to pay, but got it for her anyway, and in due course put his hand up her skirt.

Through drunken eyes she looked at him and smiled. She had already been fucked once tonight, standing up against the wall round the back of the club, but after he had come, and she hadn't, he had fucked off back to his mates....

'What do you want?' she asked.

'You.'

'Just like that? You buy me one drink and you think you can fuck me?'

He thought the drink had been extravagant and she would fuck if you gave her a cup of tea...

He moved his fingers from her clitoris and slid two inside her vagina.

Her mouth opened slightly and her eyes closed as the ripple went through her body.

'One drink....?' she repeated quietly.

He tried to put another finger up....

‘Gently,’ she said, ‘go back to my clit....’

He did as he was told.

Unlike some of the Neanderthals she was fucked by he watched her face and saw when he was in the right spot. Rubbing gently he knew she wouldn’t take long and in less than a minute she convulsed and took in a large breath.

Her body sagged. Too much booze, too much sex, and two in the morning.

She needed sleep and her stupid child had been grumbling to go home for ages.

‘Shall we go outside? Or my car?’ he asked.

‘Fuck off!’ she said with distaste, ‘what the fuck do you think I am?’

Abruptly she left him standing at the bar and weaved unsteadily on to the dance floor and told the others they were going home. Zoe and Becca decided to stay so Annie took her daughter and stumbled out to get a taxi home.

The man at the bar followed them out and watched her from a distance. When it was her turn for a taxi he moved close behind her and heard her give her address to the taxi driver.....

Chapter 26

The family - Eric

Eric had gone the other way.

Eric was an accountant and they're not really known for their aggression.

Eric was a numbers man and they're not really known for strategic thinking either. How can you think strategically when everything you are dealing with is already out of date?

So Eric did the numbers for the things they owned and then he reported to Hubert who decided what to do next.

The future was Hubert's problem; not Eric's.

And to complete his partition from the family, spiritually if not practically, Eric had found God.

God provided, for him and his family, a bedrock that allowed him to survive in the maelstrom that he knew as 'the family'. God was an unmoving, anchored, twenty four hours a day set of rules that didn't change.

God didn't do volatility.

Or opaqueness.

Or fear.

God was a loving entity that was always with you and you could depend on. Just about the opposite of Hubert.

And so Eric had embraced the Church and all its ways. His family life revolved around the Lord's strictures and Eric would argue, quite vehemently if needed, that if 'the family' also found God Hubert would, perhaps, even at this late stage, go up rather

than down. Eric remembered that it was in John, or perhaps Romans that the Lord will forgive a sinner.

It had taken quite a leap of faith to believe that actually included Hubert.....

And so Eric busied himself in the work of The Lord; helping out at Church, helping to organise the fund raising fetes, even cutting the grass in the cemetery.

He also donated amounts to the Church fund from the money that he scammed off Hubert's businesses.....the rest he moved offshore.

Chapter 27

Dear Diary 4

It's today, dear Diary; I just know it!

Today he is going to ask me out.

We have moved ever closer to this moment. He talks more, he smiles more, and he helps me when he can; when others are less likely to see his real intentions towards me.

Some are already jealous.

Oh yes, dear Diary, there are some right jealous bitches in there.

I hear them muttering to each other and it's obvious what they're saying;

'Why is it her?' they're asking. 'Why does he love her and not me?'

Of course it's quite obvious, but that's their problem. Ugly cows.

And so to work, dear Diary.

Don't wait up.....

James and I may be just a touch late.....

Yes, I know I said I'd be late but he wasn't at work. His wife was 'ill' and he'd had the day off.

I think he told her.

I think they had a row and that's why he wasn't there.

I may have to be patient for a little while now.

It won't be long now and I can wait a bit longer....

Goodnight, dear Diary

It's been a lovely day after all.....

Chapter 28

Silence 5

Annie was fucked.

Not actually fucked; just fucked.

She'd had a long week, doing an extra two hours a day overtime at Asda where she worked, which gave her a few extra quid for the bills, booze or whatever...

Her daughter had shut the fuck up and stopped grumbling and was asleep.

How the fuck someone who couldn't talk could be such a fucking pain was a mystery? Silly cow....

The phone went.

'Yes?'

'You may not remember me,' said the male voice, 'I met you a few nights ago in a club....?'

'Who are you....?'

'I bought you a drink....'

'How did you get my number?' she demanded.

'You're in the phone book...'

Really? Am I? Shit! She looked at the phone to check his number but it had been withheld.

'What do you want?'

'You.'

'What do you mean *me*?'

'Exactly what I said...'

Tired though she was she started to get worried and then, quite suddenly, started to panic and slammed the phone down.

She went quickly to the little cabinet that housed some books and magazines and found the Phone Book.

She had a mobile; she didn't need BT as well.....

Chapter 29

The family - Marie

Marie left the meeting and went home and did what she was good at....drinking.

She downed a glass of wine in one gulp, filled the glass again, downed that, and then drank what was left from the bottle. Feeling particularly self destructive she found the whisky bottle and took a swig from that. Then a swig from a Martini bottle....

Reeling, she picked up her little dog, went outside and sat on a lounge on the back lawn in the warm late afternoon sun. Her head swam and she was struggling to hold on to the dog and so he squirmed his way off her and headed to the border to relieve himself. She saw him go, or at least she thought she did, and reached out to call him back as mummy needed him, but she overbalanced and landed with a thud on the cool green grass.

Lying on her stomach, the side of her head resting on the grass, her eyes glazed and her head spinning she whispered, 'George' to try and get the dog to come to her. She called it George after George Clooney. Having never been married she was waiting for a George Clooney....

George finished his business and came back, tail wagging, and immediately dropped down by her face and licked her nose.

'George,' she muttered through lips that were slowly losing feeling. 'Mommy's little boy.....'

Just before she passed out she saw Hubert standing on a trap door and she pulled the pin and then Hubert was hanging with a very tight rope round his elongating neck.

A smile played on the unconscious woman's mouth in between the occasional drool that left it.....

Chapter 30

Healthy eating 3

And so, over time, as they say, I have developed a taste, no perhaps more than that, a need, for human flesh. Only, of course, as an addition to my diet as I still cling wholeheartedly to the tenets of veganism.

Animals are sacred.

Unfortunately as I have limited time on this earth I am going to finish what I started which was to eat as many parts of the human body as I can before I die.

I am not the kind of person who seeks immediate gratification and so I decided that I would start at the extremities and leave the good bits, the succulent bits, until last.

And so it seemed to me that working up a leg, then another leg, then an arm and so on was the way to go.....

I found toes a bit of a waste of time..... So if you try them and find them as unsatisfying as I did just remember I toed you so.

And so I sit in my chair and look down onto the High Street from my flat window and see the hustle and bustle below me. Just across the street is a casino and I watch people go in and out at all hours and I wonder.....

What would he taste like.....?

What would she taste like.....?

It seems to me the smaller ones, the lady ones, have an edge.....

Chapter 31

Pearl White 2

The man in the Bentley had a lot of problems. His business was struggling - it wouldn't go under but it would more than likely mean his controlling interest would be diluted considerably.

If he lived to see it....?

His mistress had left for pastures new. Well...not necessarily new; in fact she had left his cocooned embrace for an older man who painted water colours on a semi deserted island somewhere....? He would never work that one out...?

And his wife, who he still loved dearly, even though he had a mistress, had been diagnosed with breast cancer. *Had* a mistress. Yes, that was the operative term. *Had*. He looked at the problem again. He'd had mistresses for years; they catered for his 'big swinging dick' lifestyle as he jetted round the world doing deals and making money. But now.....? Was now a time, *the* time, to stop? In many ways it was ideal. No irate mistress to hassle him, a business that needed him and more to the point a wife that needed him.

On reflection it was the ideal time to stop.....

Because he had been lost in thought for miles he had unconsciously gone down to a thinking speed. Gently cruising along at fifty miles an hour. No thought, no hassle.

He saw the car pull alongside him to overtake, was nearly past and then seemed to slow a little. He saw the approaching lorry with its lights flashing. He knew she wouldn't make it. She should have, quite easily, but she wouldn't. He saw the look of horror on her face as she knew she was going to die.....

Benny didn't know what to do? She had punched the accelerator to kick down the car to overtake the Bentley and it had surged forward. When she had nearly passed she took her foot off the accelerator to allow the car to gently change up and then she would pull in; but the car hadn't changed gear! It had stayed in third and it was dragging the car down in speed. It had confused Benny. Why hadn't it changed gear? She didn't know what to do? She was now falling back but not slow enough to get back in! And she couldn't accelerate as it took her into the radiator of the oncoming truck.....

The driver of the Bentley Continental GT floored the accelerator and the 6 litre 12 cylinder engine with its nearly 600 bhp that would take it from 0 to 60 in just 4.6 seconds flew forward. Benny saw the gap starting to widen on her left but knew the oncoming lorry that had smoke coming off its tyres would arrive too quickly..... She saw the lorry driver wrestling with the wheel to keep the lorry straight and he was nearly standing up, he was braking so hard.....

With only seconds to spare the Bentley had widened the gap just enough to allow Benny to yank the wheel over and pull the pretty Pearl White Peugeot in to safety. The lorry roared past and she saw the driver shake his head....and shake his fist.

In the back seat Ben was crying.....

Benny's heart was pumping; she was trying to drive through tear filled eyes and her hands shook.

She saw a hand reach out of the driver's window ahead, curl over the car, point to the side of the road and then he started indicating to his left. After a hundred yards he pulled over into a lay by and she followed him. When they stopped she stayed in her car, her hands on the wheel and her head in her hands. Trembling, crying..... It had been too close; far too close.

He opened her car door.

'Are you ok?' he said gently.

She couldn't talk and just shook her head. He looked into the back seat and although the child was crying loudly it was obviously alright.

The man was used to making decisions.

'My name is Janna Janasis; my home is just about one mile from here. I am going to suggest something to you and I earnestly suggest you go with it.... You are in no state to drive so I suggest you come home with me, my wife is there; you calm down and when you are ready we will bring you back to pick up your car. Can you do that?'

Benny slowly nodded.

The man helped her out of the car and she watched as he took Ben's travel cot out of the back seat and put it in the Bentley.

And then he drove away.....

Chapter 32

JJ Security 3

In due course the solicitor hired by the lady selling the company had contacted H's solicitor to iron out the details and the accountants had also passed on the agreement to their respective accountants. If there was tax to be saved better to do it now, before the signatures.

And it had all been sorted out. Heads of Agreements had been agreed to and it was just a matter of both parties making sure there were no last minute hitches.....

But there weren't.

And on top of that H and Paul had their own agreement. Paul would run JJ Security and Scotty would continue as Chairman. In many ways Paul no longer needed the job as he had received several million as his share of the deal but he still desperately wanted to show he could do it and although H would not give him any shares they did agree a good profit sharing scheme which kicked in after the usual costs were allocated. 'Usual' had been inserted to stop H buying a new plane, or liner or something very expensive to get rid of the profits. They had also agreed a Head Office charge; again so that H could not put in a massive cost for admin....

And so Paul looked forward to meeting H on that first day and then they were going to sort out one or two minor details, grab Scotty and go over to their new company. They would meet the staff again and then Paul would stay and do what he had to do. Pull it all together and sort out the two MDs. The one from the

new company and the one from JJ Security who was none too fussed that his role would soon change.

As Paul was on his way to that meeting, far too early as usual, he had pulled in to a shop on his way to buy a paper and some chocolate. He was too early as he had a weird habit when a meeting was important. First of all he would fret about being late which meant he never slept well. And as he was awake early he would get ready...so that he was ready. And he would allow an hour and a half for an hour's drive. Then he would worry about that. What if.....happened? And so he would add another half an hour. And then with an hour to go before his one hour drive that he had allowed two for he would decide there was no point in hanging around...he might as well go. So now he had three hours for his hour journey..... Better safe than sorry....

And when he had left the shop and was just reversing a touch his car smacked into something. He couldn't quite make out why it was such a bump as he was hardly moving but a moment later an Asian man appeared at his window. When it was half way down a fist smashed Paul in the mouth, then the door was wrenched open and he was dragged out. The man, about twenty five and an older man launched into him and hit him and kicked him and then dragged him round the back of his car. Grabbing his hair, the younger one pushed his face down to the grill. 'Look what you've done, you cunt!' he screamed.

They piled into him again until he could take no more and they knew much more could be a problem for them.

They got back into their large black SUV and squealed away.....

After ten minutes Dr Tony said, 'He's ok. He looks a lot worse than he is which isn't to say he's not going to feel quite ill and quite sore for a few days. But that's more the body's reaction

rather than actual damage. What do you want me to do? Give him some pain killers and anti inflammatories or put him down?’

‘Don’t put him down, I need him.’

‘On a serious note he should be home and in bed.’

‘Ok, I’ll sort that out.’

‘How much do I owe you, Doc?’

The Doctor shook his head. ‘We all need friends...’

‘James,’ said Paul weakly, ‘I’ll be fine. Let’s go and see the people and then I’ll go home.’

H smiled, ‘You do realise you’re the boss and I’m the owner?’

On the way to Paul’s home, with a JJ Casino employee following in Paul’s Jaguar, Paul said, ‘I forgot to tell you how I got to your office. After my slight altercation I was given a lift by a fellow in a beautiful new silver Bentley. He was slim with long hair, wasn’t a London accent, perhaps Midlands, but quite articulate...’

‘You may want to rephrase that.....’ said H.

Paul grinned, ‘I’ve got concussion.....look,’ and he held up two fingers, ‘half past three.’

They both giggled like children at the old, daft joke.

‘Anyhow.....in this Bentley he showed me a sound system that would deafen you at a mile. Perhaps ten miles..... What I’m actually getting round to is that he said ‘give my regards to H’ and he said his name was KK....?’

H smiled a warm smile. ‘That’s Kenneth KK Downing. KK to his adoring legion of fans. Nice bloke. He’s been in here a few times but mainly for a good night as he’s not really a gambler. Considering his millions he’s quite happy putting a tenner on a number... As I said not a gambler.’

‘But who is he...?’

‘Kenneth is the lead guitar player, in fact they may be equal leads, with Judas Priest; been around for years from what I gather, made loads, and still making loads as they’re still a class act and still performing all over the world.’

‘I know Judas Priest....when I was younger, much younger, I went to see them. Wonderful night of loud, pumping music and an incredible feeling of.....abandon. Yes...an amazing feeling of letting yourself go.....’

After a lull in the conversation Paul said to no one in particular but with a degree of awe

‘Wow....KK Downing....wait till I tell the wife that I, that is me, know KK Downing....’

‘She’ll think you’re still concussed....’

‘Yes, but you can back me up.’

‘No...’ said H mischievously, ‘and I’m not sure you actually know KK.’

‘I’ve been,’ said Paul, ‘in my mate KK’s car. Would he have done that if I didn’t know him? And if I wasn’t his mate would he show me his sound system? See...I’m his mate....ergo I know him.’

H shook his head slowly....

After another lull in the conversation H asked, ‘You didn’t by any chance get the number of the car?’

‘Of the people that worked me over?’

‘Yes.’

‘As it happened, as they pushed my face down to the bumper, I did.....’

Chapter 33

The family - Mary

“Addiction is something that presents itself as the solution to the problems it causes.” David Foster Wallace

Mary finished her day's work, if that's what you called it, and went home. Mary and Marie were often confused by their names being roughly the same, but not by anything else. Their names were another product of Hubert's warped mind as the one was 'Mary Queen of Scots' and the other 'Marie Antoinette Queen of France'. How he managed to put the two together would be somewhat of a mystery, even to Hubert, but at the time they were the only Queens he could remember, excluding Cleopatra and Danny La Rue....

She was also single. Had been for quite a while since her husband left. He had been warned not to marry her. His friends warned him and so did Hubert but he didn't listen. He was just a factory worker head over heels in love with a pretty young thing who was head over heels in love with him.

But being in a family that included Hubert and the other psychological misfits soon sounded the death knell and he left with an aching heart which soon mended when he met someone who didn't belong to a family that had all been fucked by Hubert and, in many ways, still was.....

She went to the cupboard, pulled back some cereal and found the small packet. Only one left; just enough for today and then she would need more.

Going in to a small sitting room, her ritual started. She always went in there as it had a white sheep skin rug and a black marble coffee table which she had chosen specifically to showcase the white powder in the packet.

She tipped some out and then folded back the packet. Taking her Virgin Atlantic black credit card which she had never used but it was black, she cut the cocaine into tiny ribbons. On the edge of the marble waited a black onyx fountain pen. It had cost her several hundred pounds but again, it was black and heightened the ritual. Unscrewing the nib at the top and the cartridge at the bottom she laid them to one side and peered down the empty barrel...

She kneeled comfortably on the soft sheep skin rug, leaned over and brought in a small line of the wonderful white powder that she used to need but now she could take it or leave it as she wanted. Somehow she didn't see her daily intake as being addictive.....more a pleasant pastime.

After she had finished, after the energy rush had settled down, she found a number in her mobile phone contacts. Julius supplied her with cocaine. She didn't go to her dad's dealers as they would tell him, and no one knew of her indiscretion. Not that it was any of their fucking business what she did! But.....

'Hi babe,' said the male voice. 'How's it going, babe?'

'Good, Julius. Can you arrange a drop, please, Julius? Tomorrow? Leave it at the usual place and I will leave the money...?'

'No problem, babe. Anything else you need, babe? A good fucking? A dick down your throat? Bring the boys round and get three up you?'

She giggled. She would have loved that; oh how she would have loved that but.....Hubert. Hubert would not handle that too well....

‘Julius, you know I would, but....’ She felt herself getting wet. And horny..... Oh fuck. Part of her screamed for him to bring the boys round. Come on! Fuck me!

FUCK ME!

She felt faint.

Julius was years younger than Mary but Julius had a way with women....

‘I’ll leave the money for you. Thank you, Julius.’

‘Don’t worry about the money, babe, we’ll sort it out.’

‘You said that last time, Julius. I haven’t paid you for last time....’

‘Don’t worry, babe, you’re a Brown. We have to look after the Browns, eh?’

‘Thank you, Julius, you’re so kind.’

‘No probs, babe. It’ll be there tomorrow.’

‘Thank you, Julius.’

‘Well if we can’t come round and give you a good fucking you’ll have to make my day by just talking. How’s everything going, babe? How’s everything doing? How’s tricks.....?’

‘Well, you know, Julius.....we’re struggling a bit with.....’

When she had finished telling Julius everything that Hubert would have gone mental at she wandered upstairs.

She was still wet and the thought of Julius and his men coming to fuck her had not faded. Indeed the fantasy had taken on a mind of its own...

Julius’s men had become a large, powerful Russian with stomach muscles like a god; a large African with a dick as big as her arm; and whoever wrote the Kama Sutra.....

From a drawer by her bed she took the dildo that not only vibrated but inflated to twice its original size as well, then went to

her en suite where she stood in front of the full length mirror and undid a couple of buttons on her expensive Burberry blouse.

Taking out one breast only so that, in her mind, she was being 'slutty' she bent her legs slightly and put the black dildo in her and felt it start to vibrate....

As it did she kneaded her breast.....

After several orgasms that left her weak and panting she lay on the bed and slowly nodded off to sleep....

Chapter 34

The Clubs

With his feet up on his polished desk H read the newspaper article intently. It had been on the cards, always on the cards, but now it had happened; Luminar had gone bust! Two hundred million down the Swanee...

Luminar, a quoted public company, were the largest operator of nightclubs in Britain with seventy five night clubs. The word here was 'were'....

Steve Thomas ran the business for many years and maybe, in that period, things changed so much he could no longer continue with the business model that made him successful.

It happens.... Far too frequently in a rapidly changing world.

Everything had changed from the original night club days.....

A massive impact from pubs who extended their hours and upped their game...

No smoking.... Cheap supermarket booze..... A revolution in computer games; including on line poker.... And satellite TV..... And the recession.... And unemployment.....80% of Luminar's revenues were generated by the 18 - 24 year olds.

All added up to a creeping paralysis that slowly strangled the night clubs.

Steve thought that the nightclub business could swerve round all those obstacles as it was a social thing; a boy meets girl thing. And of course Steve was right.....*it was*.

But again.....times change.

And boys and girls change.

And their meeting places change.

And the way they meet change....

Now you can go to a pub at half the price; no entrance fee; get pissed; everybody spill out onto the streets with the girls' tops down to their nipples and their micro skirts up to their pants if they were wearing any; and the boys with hard pricks.....

Sort of cuts out the middle man.....

And the big boys also had a fair scattering of 'super clubs', catering for up to two thousand people, which are immense money earners in good times. But it becomes financially horrific when numbers are down as their massive nightly overhead costs need a critical mass of customers. And if they don't get them it's financial meltdown!

The clubs that were doing well, if that was the right word, were the smaller clubs, ones that had a personality; and were seen to be priced reasonably....

They managed.

H's clubs came into that category and every month there was a meeting to make sure they always understood what the market was, how it was changing, what was working, what was not.....

Constantly change; constantly adapt.

H's businesses, especially the clubs due to the rapid changes, were a continual example of Darwin's survival of the fittest.....

Of course one day, per Darwin, there would be a mutation. A quite different club of sorts that would take off, more than likely started by someone with a totally different vision, and the others would slowly become extinct. They would have to watch out for that.....

And H's businesses had one crucial difference. They had H and Scotty. True they also had the MD's but it was H and Scotty that made the difference.

H had the vision; and the power to make it happen.

Scotty moved H's vision into reality.

And the big boys had massive central overheads. Big Head Office. City salaries. Large boards of Directors. Non exec Directors to keep an eye on the Directors. Bureaucracy burned deep into its very soul.

The J J Group had....H and Scotty.

H wondered whether to get in touch with the Administrators and get a list of the clubs they were prepared to sell?

He closed his eyes and thought about it..... After ten minutes of 'what ifs' etc he opened them again. Nah....

Night clubs were not the future. H wasn't sure what the future was....but it wasn't night clubs.

To make sure he was sure he rang Scotty and discussed the events and asked the same question.

'Give me a few minutes,' said Scotty.

Fifteen minutes later Scotty rang back. 'Night clubs aren't the future.

'Not sure what the future is....but it isn't night clubs.'

H grinned.....

Chapter 35

Henry

Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth (not)

Andy Pandy sat in his office at one of the taxi companies he owned and watched the video on the computer. Holding just the handle of the trainer fly fishing rod with its tiny line and pretend fly (*become an expert in just a day*) he cast his wrist as though sending the fly into the middle of some sparkling Scottish stream.

‘Ah fuck,’ he muttered again, got up off his chair and untangled the fly from the ceiling light, ‘Ah fuck.’

Andy had been asked if he had ever done any fly fishing and Andy had instantly said yes to which the asker of the question countered with, ‘Then you must come up with us next time we go. There’s some wonderful salmon there....’

Andy was just about to say something but, as happens in life, a diversion occurred and the conversation moved to something else. Before, that is, Andy had time to say it was just a joke and the Flies he was referring to covered men’s dicks....

So here he was with a trainer rod and fly and he was getting....nowhere. It should have been quite easy, thought Andy, as the technique was similar to a good wank; and how hard was that?

‘Ah fuck,’ he muttered again.

Taking careful aim he took back his arm, relaxed his wrist, and with one graceful, poetic motion, he flicked it forward and the rod sailed through the open window. He heard a dull thud. Best one all day, he thought....straight in the fucking skip!

The door opened and Marge came in, a look of concern on her face.

‘Andy, you’d better have a look at this....’

She turned abruptly and was gone so Andy got up and followed her out.

In the main office he saw Henry. Henry was sitting on a chair, his heels tucked under his bum with his knees pulled up to his chin; his eyes stared frantically ahead and his body slowly rocked.

Henry was one of God’s Friday afternoon cars. The one that doesn’t work because someone didn’t give a fuck about how it was put together; they were too busy thinking about going home....

Henry was thirty five and looked eighteen. Not in any ‘isn’t he young and handsome’ sort of way. More that he just hadn’t physically and mentally progressed.

Henry struggled to walk and shuffled about on two sticks or, if he was lucky, someone saved him the effort by either giving him a lift or pushed him in his wheelchair. But generally he was self sufficient and shuffled around from here to there.

Shuffling Henry.....

And God, benevolence personified that he is, somehow fucked up the car’s wiring system as well. Let’s face it, it was Friday..... And so Henry was none too bright either. He couldn’t talk too well and it took quite a while to understand his grunts and highly animated gesticulations...

Grunting Henry.....

But Andy was a natural defender of the weak and Henry could go into the office any time he liked, have a seat out of the way of the main traffic, be given a cup of tea and stay there as long as he liked. He was also allowed a free taxi journey twice a week.

Lucky Henry.....

‘Henry, my man, my main man,’ said Andy, ‘what’s the matter, mate? What’s wrong?’

Henry slowly looked up at Andy and silent tears flowed from his eyes and rolled down his child like cheeks. His face contorted in pain and anguish. Andy put his arm round Henry to comfort him but Henry squealed in pain and moved his shoulders instantly.

Andy moved away a little and kneeled down in front of Henry.

‘Henry,’ he said gently, ‘you know me. We’re friends, have been a long time. I would never hurt you..... Can you tell me what happened?’

Henry’s mouth opened wide and went up and down frantically....but nothing came out. He started wailing.

Andy put his hands on either side of Henry’s face and moved his face to him, as though comforting a lover. Andy did love this man, but as a brother. If God was happy to abandon him, Andy was not....

He smoothed his cheeks and talked softly to him. ‘It’s ok, it’s ok, you’re safe here, you’re safe here.....’

Henry wailed and Andy could have cried. Henry was like a wounded animal; one that knows his injuries will result in him being hunted down and eventually torn apart....

It took Andy nearly thirty minutes before Henry was calm. Scared but calm. He gulped down the coffee and then gulped down another.

When Andy thought he could get away with it he asked Henry what had happened to his back?

Henry, his face contorting with fear again, grunted away. The staff understood little but Andy understood literally everything, only occasionally having to ask Henry to re-grunt something.....

‘Let me look at your back, Henry....’

Henry looked bothered and grunted but Andy just said, ‘I won’t hurt you. Show me your back.’

Andy very carefully helped Henry undo his shirt so that the shirt could fall down and expose his back.

Andy saw the red weals. Lots of red weals.... Fury rose dramatically in Andy but he fought hard to control it and not let it show. He had to be calm for Henry.

As he helped him put the shirt back on Henry grunted again and nodded downwards. *And they had stamped on his balls....*

Andrew casually moved behind so that the fury, and the tears, wouldn’t show.....

Now that Andy had the full picture he kissed Henry lovingly on the forehead. ‘Henry, I’m going out for half an hour....’

Henry reached out and clung to Andy’s shirt.

‘It’s ok, Henry, Marge and the girls will look after you, and I won’t be gone long. And when I come back we’ll go and get some fish and chips and a loaf of bread and go to the park and feed the ducks. Ok?’

Henry’s face lit up and he grunted his assent.

Andy smiled one more time at Henry, squeezed his hand and then left.

Marge took over his duties.

Marge was scared.

For who she wasn’t sure....?

Chapter 36

Fabian enchants Benshima

It was that day, Benny's day, when the two of them went out, left little Ben with the baby sitter, who Benny referred to as the nanny, and they went off and did what Benny wanted.....

They had dinner in a small Bistro, some window shopping, then actual shopping, then into a small gallery....

After a few minutes browsing she stopped suddenly, looked at a painting in front of her and thought.....wow.

She found a chair nearby, positioned herself comfortably and just....stared.

Wow

Whilst Benny knew quite a lot about art, and excluding the old masters that took your breath away, most was quite dreary. But this painting, actually a print, had stunned her.

Everything about it captured her. Its mood, simplicity, the hint of....danger; was it danger? And it could have been painted in one of James' casinos.

And most of all....it could have been James.

It was him. Not actually him.....but somehow it summed him up. Handsome, masculine, strong and his face was partially hidden, suggesting mystery.....

H peered around the corner. 'I'd lost you. What are you doing?'

'Looking at you.'

'I was over there.'

'Not looking for you, at you.'

He moved round and stood by her.

‘I like that,’ he said, ‘it reminds me of a lone gambler.....
It’s quite stunning.’

‘It’s more than that..... it’s you.’

‘Me?’

‘Yes.’

‘Why is it me?’

She looked at him and grinned, ‘You’re just fishing for compliments.’

He grinned back. ‘Worth a try.’

‘I’m going to buy it,’ she said, ‘I love it.’

‘Really? You love it?’

‘I do.’

‘Where are you going to put it?’

‘In the lounge. Over the fire. Where it will have pride of place.’

‘I must admit it is rather special. How much is it?’

She looked at the tag. ‘About eight hundred pounds.’

‘It’s a print, I take it?’

‘Yes.’

‘Then I’ve got a great idea,’ he said, ‘let’s buy twenty one and get a good discount.’

‘Twenty one?’

‘One for the house and one for each casino.’

‘That’s the best part of seventeen thousand pounds.’

‘You’ve got your purse, haven’t you....?’

She grinned. ‘Yes, but I’ve forgotten the key.’

‘I bet you have. Anyhow, let’s go and see what deal we can strike.’

They took the painting, *Man lighting a Cigarette II* by Fabian Perez, and the DeMontfort people agreed a deal to scour the world and acquire the others.

When they got home Benny moved some paintings round and gave it pride of place in the lounge. So that when H was out she could see him, leaning on a bar in one of his casinos.....

She looked up at it.....



Wonderful.....

Chapter 37

Pope Julius III 3

Julius put down the phone from Mary and told the man sitting on his right what he wanted and to get it done.

Mary was a magic ingredient in the plan to oust the Browns. Unbelievably she was buying coke from the one man she should run a million miles from had she known what was happening.

And of course she wasn't buying; Julius was giving. Free. She saw it as something that Julius would do as she was a Brown. Julius saw it as something he would do because he could get her hooked, make her dependent, and keep those words of wisdom spewing from her glossy lips.

The key to the Browns, *The Man* had said, was the Browns.....

Chapter 38

Silence 6

Annie was dozing on the little settee and her daughter slept peacefully with her.

The tele droned on in the background but wasn't loud enough to wake either of them. It had been a long day; more overtime, a bollocking off her boss because she couldn't remember which aisle a product was on, a bollocking off a customer who was having a bad day and wanted to steam at someone, and then home.

Annie was lucky she still had a job. She could quite happily have told her boss, or the customer, to get fucked but for some reason she didn't.

She was quite amazed at that.

For some reason she hadn't bitten back.

Quite unusual.

She must be getting old.....mellowing.

Perhaps she would end up as a.....as a as a.....nun. That was it, nun. Was that the word? Sister? Nun.....? Whatever....

Not doing too much appealed to her but not getting a good prick up her didn't, so maybe not.....

In her dream her mobile went off. She answered it. It was a boss nun asking if she would like to join....? The mobile rang again.... Realising it was no longer a dream she reluctantly opened her eyes and felt for the phone on the little table by her.

'Yes,' she said agitatedly.

'Annie? Is that Annie?'

‘Yes, who’s this?’

‘Don’t put the phone down....I met you in a club...I bought you a drink....I want to meet you.....’

How the hell had he got her mobile number?

‘Fuck off and leave me alone,’ she shouted down the phone and immediately hung up.

The man looked at the disconnected phone.

Poor girl, she had no idea how persistent he could be.....

Chapter 39

Dear Diary 5

He wasn't there today!

He wasn't there today!

He's off for the week to 'sort things out' according to one of the admin staff. When I asked her what things she went very quiet.

I know what's happening. They were splitting up and the bitch has persuaded him to go on holiday so they can patch it all up.

Bitch! Fucking devious scheming bitch!

Oh yes, she'll patch it up all right. A warm sea breeze, black starry night, a few drinks, pants off, hairy legs open and.....

and.....

she'll make him fuck her....

My man.....she'll make MY MAN fuck her!

The bitch!

And then it'll be, 'I think I've missed a period...we have to stay together now.'

I'll kill the bitch!

I'LL FUCKING KILL HER!!!!!!

Help me, dear Diary. It's 2 am and I can't sleep. It's driving me crazy...I'll take a sleeping tablet....

Help me, dear Diary. It's 4 am and I can't sleep. It's driving me crazy...I'll take another sleeping tablet....

H e p m de Diry is 6.....

Chapter 40

Henry 2

On the way there Andy became calmer. His fury at what had happened to Henry knew no bounds but he was quite aware that he didn't need it now. If he used it all up now there may not be enough when he got there.

He arrived at the semi detached council house, saw the car in the drive, parked and went up to the scratched front door.

He rang the bell but nothing happened except a dog barked. After a few moments it yelped and shut up.

In due course the door opened and a fat woman with a fag hanging from her mouth said, 'Yes?'

Andy went to move past her into the house but somehow she knew what was coming and moved in front of him.

'I said...', she started to say but Andy hit her so hard in the face that she collapsed in a heap. Andy went instinctively to kick her in the balls before he realised what he was doing....

He went past her to find the man he had come for, the man who had had fun with Henry, trying to get out of the lounge before Andy got there.

Too late.....

'It wasn't me,' said the man, as Andy entered the room, and who was just as fat as his unconscious wife, 'it was the others...'

He held up his shaking hands to ward Andy off; but Andy just stood at the door.

Andy watched him intently and then started taking off his jacket. He wanted freedom of movement; freedom of expression; freedom for Henry.....

‘It was a mistake...’ pleaded the grotesque creature in front of Andy, ‘just a mistake....it was just a laugh and it got a bit out of hand.....’

Andy carefully folded his jacket and put it on the chair. To the amazement and terror of the man waiting to die, Andy then took off his shirt and trousers and folded them neatly as well.

The man, the coward who picked on disabled, defenceless people, backed up in a corner...

‘Please....please....please....’ he pleaded. ‘I didn’t mean it. Let me pay him....anything....I’ll pay anything.....’

Andy looked around the room at the cheap furniture, except for the enormous plasma tele. *Oh yeah he’s got loads.....*

As Andy went in the man raised his knee as a defence. Andy grabbed the leg and pulled the fat man, hopping, out of the corner. In the middle of the room, still holding the leg, he smacked him in the face. Blood spurted and he clutched his nose. Letting go of his leg Andy grabbed his other arm and steered him to a glass cabinet full of wine glasses, decanters and Lladro style figurines they must have bought while they were pissing it up in Spain.

Grabbing his hair Andy propelled his face into the glass cabinet. It broke immediately and didn’t offer much resistance to the man’s face as it continued on its journey, only stopping to bury itself into a row of wine glasses that buried themselves into his skin.

Andy yanked him back and punched him hard in the stomach and as he doubled up Andy kneed his face again. The face that was already unrecognisable not just as a means of identification...but as a face.

The man slumped to the floor

Andy stamped on his face again. Blood spurted high in the air; and then he went round in front of his legs and buried his right heel, as hard as he could, in his testicles....

The unconscious man lay there....finished. But Andy wasn't.

He went back in the hall where the cow was grazing and gave her another hard smack. Teeth shattered and her nose, already flattened from the first smack, oozed more blood.

Going into the kitchen Andy filled a jug with water and switched it on....

He walked back into the lounge and stuck his foot through the large tv. Realising he had forgotten something he went back into the kitchen and found a large sharp knife in a wooden block. They obviously liked the Shopping Channel....

Back in the lounge he slashed all the furniture, then went upstairs and did the same.

Back downstairs he went into the kitchen and picked up the kettle of hot water. Going into the lounge he kicked the man over on to his back, tried to pull up his shirt which unfortunately would hardly move as he was so fat so he slit it from top to bottom with the knife, then poured the boiling water over it.

Although the man was unconscious he yelled in pain.....

In the back of his mind Andy remembered something so he searched the house. Tied up in a little wall cupboard was a shaking terrier dog. Andy took out his knife.....but decided to wait. He could do that at the end.

In the kitchen he ran his hands along all the shelves until everything was heaped and broken on the floor. He opened the door of the large fridge freezer and then overturned it and watched it crash to the floor. The waste bin followed.

It was nearly over now.

Nearly...

Going back in to the lounge Andy swiped the knife's sharp blade across the man's right hand to sever all the tendons of his fingers. They wouldn't work again.....

He surveyed the devastation.....

Anything else?

Kill him, a voice suggested in his head. *Kill him! Now!* Andy tilted his head to one side to let the voice out.

Andy wouldn't kill him. Andy knew that killing him would be a problem. A blue uniformed problem. Currently this was not a problem. Andy would let it be known that if he talked, he and any others involved would fare as badly, if not worse. Worse being dead.....

They would make sure he didn't talk...

He put his clothes back on, picked up the knife and went to find the dog. The shaking dog shrank back but Andy grabbed its collar, put the glinting, sharp knife by its neck.....and cut its tether.

Picking it up he took it out to the car...and a new home.

Perhaps with Henry, if Henry could cope.....

Chapter 41

Pope Julius III 4

Larry waited on the street corner trying hard not to look like the drug dealer he was. He was a lowish order dealer in the Brown network; the Browns imported it and then it went down the line. Larry was down the line.

Using his business degree and knowledge of marketing Larry was selling to a specific socio economic group within a defined demographic. Ok that's crap; but Larry was selling to those that could afford it at his level and in his neighbourhood and it allowed him enough profit to have a three year old beamer and lots of bling.

He saw his sale approaching, nodded to the man, and moved down a small, dark street that served as a delivery entrance for shops that were now closed.

Half way down he stopped and a couple of minutes later his customer joined him.

'Thank fuck,' said the customer, his hands shaking. 'Where the fuck were you yesterday?'

'Sorry, man,' replied Larry, 'you know how it is.'

'I don't fuckin know how it fuckin is!' he said in a raised voice, 'what I know is that you were going to meet me and you didn't fuckin arrive!'

Larry was just about to say something when four men appeared out of the blackness of the shadows. They circled Larry and his customer.

'You got problems, pal?' one asked of the customer. 'Larry fucking you about, is he? You fucking him about, Larry?'

Larry raised his hands. 'I don't want no trouble.'

‘Too late, Larry...too late. We ask you, politely I might add, to come over to us. Join us. Join Julius. We’ll take care of you....But what do you do? In your own little way you tell us to fuck off. That sort of means you’re going to get trouble, don’t you think, Larry?’

Larry moved quickly but they knew he would and he was restrained immediately.

The man in charge looked at the customer whose teeth were chattering.

‘Don’t worry, mate,’ he said, ‘we ain’t going to hurt you. How much you want?’

‘Just a gram.’

‘Give him a gram, Larry, and don’t do anything stupid.’

Larry took a small packet from his jacket and handed it over. His customer went to give him the money but they said no.

‘Larry won’t need it. Now if you need more, and I’m sure you will, just ring this number and we will either arrange a meet or we can even deliver. How good is that?’

One of his men handed the customer a card.

‘It’s been nice meeting you but you go now and forget Larry. Larry can’t help you any more.....’

Larry’s arms were pinned and fear was in his eyes.

‘What are we going to do with you, Larry? You see, Larry, we have to send a message. We gave you a message but you didn’t hear it. The message was *come to us. Forget the Browns and come to us*. But.....alas, Larry, you fucked up....’

‘Please,’ pleaded Larry. ‘I’d like to work for you. But you have to understand, the Browns are powerful. If I move over and they get me they will hurt me very badly or kill me...’

‘And you think we won’t?’

Larry's head slumped. A rock and a hard place. The Browns or Julius? Or tell them you'll move over but don't do it. Or move over and take your chance.

Or....

Or.....

He screamed as the thin bladed knife jabbed into his left buttock. Fucking hell! The pain!

'Ok!' he yelled. 'Ok! I'm in.....'

Chapter 42

Roger Davids

Roger waved again as he left the shop, said *again*, how well they had all done, tripped over the step that had been there forever but got him every time, and headed for the car park. Half way there it poured down....oh fucking joy!

Getting to the car he took off his jacket and opened the door. He leaned in and threw the jacket on the passenger seat, then felt the water off the roof cascade onto his back..... For some reason, quite unlike Rog, he lost it. He slammed the door shut again as hard as it would go.

There, he thought, *fuck you! That will show you who's the fucking boss!*

With rain still pouring on him he opened the door again and watched the water trickle down onto his seat.

A tiredness enveloped him as more water found the driving seat. Ah fuck it.....

He got in and felt uncomfortable in his wet trousers, wet back, wet cuffs clinging to him and then....it steamed up.

He shook his head in despair....what a fucking day.

He had been out at 6am to go and visit some shops; J J Betting now had one hundred betting shops. One of them, the one he needed to visit, was the farthest from home and so he had decided, while he was out there, to visit all the shops in that area.

The main one was not only Shop of the Month but they also had the Employee of the Month. Quite an achievement!

He had left that one till last. Better to do it later than sooner otherwise it had been known for the Shop of the Month to deteriorate rapidly once Rog had visited, shook hands, extolled

the virtues of the shop and the employee, taken photos for the monthly newsletter and left the goodies and a bottle of Champagne....

He searched the compartment in the door for a rag to wipe the screen. There were sunglasses, phone charger, bottle of water (empty), half a tube of mouldy extra strong mints but....no rag.

He turned on the engine and set the aircon. That would clear everything....soon.

He had now been out twelve hours and another to get home. His shoulders ached, his head ached, he ached.... Ah well. When the aircon had done its job he shifted into Drive and pulled out. Home called....

In the pouring rain he was constantly blinded by some cretin whose lights were adjusted too high. Adjusted...?

He should have shut off. Should have thought of home, or his wife, or golf, or the new girl at the last place but one he had visited who had legs up to the sky and a V shaped sweater that carried on down to the centre of the earth.....

But he thought of work..... Always thinking of work..... That's why he was the boss, he supposed, that's what bosses did. If they didn't you stopped going forward; and in this industry, perhaps any industry, when you stop going forward you actually go back....

So Roger Davids had a mantra; *every day you tried to make one thing better.*

So what had he made better today? It was debatable. But tomorrow one thing would be better - he'd get that fucking step sorted out!

The business was going well. They were lucky in that they were essentially London and that area was doing well. Thank God. It helped considerably to have shops where the money was.

Certainly Roger knew that in the more rural areas shops were really struggling. Half of him was pleased with that. It helped his figures to show up quite favourably. The other half felt a degree of compassion for their owners. He felt the compassion in the hope that should his little Group have a bad time, that H would have compassion for him....

The betting industry had changed dramatically; people still bet on the horses and the dogs but to a much lesser extent. And those punters were older; the ones that had done so for years.

The big money makers were now Sports Betting and the FOBTs.

The Sports Betting was a much younger punter, quite often late teens. They gambled on football, cricket, golf.....any sport really. And they also did it online.

And shops had changed, or at least, how you got them. Prior to 2007 it was difficult to get a licence to open one, but then the rules had changed significantly. Before, you had to prove demand and god knows what else and how could you do that? And so the local Magistrates, pompous bastards, used to reject the Application.

But now it was quite the reverse. Now, they had to show that the shop was unacceptable due to the age of potential customers (?), the type of customer - were they improper (?) and was the company solvent (?). So getting a Licence was now much easier.

And the Fixed Odds Betting Machines were little gold mines. On them were cards, roulette and any other numbers game that was popular and could produce a profit.

So they sat there, in their little corner, hour after hour, day after day just churning out profits. In the last five years FOBT's had doubled their profits! Doubled!

So Rog's little Group was doing well. Roger had to acknowledge it was little as Ladbrokes had about two and a quarter thousand shops in Britain and almost another thousand in Belgium. And that gave them one major advantage over little dodger - they didn't have to hedge. They could afford a big betting hit and so saved the continual cost of hedging. That could make a two percent or so difference to the bottom line....

There was one other little problem....

They had been robbed four times. Unfortunately it was not unusual nowadays. They just leave a motor running, burst in, maybe brandishing guns, maybe just pick axe handles, and terrify the staff into handing over the money from the till and the machines.

The amount they nicked wasn't large, usually between five and eight grand but.....something stunk.

If Roger didn't know better you would say it was an inside job; but it couldn't be. Different stores. You would need a nark in each store and that wasn't easy. But somehow they just timed it when the machines had been emptied. How did they manage that? Or was it just coincidence? Or did they do one, realise the significance of their timing and do the others at the same time?

Or.....or....or.....?

On the dual carriageway Roger followed the traffic in the outer lane. The radio was on but he hardly heard it. The windscreen wipers were juddering a bit but he hardly noticed them.

Roger really should have opened a window, or put the aircon on low as he was now driving....but his mind was somewhere else. Not even on work. His eyes were heavy and it was only the coincidence when he blinked to open them that he realised the traffic in front was stopping!

He slapped everything on but knew, *he knew*, he was going to hit the arse of the car in front. Hit, he knew, was not the right word. Destroy would be better...

The tyres were just slipping along the wet road, the brakes locked. He remembered that he should let go of the brakes if he wanted to steer. Steer fucking where? Armco three feet from his right so he instantly looked in his left mirror and over to his left. There was a space, a tiny one it was true, but a space. Praying to a God who may have been on tea break he made himself take his foot off the brake and started to steer left. It went! Well fuck me!

The car on his left sounded his horn aggressively. Fuck you, thought Roger. Then something else occurred to him. Although he would not plough into the car in front now, he would most certainly plough into the ones in the next lane in due course. It may be very clever to be steering the fucking thing but now it wasn't exactly slowing down.....

He decided to keep going diagonally to what appeared to be a hard shoulder, which wasn't. With the horn blaring as the other car missed him by inches Rog found the grass that gave him even less grip. He hit the brakes and the car hit the Armco side on and carried on down for nearly a hundred yards, making a nice pattern down the side of Rog's car.....

He switched off the engine and sat there; his hands trembled, his heart pumped with a pressure that he didn't realise it could.... His head slumped on to the wheel but it made the horn blare and scared the shit out of him.....

He became aware of a blue flashing light behind him.

Oh fucking joy.....

Chapter 43

Pearl White 3

The man in the Bentley realised when he was five hundred yards up the road that he had left Benny behind and he went back. She was distraught and it hit him she thought he had stolen Ben.....

He apologised profusely and comforted her again.....

In the beautiful home of Janna Janasis, Benny was sympathetically tended to by his beautiful wife Andrea; although Benny noticed she was tired and drawn. Ben's crying had stopped as it was more the product of indigestion than the near death experience.

When Janna had gone to his study Benny started to cry again, the shock aftermath setting in, and this started his wife off.

'I know why *I'm* crying,' said Benny, 'but why are you?'

She pointed at her right breast and Benny immediately understood. 'I'm so sorry...'

Andrea shrugged, 'It came as a bit of a shock...'

'I bet....it puts my little scrape into perspective. What.....er....?'

'It's being removed next week.'

'Completely?'

She nodded slowly.

'I'm sorry.'

'I'm still alive.....and I think they can make quite a good job of rebuilding me....assuming.....everything goes ok....' Her words tailed off....

After tea, cakes, a good chat and a girl to girl boost, Benny decided to ring James to collect her. She wasn't driving that load of crap again!

James arrived an hour later and got the story off Benny and Janna. It was pretty obvious that an automatic car doesn't just stick in gear and so Benny must have panicked in some way; but he said nothing. They decided he would drive the pretty White Pearl car home and Benny would take the Merc.

'That would be the one with the gearbox that works,' said Benny.

On his way home H found nothing wrong with the pretty White Pearl car. He drove as usual, with no problems; but it nagged him. You could laugh at 'women drivers' but Benny was a good driver. An intelligent driver. And Janna had said she seemed to slow.....

Fuck it.....

He found a stretch of quiet road with a car in front and accelerated hard. He overtook the car and, nearly at the top of the rev range for third, he took his foot off the accelerator to allow the car to move to fourth.

Nothing!

The car refused to change gear. H could see how Benny would panic. You are now in no man's land. In the wrong gear at the wrong time..... Expecting something to happen that hasn't. Shit!

He put the auto box into manual and shifted up, over took the car then, when he could, pulled into a side road. After a few moments he pulled out again and floored it in second. Nearly at the top of the rev range he took his foot off the accelerator to find the car again stuck in gear. Shit! He did it again, lifted his foot off the accelerator and the car just slowed from 70 miles an hour to

nearly twenty before it changed down to second to stop it stalling.
Jesus Christ!

His mind went back to his conversation with Benny.

'How old is it?'

'They said nine months.'

'The Peugeot garage said nine months?'

'Yes, why?'

'It seems a short time to suddenly change a new car...?'

'Oh...it wasn't Peugeot, it was Audi.'

'It was an Audi garage?'

'Yes.'

So now we know, thought H. Some bastard has a faulty car and swaps it quick! For another make! He thought that through again. Why would anyone need to swap a faulty car that has, at least, a three year warranty?

When H got home he found out Benny's car documentation and the name of the previous owner who, as luck would have it, was in the phone book.

'Is that Mister Charles?'

'Yes.'

'I'm sorry to bother you but my wife bought a car you swapped in for an Audi.'

'Ahhhh....'

'Aahhh....?'

'How can I help you?' asked Mister Charles.

'Did you swap this car because of problems with the gearbox?'

There was a pause before he answered. *'It's a tricky question but....yes.'*

'Why tricky?'

'Because Peugeot refuse to accept it has a fault.'

‘It nearly killed my wife!’

‘I have no doubt...so let me explain.....’

The man explained that he had soon found out about the problem; when he was overtaking.....just like Benny.

After an argument with the local dealer and the Head Office, he was merely directed, yet again, to the Handbook that stated it was a ‘safety feature’. He couldn’t believe it but there it was...in the Handbook.

‘And so I gave up..... Other than take them to Court what else could I do? So I got rid of it. I didn’t want to, but why should I have to warn everyone that drives my car how to overtake safely? It’s nonsense.’

H thanked him and shouted through to Benny, ‘Do you want to keep the pretty White Pearl load of shit?’

‘No!’

‘Ok...well it’s your birthday soon so we’ll go out tomorrow and trade it in for a car that isn’t dangerous.’

‘It’s not my birthday for months...’

‘Soon enough...’

Overnight he had a change of heart.

The next day he took it to a mate with a scrap yard and a baler and they watched as the pretty Pearl White car was crushed down to not a lot.

H was not going to sell it to someone else who may get killed.....

Chapter 44

Silence 7

Annie had worked extra overtime and it was late when she left Asda. She was tired, it was dark and she just wanted to get home. She caught the 87 bus and sat there looking vacantly out of the window at the cars, and houses and....and.....

Behind her a kid had iphone headphones in his ears and the music volume would have made a rock concert seem tame but she couldn't be arsed to tell him to shut the fuck up...

At her stop she disembarked and headed towards her little terraced house. Along the road, through a small cut and then on to her estate. You could get a bus to get you closer but they were less frequent and stopped fucking everywhere so it took ages to get home.

She stood at the stop for a couple of minutes. She was quite knackered and it would be good just to get in, have a good soak and go to bed and sleep forever. Assuming her daft kid didn't decide she needed attention and woke her.....

She lit a fag, inhaled deeply and then coughed just as deeply. For some reason, much as she loved a good fag, tonight she didn't and she threw it away. She walked along the road, her silhouette changing as she went in and out of the street light glare until she came to the short cut that took her to her little estate.

For two or three hundred yards there were no lights but it held no fear for her as she had grown up here and done this walk forever.

Two thirds of the way along she saw a man enter and head towards her. In the gloom she couldn't see his features...

For some reason she felt bothered but as he got closer she actually became scared. She had no idea of what, except that this man could be.....? Could be.....? What.....?

When he was within ten yards of her she had an absolute need to run away but she forced herself to be calm. *For Christ's sake you silly cow*, she scolded herself. *For Christ's sake!*

He moved over to the side to let her pass and she felt instant relief. As he walked past she felt a restraining hand on her shoulder.

‘Annie.....’ he whispered.

Chapter 45

The family - Charlie 2

Charlie walked in to one of the twelve butchers' shops the family had. They had the shops, did the markets, the car boots, had burger vans, they were everywhere people needed meat....

‘Morning, Charlie,’ he heard off several of them.

‘Morning, fellas,’ he replied jovially.

He looked around him to check everything was as it should be...

Shop clean? Yes.

Assistants well turned out? Yes.

Meat laid out correctly? Yes.

Presented well? Yes.

Hot and cold meats kept away from each other? Yes.

Hand washing facilities clean? Yes.

It was very important that their business was seen as ‘good value’ and ‘respectable’, so to speak; as that was where the meats held their price against the competition, where the money was, where the profits were.

And, of course, the display of cleanliness and respectability hid what crap they were actually selling!

Their meat business was a massive supplier of profits to the family. Not exactly like those from cocaine or robberies but Hubert, and now Charlie, saw it as robbery on a daily basis.

It was quite simple.....

There really wasn't a very good margin in meat....if you did it properly; but you only had to look round the shop that Charlie was in, through Charlie's eyes, to get an idea....

They were selling Aberdeen Angus steak, a good seller, and a good meat.

Where was the extra profit?

It had been rustled!

Taken from somewhere in Scotland by one of the men, they had a network, who nicked meat; live or dead. This one was alive when it was found, dead before it hit the ground, and in England a few hours later. With quite a few of its relatives lying with it in the back of the wagon.

Profit? At least £25 a kilo.

They also sold wild boar - which was not wild and was not boar. Well maybe occasionally for appearances.

The 'wild boar' was pig meat, Wessex Saddlebacks, and they left just a stubble of the black fur on it for authenticity.

Or when the Environmental Health Inspector was calling. The one that gave them plenty of notice, and they gave him plenty of cash.

They also bought eighteen tonne lorry loads of nicked cattle that the driver had left in a car park while he went and had an English in the caf. By the time the English was done he knew his lorry would have gone....and his fist would be filled with notes later...

And the chicken that lay on the counter invitingly.....well fifty percent of that was rabbit. And the rabbits were mainly nicked as well. Usually from rabbit farms..... but also back gardens.....

The sheep were a good seller....pity most had already been condemned; dyed blue so that it couldn't be used for human

consumption. As if.....cut the blue bits off.

And they even had dodgy inspectors in the slaughterhouses who condemned meat when it was fine..... Obviously they couldn't do it too often....but it all added up.

And vets on farms. 'She's sick, farmer George. Better she's gone...'

Another good one was out of date food from supermarkets. The family bought it off the company that had been paid to take it away, took it to an industrial unit, took it out of the packets, tarted it up a bit, vacuum packed it again with new labels and.....sold it again.

And stuff that was obviously not good enough to put back in packs was minced up and put in pies....in the burger vans they ran...

Charlie looked at the succulent rump beef.

Very nice.....

Well it would be if it was rump beef. But seventy percent was crosscut or braising steak that had been through the tenderiser.....hardly tell the difference...

And of course sometimes it had a bit of horse in it.

That's where the outside appearances made a difference. If the shop looked good, then the meat was good.....

Yes, the shops did well.....

He smiled as other scams ran through his mind.

They did a reasonable trade in wet fish. A lot of that was nicked as well... A few men arrived at a pool, stuck a net in one end and then hoovered the fucking lot up. Every last one.....

And eggs. They sold a lot of genuine, farm fresh, free range eggs. They even displayed them in wicker baskets, on a bed of

straw to prove it.....

They weren't of course.....genuine that is, or free range. They'd more than likely spent their happy days in a two foot by two foot space indoors where the sun never shone...

And the water they injected into the meats to add to the weight, for which the customer paid top dollar, would make Hubert say they should have bought shares in a Water Utility company...

And to top it off, at Christmas they sold geese.

Wild, Canada geese.

From pools and lakes all over the land....

Nodding happily to himself Charlie wandered off to a room over the shop.....

Chapter 46

JJ Security 4

It was at dinner one evening that H decided to tell Benshima about his night at the villa in Portugal with Valerie. He didn't really want to but one day it may just come back and bite him on the arse...

'You're offering seven,' Valerie said huskily as she sat on his bed, 'I'd like more. You're a big man...you can get it up farther than that....I bet you could get it right up? For me.....' Her eyes stared pleadingly at him; wide eyes, lust filled eyes. 'I bet if you needed to you could get that up so high.... And if you did it would save you a lot of money....'

She stood up, shook off her negligee with her 36 DD bust and pulled back the sheets...

She lay by him and her hand went down to his already hard cock.

'Wow,' she said, 'aren't you going to save a lot of money.....'

H shook his head and said softly, 'No.'

'I think so...'

He reached down and held her hand firmly and brought it back up the bed.

'Valerie, I can't do this. I have a wife and a child. I can't do this.'

'You can,' she said sexily, 'you can, you know you can. And she won't know. This is just a business transaction. I am paying you a lot of money for a fuck that will blow my mind because I

want a mind blowing fuck. Now...give it to me now,' she said urgently, '...please...come on...you can have anything....anything you want you can be as rough as you like as long as the marks don't show.....please....come on.....you can put it anywhere...anywhere....'

Her voice was guttural like an animal on heat and her eyes even wider with lust. Her face was expectant, almost contorted by want; she had built herself up into an inner frenzy of desire and she was a volcano that wanted to blow.....in more ways than one.

He let go of her hand and she threw back the bedclothes and her head went down.... She had it in her mouth before he could stop her; he held her shoulders and tried to pull her back up but she sucked hard on his dick and held it tight with her hand.

'Valerie,' he said and tried to prise her up but to no avail. He sighed. For what reason he couldn't quite work out; it certainly wasn't boredom.

'Sorry, Valerie,' and he put his hands both sides of her throat, pushed back the muscle protecting her carotid artery and squeezed..... Five seconds later she had slumped lightly on him and he gently moved her away from his groin. Groin was the term a person would use who was already trying hard to explain, mitigate or deny the fact that a woman had put his dick in her mouth.

I couldn't stop her.....

She made me.....

I didn't think she could handle rejection....

She was recently widowed.....I felt sorry for her

It was just to get a good deal.....

Men aren't natural monogamists

What else could I do?

All obviously valid reasons....to a man

He lifted her up and carried her down the landing until he found her bedroom and laid her gently on one side and then pulled the sheets over her. She would be awake soon and so he went back to his room, got dressed and went out into the warm night and walked to the beach. He found where they kept the lines of sun beds and lay on one.

Staring out to the ocean, at the moon's shimmering reflection, he knew he had just blown a wonderful deal. And he didn't care. He didn't care in the least.

The only thing that mattered in his life was that he had Benshima. H, the man, could do most things and was self sufficient but little Jimmy, the child within him, needed someone there; someone safe. Someone who gave him a feeling of belonging and protection. And losing that was worth a quick fuck and a good deal?

Not a chance; not a fucking chance in the world.....

He lay back, folded his arms on his chest and slowly went to sleep.

He was woken the next morning by the tractor that was combing the beach. He looked at his Rolex; 6:30 and the sun was peeking out over the horizon. He was stiff and wanted to go to the loo and so he got up to see if he could find a beach bar that was open. He found one where they were starting to get ready for their 7 am opening but they took pity on this man who had slept under the stars and brewed coffee and pointed the way to the loo. Just after 7 he ordered another coffee and one of their English breakfasts which he would no doubt regret but the thought was just too tempting. At 8 o'clock he walked back to the inevitable confrontation or long silence but it mattered little. Just pack and go. Paul met him at the door.

'Been out for a walk?'

‘Yes.’

‘Have you seen Val?’

‘No.’

‘Can’t find her anywhere but we need to see her as she left this note...’

He handed H the slip of paper. ‘Deal off,’ it said.

‘What’s it mean?’ asked Paul.

‘It means the deal’s off.’

‘Why?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘Have you upset her?’ demanded Paul. ‘Have you come on to her and upset her?’

‘No.’

‘Are you sure?’ he demanded a little too aggressively.

H looked hard into his eyes and Paul backed off. ‘What do we do now?’

‘We go home.’

‘What about the company? What about my deal?’

‘You stay and sort it out if you want but I’m going home.’

‘What’s going on?’ asked Paul suspiciously. ‘You know something...Tell me what it is. Help me to make sense of this...’

H told him about the previous evening. ‘So why don’t you stay here and try and keep your deal going. She won’t give you a deal if I’m involved but she’ll still give you one.’

Paul decided to stay and H went to the airport. Paul stayed another four days but all he saw was the cleaner and the pool man and so, dejectedly he followed H back to England. He had lost it. Lost everything he had hoped for. And all because James wouldn’t fuck her. How stupid was that? It was the least he could have done. And if James wasn’t going to fuck her all she had to do was walk down the landing.....

Nine weeks later he had a phone call from H asking him to call in as he had something to show him. It was a solicitor's draft letter confirming the sale of her company for seven times plus one for Paul.

'Why?' asked Paul.

'I have no idea.'

'Have you spoken to her?'

'No. You?'

'No. I rang and rang and rang but nothing....not a friggin soul.'

Silence enveloped them for a moment and then Paul said, 'So why....?'

The answer came three months later in a hand written letter to his office.

James

I hated you for rejecting me. You made me feel worthless and worse than that I felt like a whore. A discarded whore! But a whore who was offering it for free. In fact I was essentially paying you and was still rejected. The height and depths of humiliation.

To make you pay for that I went out that night and picked up a man in a bar and had him outside against the wall. Or should I say he had me. That showed you!

And then after a week of Bacardi and coke I drove (god knows how?) into the mountains and came across a Convento do Christo. I stopped and went in - and ended up spending two months there.

Tranquil and serene it took me nearly a month to rid myself of the anger and injustice of many things but then my life became clearer.

You did nothing wrong. You did everything right. Would that my husband had been like you but he had a 'roving eye'; which is a metaphor for fucking everything with a skirt.

But I took it out on you and now I have made up for it.

Give my regards to your wife....

Valerie

Benny listened to his explanation and read the letter. 'I'm disgusted,' she said.

'I didn't do anything!' protested James

'What are you; a eunuch?'

'What...?'

'That a husband of mine can just sit idly by when a woman takes her ample bosom out and gets in his bed? What do I tell the girls? I think my husband's going gay?'

'Eh?'

'There I go telling them how butch you are and an old woman scares you away and you sleep on the beach? Where does that leave me? How will I ever live it down?'

H had got over his initial panic as he waited for the bollocking and the need for a further explanation. 'I'm sorry,' he said, 'it won't happen again.'

'I should think not.....And by the way, as we're in a confessional mood, I think it's only fair that I mention something that happened when I went to Colombia the last time on my own...'

H felt uneasy. Was this really a confession.....or a prelude to a joke? *Please be a joke...please.*

'When I was there I visited an army barracks....'

'And.....?'

'I gave out the prizes.'

‘Prizes?’

‘Yes. They had won the war.’

‘What war?’

‘Doesn’t matter; but the point is they were getting a prize for winning the war.’

‘And you gave out the prizes?’

‘I was the prize.’

‘Eh?’

‘It was a struggle but it is my country and you have to do your duty.....but thirty four thousand men is a lot of men.’

Inwardly H relaxed. ‘But you did your duty.’

‘I did. You would have been proud of me.’

For a second H lost the fantasy of it all. ‘Actually, I wouldn’t,’ he said softly.

She looked into his eyes and knew this had gone far enough. It was the wrong topic to make fun of. The man had been replaced by the child who still needed her reassurance that he was ‘safe’. She pushed back her chair, walked round the table and sat on his lap.

‘I love you,’ she said gently, ‘I have loved you since the day I first saw you. I will always love you. I will die loving you.....’

Chapter 47

Ehwun 1

With his feet up on his desk H slowly swivelled on his executive chair. A bit this way, a bit that way....a bit this way, a bit that way.... He had got to work feeling a bit lethargic and he couldn't be arsed. That was the good thing about being the boss; you could be lethargic and get away with it. An employee is not pulling his weight; the boss is thinking grand strategic thoughts that will shape the company and keep its employees safe. Good old boss....

Of course there was the 'damn meeting didn't finish till nearly midnight....that bloody supplier could certainly negotiate.....thought it would never end...' Luckily most people never asked the name of the supplier and even if they gave it a thought they would have been looking at the boss's back who had made a timely exit.

Working from home was another good one....

H had used those excuses a long time ago up to the point when he realised that bosses didn't actually have to answer to anyone. Why make excuses to your employees?

He felt weary; he rested his head against the leather head rest, made himself more comfortable and closed his eyes. Suddenly his head shot forward and he sneezed. Well now we know, thought H, now we know.....its pneumonia, or tuberculosis, or bird flu minimum.

He settled back down and the tiredness swept through him and in a few moments he was dozing.

He found that Phil Ivey was surprisingly easy to beat heads up as H's onslaught with continual raises from position, followed

by Ivey's reraise and then H's re-reraise just destroyed Ivey's confidence.... Durr was much more difficult but H's stamina and cunning were too much for the young man and after nearly twenty hours of nearly continuous play H was the winner of the first ever £5,000,000 first prize heads up tournament event. Smiling he walked up to the podium and took the microphone.... The ringing phone from off stage irritated him and he turned and asked them to shut it up. 'Ladies and gentlemen...', he started again but the phone kept ringing.

The insistent phone dragged him out of his stupor and for a moment he wasn't sure where he was.....?

He punched the button on the phone....'Yes?'

'There is a woman on the phone who wants to speak to you, James.'

'Who is it?'

'She refuses to say. Just keeps repeating that it's personal and.....'

'And.....?'

'and.....she may be drunk...or drugged....I'm not sure....'

H was about to say 'tell her to go away' but it may be what he needed to get him out of his languid state. He took a deep breath to clear his head.

'Put her through.....Hello, can I help you?'

'Are you ames ames?' a voice slurred and H immediately regretted doing this. Ah well a bit late now.

'Yes, I am.'

'Are you sure?' said the slurred voice.

Despite himself a large grin creased H's face. Am I sure? It was true there were days when he hadn't got a clue who he was but that was a throwback to his childhood. When the waves of the past crashed against the reality of the present and the manchild

struggled to make sense of competing information..... Yes, then he didn't know who he was.....

'Yes, I'm sure...'

'You're noh someone they pu me frew to jus fob me oooff?'

James struggled to understand her. 'No.'

'You're sure?'

'I am James James and you can talk to me. How can I help you?'

'You romise me you're ames ames?' she slurred insistently

'Yes.'

There was a long pause. H could feel the pathos behind the slurred and faltering voice.

'What do you want to say.....?' asked H gently.

'I aaam Ehwun..'

H struggled to repeat it. 'Eh-wun?'

'No,' she said. 'Eh-wun.'

H thought that's what she had said and tried again. 'Ehwun?'

'No, Ehwun. H E L E N,' she spelt out.

'Oh, Helen. I'm sorry, I misheard you. It must be a bad line... How can I help you, Eh....Helen?'

'Ca you hep me pease?' she slurred. 'No one else. I wouldn't have borrered you, have never borrered you but.....'

She sounded dreadful. Almost pitiful. 'I'll help you if I can, Helen; what is the problem?'

'If I terr you, no shou at me?' she slurred.

H was lost. What was this all about? This woman may be drunk, or drugged or ill but she sounded quite genuine. In relation to what he had no idea.....

'Of course I won't shout at you,' he said gently.

'I'm Ehwun..., ' she said in a voice he could hardly hear, 'I'm Ehwun...'

H sighed a silent sigh. This was hard work. Why wasn't Ehw....Helen helping him? What was she trying to say? And why did she keep saying she was Helen? His body reacted as though it had been hit and he had no idea why? And then the intense pain started in his shoulders and back. This had happened all his life but it usually indicated he was straying into an area of his past that had yet to be uncovered and it let him know he was in for a rough ride and to be ready...

But this woman was not from his past so why was he reacting to her like this....? Why? But his subconscious was telling him something. Something it had worked out but he hadn't. And then it hit him and as it did she said

'I'm Ehwun.....your sisser.....'

Chapter 48

The family - Charlie 3

They brought up a cup of tea for Charlie and he sat quietly and drank. He liked it there. It seemed a long time ago now, learning the butchering trade, and he was especially proud when he became adept at sharpening a knife, using a steel, without cutting his fingers off. It was weird that Charlie liked it there as, when he was much younger, Hubert used to bugger him there.....

And much later on, when little Davey was actually *little* Davey, Charlie repeated the process.....

Like father, like son.

And yet he *was* comfortable there...

A small fridge provided him with a cold lager which he put in a cold glass from the same fridge. Charlie could never understand why you put cold stuff into warm stuff? Or the opposite? They put hot coffee into a cold cup with freezing milk and ten seconds later it was lukewarm..... Fucking idiots!

Charlie thought about the unfolding future. A future without Hubert! Oh fucking joy! It was only a matter of time now before it all unfolded and he took over the Brown empire. With Julius's help it was true, but Julius knew that although his little empire had grown massively, often at the expense of Hubert's, he needed a Brown to put the two together. And a Brown to lead it.

Hello....Charlie!

Boom Boom! Get in there, my son!

He rang Julius on his mobile. He actually had nothing to say but he liked doing it so that he could hear Julius and listen for any

signs of betrayal in his voice.

‘Juley, my man, how’s it going?’

On the other end Julius smiled. Charlie was talking, trying to talk, in the street patois and he hadn’t got a fucking clue....

‘Good man, good. You?’

‘Good,’ replied Charlie whose voice had slowed and the pitch lowered to mirror, sort of, Julius’s drawl. ‘Everything still on plan?’

‘Everything.’

‘No problems? No bag-o-wires?’ Charlie had heard one of Julius’s head boys use the phrase and found out it meant a *betrayal*.

Julius smiled again and shook his head slowly. Charlie may be a criminal mastermind but sometimes he sounded just fucking ridiculous.

‘No, Charlie, no problems. Everything’s good. You know that, you’re the man....’

They chatted a couple of minutes more then Charlie, now quite confident that Juley was hiding nothing from him, called it a day and hung up.

He draped a leg over the chair and took a drink of cold lager.

Not long now.

He had dreamed a long time of getting rid of Hubert but now he was nearly there. And, this was the wonderful thing, it would just happen. No war, no aggro; just Hubert one minute and Charlie the next. And one super gang with him as its Head and Julius as his number two. Julius had done well to get where he had but he was essentially a violent gangster whereas Charlie could provide violence *and* brains. And they would rule.

Charlie would rule.

And Hubert? Hubert would be dead.....

His phone went. He looked at the screen and saw Windy displayed. Windy was the name he had put in for his mistress in case his wife ever got hold of his phone. He had put Windy in as she was particularly good at a blow job - so he put in Windy. Blow, wind.... made perfect sense.

‘Yo,’ he said as though still talking to Julius.

‘I’ve got some good news for you.’

Charlie knew what was coming.

‘Yes?’

‘I’ve just come on.’

Charlie looked at his watch, said, ‘Give me an hour,’ and hung up.

Charlie was excited. She had come on!

It had nothing to do with the fact that she wasn’t pregnant; she couldn’t be, she was on the pill.

It was just that he liked fucking her when she was on.....

And licking her.....

He was already hard as he got to the door.....

Chapter 49

I will rock you

H was walking through the streets trying to clear his head. It was lunch time and he knew there was something he had missed at the management meeting earlier but he was damned if he knew what it was.....? For whatever reason his mind was dull and some fresh air and an amble wouldn't do it any harm. He walked past a bric a brac shop and idly looked in it as he passed and it was only four streets later that it struck him what he had seen.

He walked back and without haggling H bought the item he had seen but not seen and arranged to get it collected later that day.....

When he got back to his office he sat down at his computer. He knew exactly what he wanted to achieve but firstly he needed a template to work from and so he googled it and added it to a Word document. He put that on one of the three computer screens and then copied it and added it to another blank document on another screen. Then he went back into Google on another screen and found the music.

Then for the next fifteen minutes he racked his brains, stamped his feet and counted syllables.

When he was quite sure it worked he rang KK Downing.

'KK, I'm sorry to bother you, mate, but can you point me in the right direction.....?'

After several minutes so that KK completely understood what H was trying to achieve KK not only pointed H in the right direction he took on the minor project himself.

Chapter 50

Dear Diary 6

I slept for a whole day

A whole day!

But it has cleared my head

Everything is quite clear now....

I know what to do now.....

I have to make sure he knows how much I love him...

Chapter 51

Roger Davids 2

Roger explained to the police officers who, let's face it, are wonderful human beings, that he had been in the *inside* lane and when he realised that he may *nudge* the car in front, he had moved to the left, not realising it was grass. Silly dodger....

They checked him for booze and his tyres for tread and then did the obligatory *driving too fast taking into account weather conditions* speech. Rog could hardly disagree.

He apologised profusely, thanked them for being so understanding and they went on their way.....

When he had calmed down he noticed a sign saying *Services one mile ahead*. That'll do. Coffee, sugar, sugar and more sugar. Then maybe some sugar....with coffee.

At the services with its McDonalds et al, and with the rain now stopped, *fucking typical*, he checked over the side of the car. Could have been worse. Just long scrapes. Even the door still opened....

Sitting at a table with a large latte with copious little sachets of sugar; and a jumbo cheeseburger which he didn't usually eat but his body had commanded him buy, he ate and drank at the same time. Gripping the cheeseburger too hard some of its contents squelched down his shirt front.

What a fucking day.....

Going back to the car park he was just about to get in his car when a voice said, 'Would you give me a lift, please?'

He looked at the woman. Late forties, early fifties. Looked in a worse shape than Roger.

‘I’m sorry, luv, I can’t help you.’

‘Please....’

‘I’m not allowed to, luv,’ lied Roger, ‘my boss would kill me.’

‘Please,’ she repeated, and Roger saw tears in her eyes, ‘I’m desperate.....’

Everything about this told Roger to say no.

‘Where are you going?’

She told him a place that was only about ten miles from where he was going; and it was on his way.

‘Ok,’ said Roger.

On the way back she just sat there silently. He asked her name but she said nothing. At one point she moved her hair from her face and Roger saw blood on her wrist.

‘You ok?’

She saw where he was looking. ‘It’s just a scratch.’

Roger took a handkerchief from his pocket and gave it to her.

‘Thank you.’

She dabbed the wrist until it stopped and then wondered what to do with the hanky. Roger held out his hand, she gave it to him and he put it back in his pocket.

‘Is there anything I can do to help?’ asked Roger, praying the answer would be no.

‘No, thank you.’

They did the rest of the journey in relative silence and then he dropped her off.

When he got home he looked like death and his wife ministered to him. When he had recouped somewhat he told her everything that had happened.

‘And you don’t know why she was desperate?’

‘No idea.’

‘At least she’s safe now.’

Roger nodded.

They curled up on the settee to watch tv but it didn’t take Roger long to start dozing.

With Roger snoring heavily the door bell went. She moved him to one side and went to the door. Two police officers stood there.

‘Sorry to bother you, is this the home of Roger Davids?’

‘Yes.’

‘Could we come in and speak to him, madam?’

‘Is this about his accident?’

‘If we could just speak to him, madam....?’

She led them through and went and shook Roger. ‘There are two police officers to talk to you, Rog....?’

Roger blinked a few times. ‘How can I help you? If it was that driving thing I was breathalysed by the police officers at the scene.’

‘You gave a lift to a woman, sir?’

‘Yes.’

‘She says you assaulted her.’

‘What?’

‘Is that true, sir?’

‘Of course not.’

‘The lady says you wiped some of her blood off you with your handkerchief.....’

‘I.....it wasn’t like that...’

‘Do you have the handkerchief, sir?’

He nodded dumbly, ‘In the bin,’ he said quietly.

The police officer looked at Rog's wife. 'Would you mind getting it for us, please.....?'

When she returned from upstairs with the hanky that she had retrieved from the washing basket they said, 'Roger Davids, we are arresting you on suspicion of rape and physical assault. You have to come with us to the police station where you will have an opportunity to tell your version of events.'

Version of events? My version? There's more than one version? Roger looked at his wife in despair and she burst into tears.....

'I was just trying to help her.....' he pleaded. 'She asked me to help her....I told her I wasn't allowed to give lifts but she was in a bit of a state so I did. I was just trying to help.....I've done nothing....I didn't touch her....'

'Would you come with us, please, sir.'

Roger's body visibly shortened as it sagged in despair. He kissed his sobbing wife and they led him to the waiting police car.....

Chapter 52

Ehwun 2

H went to the hospital from where Helen had rung. He found her in a side Ward with several other patients; her leg in a sling, her face black and blue and her mouth wired up. No wonder she couldn't talk. Must have been some god awful accident to leave her like that...? The word 'god' resonated and for a second H remembered the article from The Times he had read in the hospital cafe while waiting to see Helen about the Catholic Church and the child abuse.

For a second rage welled up inside him and he willed it to go away. Not now. Now was not the time but.....if he had his way, and the power, he would annihilate them all. Raze every church, kill every abuser, wipe out all the god nonsense..... His rage intensified. *The fucking hypocritical bastards*, his mind screamed, *fucking, fucking, fucking bastards...*

He smiled a disarming smile. 'Been learning to dance?'

She tried to smile but pain creased her face and so she nodded and the smile was in her eyes. She looks so frail, thought H. She was skinny, her eyes were shrunk into her head and they were dark. Her hair was lank and her hands were rough. She looked like an old fashioned street urchin...

'Let me talk,' said H, 'and you nod or shake your head.'

She nodded.

'You are my sister?'

She nodded.

'From my mother.....?'

She shook her head. Well that was a fucking stupid question, thought H. He looked at her and even he, who was no good at this sort of thing, could see some similarities.

‘How old are you? About thirty or so?’

She nodded.

‘Really?’ said H amazed that he had been close as he was also crap at guessing women’s ages; especially ones that were about two stone less than they should be.

She nodded again.

H started to do calculations. He recalled his question. ‘Are you actually thirty...or older?’

She nodded.

‘Thirty two?’

She raised her eyes.

‘Thirty four?’

She nodded.

So.....about 1976. His old man had fucked someone else around 1976 and she was the end product. For a second H wondered how many other siblings, if that was the right word, he had?

‘Oh Christ,’ said H suddenly, ‘stay there....’ and he rushed out of the Ward. Ten minutes later he was back with a huge bunch of flowers that he had left in the hospital cafe but a kindly volunteer had put behind the counter.

‘For you.’

Excited she shook her head up and down and then tears flowed from her eyes.

‘Did that hurt?’ asked H.

She shook her head.....and looked at him and H knew what the look was. It was gratitude. But it was more than that.....it was the look of a child who was putting their trust in you..... It was a look that said *please help me....please....*

‘Do you have any family?’

She nodded.

‘Where are they?’

She shrugged.

‘Husband?’

She shook her head.

‘Partner?’

Fear invaded her eyes and H watched her change in front of him. She was getting smaller.....

H smiled broadly, ‘It’s ok, we’ll sort it all out. What I’m going to do first, with your permission, is get you into a private room. Is that ok?’

She looked puzzled and grunted at him. He didn’t have a clue what it meant so he said, ‘I can do that.’

She grunted again and her eyes widened. *Really?* they were saying.

‘Oh yes,’ said H, ‘I can do that. Is that ok?’

She nodded. H wanted to keep talking to take away whatever it was that had invaded her.

‘And then I’ll get a consultant to look at you and if need be we will move you somewhere else. Is that ok?’

She looked amazed.

A nurse arrived.

‘Helen, I need your address; can I ask the nurse here to give it to me?’

She looked bothered.

‘It’s ok. I just need it so that if anything happens to me I can leave an address for my colleagues to find you and help you...’

It sounded lame, which it was, but the bustling nurse interrupted, ‘Is that ok, love?’ said the nurse and Helen found herself nodding....

H stayed a little while longer but Helen was tired and couldn't talk to H anyhow and so when he could he left her to sleep. He went to the desk to get Helen's details from the nurse....

'This is her home address but she came here from a Refuge...'

'A Refuge? Why a Refuge?'

The nurse looked at him. 'Why do you think?'

H thought for a moment. 'I assumed she had been in some kind of accident but I didn't ask her? So...why is she here?'

'Officially I have no idea as she wouldn't say. Unofficially I think we can guess....'

'Do you have the address of the Refuge?'

The nurse wrote that down as well.

In the Mercedes going back to his office he rang Sammy the Search.....

Chapter 53

The family - Mary 2

What she was about to do was suicide. If Hubert found out he would hurt her so much she would beg for death. And yet here she was, driving in the middle of the night to meet a man who was not only a threat to herself but to Hubert and the entire family and its businesses.

She had rung him for some more of the white powder and she had somehow got involved in a quite disgusting conversation which found her rubbing her clitoris as she talked to Julius.

And somehow her need for sex, wild, abandoned sex, with a dangerous element, had taken control of her and she had suggested he didn't get the cocaine delivered by a bag man but deliver it himself.

And she was on her way there. To some deserted spot that even her sat nav had moaned about, to meet a man she shouldn't and pick up a packet of illegal white powder which she also shouldn't.

Her heart pounded and she wondered why she spent so much buying the same effect when this was much better....hopefully.

She arrived at the deserted, pitch black airfield and saw his car lights flash by some buildings. Going over she parked next to him so that their driver doors faced each other. His window went down.

'Come on over, babe,' he said smiling, 'jump in.'

She somehow hadn't seen it this way. He was supposed to come to her..... His window went back up and her choices were gone.....

She got in the passenger side to find Julius sitting there, naked from the waist down and holding a large, erect cock in his hand.

‘Welcome...from both of us.’

She stared at the cobra like thing in front of her and wondered why she had never had one of those....?

‘I...,’ she started to say, but he leaned over, put his hand behind the back of her head, held her hair and pulled her gently down towards the waiting cobra that was ready to spit.....

It didn’t take long as Julius was also in a heightened state at the thought of not only fucking Hubert’s daughter but also, perhaps primarily, vicariously fucking Hubert.

Julius was a young, virile man with a talent for producing large amounts of semen. She nearly choked, but kept swallowing.

Julius was impressed....

When she sat up he kissed her tenderly.

‘Thank you, babe,’ he said, ‘you’re good. Damn good. In fact I’d say you’re wasted....?’

She grinned.

He kissed her again then put his hand up her skirt.

‘Nice,’ he said. ‘Take your pants off, babe...’

Mary hadn’t seen it like this either...somehow it should have been.....been.....talk a bit, fondle.....hand in blouse, fondle.....hand up skirt, fondle.....hand in trousers, fondle and then.... well make love.

That would have been romantic...

She shook her head just a touch as she took the nonsense out of her head. She wasn’t here to be romanced. She was here to have the fucking of a lifetime!

She lifted her hips, slid the pants down and then felt the seat back start to go down until she was horizontal. Then watched in

amazement as Julius, his cock as large and erect as it had been moments before, get on top and slide it up her.

She gasped. 'I thought.....that once you had, you know, you needed a little while to.....er.....'

'Nah, babe, not me. I could fuck for England.'

She splayed out her legs on the dashboard.

'Careful, babe, take your shoes off. This cost a packet.'

She undid her top and dropped her bra below her tits so that he could see her.

'Nice tits, babe,' said Julius who was quite unimpressed; but who gave a fuck?

He fucked her hard for twenty minutes until it was either he came or her legs dropped off. Luckily he came first, kissed her on the forehead and then prised himself over to his own seat.

She had had several orgasms, more than and better than she had ever had while having intercourse but now it was over she felt the pain in her legs..... She started rubbing them.

'Ok, babe?'

'Oh yes, Julius, oh yes,' she whispered, still trying to get enough breath, 'oh yes...'

She started to gather her clothes to put them on but Julius said, 'Not yet, babe...'

'Really?'

She looked at him. 'Again? Really?'

'Give me five minutes, babe, and while we're waiting let's have some coke.'

Julius arranged it on the dashboard and she took some up her nose. Julius watched until she had finished.

'You not having some?' she asked.

'I'll get plenty later,' he lied. He didn't touch the stuff....

She lay back on the car seat and said a soft 'Wowwwwww'.

He let her relax for a few minutes.... ‘Turn over, babe.’

She did as she was told, Julius got himself hard again and went up her. After a few minutes he lubricated her arse with a wet hand and slowly slid himself up it.

Her mouth opened wide in a silent scream as something she had only dreamed of became reality....

When it was all over and she was dressed again he gave her some more coke to take with her.

‘Let me pay you this time, Jules.’

‘It’s ok, babe, you’re a Brown; and, by the way, you have just given me a good fuck.’

She smiled. ‘Did you enjoy it, Julius? Really enjoy it?’

‘Baby, you were great.’ It hadn’t been so great but let’s face it he had come three times so it couldn’t have been that bad. And she was here, he had fucked her, given her coke....and now he owned her....

In some ways this errant woman was ahead of him.

‘Julius,’ she said slowly, ‘if all this kicks off you will take care of me, won’t you? You will make sure that I’m...you know.....’

He made sure the surprise didn’t get as far as his face. ‘Course, babe. You’re special. I’ll make sure you’re looked after...’

‘Good,’ she said softly.

‘No fucker likes Hubert, do they?’ he said.

She slowly shook her head. ‘No....’

Chapter 54

I will rock you 2

H arrived home and, finding Benny, he took her outside to the car.

‘Look,’ he said pointing to the back seat.

‘Whatever’s that for?’

‘Ben.’

‘Ben? Why does Ben need that?’

‘He doesn’t but he only has to try it once.’

‘I think you’ve lost me.’

‘It’s ok. I’ve always been the brains in the family and you’ve always been the brawn so you’re just going to have to bear with me.’

She grinned but he still felt the kick on his shin.

‘Can you go round the other side and help me out with it?’

They took it in to the kitchen where Benny gave it a good look over. She pushed one side. ‘It swings,’ she said.

‘Yes. It’s a swinging cot.’

‘It looks very new.’

‘Nah, I found it in a bric a brac place,’ said H and excluded the fact that he had had it re-covered.

‘I have some lovely dress fabric we could cover it with,’ she said and immediately left the room, leaving H a bit miffed that his choice of fabrics for the covering was so.....inadequate. Although the lady did suggest another but H had been keen on this one.....? Ah shit.

Benny came back with a breathtakingly beautiful blue silk wrap decorated with exquisite Japanese geishas which she laid

over the cot.

‘What do you think?’ she asked.

‘Magic,’ and he kissed her cheek softly. How the fuck, thought H, do women do this? I pick out a fine material, I get the cot covered, it looks fine and now.....it looks fucking amazing! How do they do it?

She finished laying and smoothing it.

It’s as though she’s caressing it, thought H. So.....tactile.

She looked at him. ‘There’s something else, isn’t there?’

He grinned.

‘God, I know you so well.’

He kissed her again.

They took it upstairs to where Ben was sleeping and H gently lifted him from his cot to his temporary new home. He opened his eyes a fraction, nearly smiled but went back to sleep.

Going over to a small iPod docking station H took a pen drive from his pocket and inserted it. He fiddled with the controls for a moment, turning the sound completely down and when he saw it was playing he slowly increased the volume.

The iconic Queen beat from ‘We will rock you’ softly filled the room.....

Clap clap ***clap***

Clap clap ***clap***

Clap clap ***clap***

Clap clap ***clap***

Clap clap ***clap***

Clap clap ***clap***

And then the Queen backing track with KK’s over dubbed voice and H’s lyrics

Baby you’re a child, make a big noise

*Playing in your cot
Be a man someday
A smile on your face
Your mommas face
Picking up girls
All over the place*

*I will I will rock you
I will I will rock you*

*Baby you're a child, just look at you
Shouting in your cot
Shouting 'here I am'
You got food on your face
Your mommas face
Waving your rattle all over the place
Singin*

*I will I will rock you
I will I will rock you*

*Baby soon a man, a quick, strong man
Gonna rule the world
Be rich one day
No mud on your face
No big disgrace
Nobody try to put you in your place*

*I will I will rock you
I will I will rock you
Singin*

I will I will rock you

I will I will rock you

I will I will rock you

I will I will rock you

As the music and its incredible beat washed around them H gently pushed the cot that rocked and Benny looked on. She watched James as his love for the tiny Ben shone through and transcended everything and she saw the tears roll down his face. H remembered a long time ago his father used to gently push him but it was in the back and it used to send him crashing down the stairs.....

She went to him, circled her arms round his waist and rested her head on his shoulder.

After several minutes James said, ‘Shall I put him back?’

She smiled and shook her head. ‘He’s serene; let’s leave him in the Land of Serenity.’

H shut off the music, took out the pen drive, took her hand and led her to the cinema / music room. The six foot plasma on the wall and the enormous speakers waited for his command. He searched through the music library, found the file, put it on repeat and waited.

The soundproofed room thundered into life

Clap clap *clap*

Clap clap *clap*

Clap clap *clap*

Clap clap *clap*

Clap clap *clap*

Clap clap *clap*

And the original Queen lyrics blasted out

*Buddy you're a boy make a big noise
Playin' in the street gonna be a big man some day
You got mud on yo' face
You big disgrace
Kickin' your can all over the place*

Singin'

*We will we will rock you
We will we will rock you*

H took Benny in his arms and they both moved, locked together, to the hypnotic beat.....

Clap clap **clap**
Clap clap **clap**
Clap clap **clap**
Clap clap **clap**
Clap clap **clap**

They moved slowly in unison. His arms around her waist, hers around his neck. Her cheek nestled on his shoulder. They moved round the room to the beat and then Benshima moved away; her arms outstretched and her hands entwined around the back of his neck. James put his hands on her hips and watched her....

Benny's eyes closed and her hips swayed. Her head lolled from side to side as though in a trance. H watched her move, the swell of her breasts pushing inside her blouse fascinating him. He undid the top two buttons of her blouse to reveal more of her. A soft smile spread over her face but her eyes didn't open. She continued swaying, lost in a primeval ritual that could easily have invoked fertility and within H's body it was....

He gently pulled the blouse from her skirt and undid the rest of the buttons. The cuffs were wide and she dropped her arms so that it fell softly to the floor. Still swaying, eyes still closed she turned her back to him and he undid her bra which also slid to the floor. Turning back H saw her movements become more vital, more sexual.

He was becoming hard and he reached down to position his penis so that it reached up rather than try and punch a hole in his leg as it sought to emulate an iron rod.

She undid his shirt and when it had also fallen to the floor she moved towards him and sensuously rubbed her breasts against his chest. He kissed her hair and then gasped slightly as her vulva started to gyrate against his rock hard penis.

She kissed his lips softly then moved down, kissing his chest as she went until she was kneeling. She undid his belt, his restraining button and then pulled the zip down. She saw the bulge in his pants and caressed her cheek against it, kissing it where it hid away, then pulled down his pants and kissed it properly. As he lifted his feet to get rid of his clothes she took off his socks. Even in her highly sexualised, trance like state a part of her knew there was nothing sexy about a man with socks on.....

She kneeled and put his prick in her mouth and then, after several minutes, she stood up and continued swaying to the music. H looked at her in amazement. She was naked! How had she managed to take off her clothes and suck him at the same time? What a woman.... His woman.....

He pulled her to him and they locked again in their erotic dance of love and sex. Putting his hands under the cheeks of her bum he lifted her so that she could put her legs around his waist and then he slowly lowered her so that his prick easily entered her wet vagina. She moaned softly into the nape of his neck, 'oh fuck.....oh fuck.....'

Her legs held him tight and his hands held her hips tightly to him. The movements of their charged dance were rubbing Benshima's clitoris and she started moving urgently and in seconds she screamed and her body convulsed. She buried her face in his hair.

After a few moments she moved away a little, looked into his eyes and said, 'What do you want me to do for you.....?'

'For me?'

'Yes...for you. I think it's time you did nothing and learned that it's ok to do nothing.'

He looked at her through confused eyes. In the middle of the room a huge sheepskin rug lay. She led him to it, made him lie on his back and then lay by him.

'Do you know who I am?' she asked.

'Benshima.'

'Are you sure?'

'Of course.'

'Then why do you struggle with me giving you pleasure?'

His face mirrored his confusion...

'What do you want me to do, James?' She wasn't sure if what she was doing was going to help him or push him over the edge but her instinct told her to keep going.

'I don't want anything.'

'You do. What is it?'

'I don't want anything...'

'What do you want, James? What can I give you that you want?'

'I don't want anything....I just want.....'

'Yes...?'

'I just want to feel love. Physical love. I want sex to have a meaning and be a pleasure.'

‘You want sex to be a pleasure?’

‘Yes.....’

She paused, thinking. ‘You make me feel wonderful in bed, don’t you?’

‘Well I er don’t know....er wonderful?’ But he did. It was what he did....what he was good at. Fourteen orgasms, madam? Is madam sure that will be enough....?

‘Well, we’ll change the scenario. I’ll make you feel wonderful.’

‘How can you do that?’ he asked without realising the absurdity of the question.

‘I will, for the foreseeable future, and until such time as it becomes unnecessary, please you.’

‘Me?’

‘Who else?’

‘I don’t know what that means?’

‘I know you don’t. But it means from now on you do nothing and I do everything.’

‘Really?’

‘Yes. And when you’re comfortable with me doing that and you no longer performing we will go to a democratic system where we both please each other.....together.’

He nodded, ‘I can go with that.’

‘Good, then let’s start.’

‘When? Now?’

‘Of course now. You’re naked, I’m naked. Do you want to do it on the school run?’

He grinned. ‘Ok.’

‘Lie back and close your eyes.’

‘Haven’t I heard this before?’

‘Yes..... but not from me.....’

He lay down.

‘Good, so now I will begin.....’

Chapter 55

Silence 8

Annie was petrified. She tried to run but he restrained her; and when she realised she should be screaming her head off he put one hand behind her head and another over her mouth, pulling them together tightly. Trapped in the narrow passageway that led her to home and safety.....

She felt faint.... She knew she should kick and fight and scream and shout but..... she felt faint.

He put his face close. ‘Keep still,’ he said, ‘and listen.’

She didn’t move. Her eyes were huge and tears were starting. Her lips were quivering as the arsy, mouthy, tarty Annie became vulnerable and knew what was going to happen. For some obscure reason she wondered what state her knickers were in...?

‘Listen very carefully to what I have to say. If I ask you a question you nod or shake your head. Got it?’

She nodded.

‘Do you know who I am?’

She shook her head.

‘I bought you a drink at a club recently. Do you remember that?’

She shook her head slowly.

‘I had my hand up your skirt at the bar and you had an orgasm. Perhaps you remember that...?’

She tried hard but shook her head.

‘Jesus Christ. You don’t remember *that*?’

She shook her head again and her face screwed up in an apology *sorry, but I don’t; so sorry.... I know I should but....I*

have so many drinks.....I have so many hands.....so many orgasms.....in so many places.....

‘I rang your home and you told me to fuck off. You remember that?’

Ah....yes. She remembered that. She nodded.

‘And then you changed your number or something?’

She nodded.

‘And I rang your mobile and you told me to fuck off again?’

She nodded.

‘You scared?’

She nodded.

‘Have you ever been raped?’

The chill gripped her body instantly. She shook her head and started to tremble.

‘Then why the fuck do you go down dark cuts? You asking for it?’

She shook her head frantically.

‘Anyhow,’ he said slowly, ‘you’re a bloody difficult woman to ask out....’

Incomprehension spread over her face; and *then* she fainted.....

Chapter 56

KK

KK Downing settled back in the luxury of the white leather seat and, unusual for him, turned off the sound system. He had been listening to selected tracks from the Black Sabbath album Heaven and Hell and Dio's Master of the Moon.

He felt sad.

Poor Ronnie.

Ronnie James Padavona, known to all as Ronnie James Dio, had been with the super group, replacing Ozzy Osbourne, and in due course had left and started his own band; Dio. But no more. Ronnie had died in May and the world would be a poorer place without him.....a true gentleman.....and there weren't many of them around. Especially in the music industry! KK did a quick sum. Ronnie was 67 when he died and KK was 59 which gave him a lot of time yet.....

He had been in London to their Recording Company who had come up with a wheeze to kick off the next Tour. The last had been an enormous year; touring the States and being joined on some of the gigs by Whitesnake, but it had taken it out of them.

He smiled to himself. At twenty five he could have done that Tour twice over and not taken a breath. Taken everything else, but not a breath. He smiled again. Those were the days.....

Not that they had stopped, they hadn't, but the pace had changed...

He wondered whether now was the time to call it a day....?

On the outskirts of London he stopped at traffic lights and was pleasantly surprised to see two twenty something's wearing his and hers Judas Priest Tee shirts. The one with the fingers holding the razor blade from their iconic British Steel artwork. Black. 100% cotton. He even remembered the selling code on the website was SKU JPM06. KK liked to know what was happening in their vast financial empire....

The window purred down; he put a raised fist out and shouted, 'Judas Priest rules!'

They looked across and for a moment they didn't recognise him. Why would they? He wasn't on a stage. He wasn't playing guitar. And he wasn't wearing leather.

And then it dawned. 'KK,' they shouted. 'KK!' and the man started playing air guitar. KK pumped his fist again. 'Power to Priest.'

The lights were beginning to change and he picked a Judas Priest CD from a small pocket in the door and hurled it to them. 'See you soon,' he shouted as he sped away.

KK understood PR. KK did business. KK didn't make money and piss it up the wall. A ten quid CD would equate to several more Judas Priest tickets, more merchandise, tell their friends, spread it around..... That tenner could turn into a grand. Easy. OK, not easy, but if you had no financial discipline you ended up broke. And the lad from the Black Country was never going to be broke again....

As soon as he cleared the city and got on the M5 he floored it. He had had a very disturbing phone call earlier and he wanted to get back to sort it.

One or two things in his life had terrified him. Growing up was no fun. Leaving home....well that was better than staying. Nearly drowning in a drunken stupor in Atlantic City. Falling off a balcony in another stupor in Vegas. Getting electrocuted by a

live mic when it rained at an outdoor concert and his heart stopped.....

But this.....this really scared him.

At home he was building a twenty seven hole golf course which was coming on a treat. When it was finished KK was sure it would rank against any Championship Course in the UK and maybe he would offer it as one. Have the Open there?

Nah.

He valued his privacy far too much to have millions of people tramping around his country estate. It was bad enough and pissed him off mightily when the occasional idiot ignored the *Please Keep Out. By Appointment Only!* signs at the entrance to the drive. In fact only a few weeks ago some cretinous wannabee author had knocked on his back door and asked if he would mind if he put KK in his book? What was he, a fucking Charity?

Anyhow.....the problem.

The Manager of his Estate had noticed, this morning, a greyish patch in one of the superb, highly manicured greens. A greyish patch was not good. A greyish patch meant, could mean, disaster. If it was Anthracnose disease it could mean that months, if not years of hard work could be destroyed overnight.

That thought wound him up. All that hard work destroyed..... KK felt instinctively, practically and philosophically that if you worked hard you should be rewarded. There were enough people out there doing fuck all and being kept.....at least let the others have a fighting chance. The car phone went and the sat nav screen gave way to the name of his Estate Manager.

‘Richard,’ said Kenneth Downing in a non rock star, this is business tone, ‘what’s the news?’

‘Ken, it’s good. We’ve had the tests back and it’s not a disease, it is, believe it or not, fox urine.’

‘Really? Why would a fox do that? Surely foxes don’t do that?’

‘You’re right, it’s almost unheard of but I think, and the urine sample would suggest, it was quite ill and may have had no option to just relieve itself as it wandered over the course.’

‘So we’re safe...?’

‘Yes, we’re safe.’

‘Thank God for that. Well I’m half way home now and I’m glad you called with that good news as I can slow down a bit....but while you’re on I want to discuss the aeration of the bunker fringes.....’

KK...rock star.....carried on the conversation in a voice and with a logic that many of his fans would not have recognised.....

As the miles fell to the big V8 he took another call, this time from Tony T. Tony was another rock star but unlike KK he had indulged in too many drugs, too much booze, too many women, a bad manager who had ripped them off for just about everything and now they were touring constantly to get money just to live....and drink, and inject and fuck. Ah well...you make your own choices in life.

Tony was at the end of his tether. More than likely due to the incessant bombardment of his mind and body with all the substances he had used Tony was now verging on paranoid. According to Tony he was being tracked incessantly by a stalker who was going to kill him!

KK half smiled and half grimaced. Stalkers.....

They tended to come into two groups. The acceptable ones who were young, leggy, had big tits and just wanted fucking by a rock star..... and the crazy ones who could be any age, any sex and wanted God knows what?

They sent you letters...begging letters....begging for all manner of things. To be fucked, married, adopted. They needed

money for one thing or another. And when they didn't get a response to that they sent more letters upping the ante. Demanding, insulting, vicious, threatening.....

And when they didn't get a response to that 99% of them went away and picked on someone else.....

But some didn't.... If you wouldn't answer their letters they would want to talk to you direct. *To explain; to help you understand....* And so they followed you from stadium to stadium, hotel to hotel and KK even had one that followed him from country to country. There was an overwhelming feeling that if you talked to these people you could somehow sort everything out and they would go away but KK knew that was bollocks. The Group had been given advice a long time ago from an eminent Psychiatrist.....you have to ignore them, he counselled.....any contact from you will be construed as a form of bonding. You must *never* engage with these people....no matter how much you want to, no matter how much you feel for them, no matter that you feel sad for them. To engage with them is a green light. A green light that gives them an acceptance that what they are doing is validated.

So do nothing and in due course their attention will move to some other famous but soon to be unfortunate rock star....

Ah well....

KK's attention went back to the golf course and what needed to be done over the next few months.....

Chapter 57

The family - Eric 2

Eric kneeled in prayer with his wife and two children beside him. Their pew, the only one of its type in the church, was twice as wide as the others. Hubert, many years ago, had given a large donation on the understanding that his munificence would be financially discreet, but their undying gratitude quite visible...

Thank God, thought Eric, for God.

God was the answer to everything..... QED

In God you had friend, companion, confessor, confidante and, most of all, someone who guided you. That guidance was everything. If God said you could do it, it was ok. If God said you shouldn't do it, it was ok.

With God leading the way you couldn't really do anything wrong. And if you never did anything wrong, your life, your conscience, your soul, was trouble free.

And then, to top it all off, when you died you went to heaven. To God.....

Eric felt a warm glow as God entered him. *Hello*, he silently said, *Hello God*.

God, he continued, would you mind just casting your eyes over this, please? As you know I discussed with you about taking money from Hubert, which you felt was acceptable as Hubert is in Satan's image and as long as some went to furnish Your House, which of course it did, as you know, but I was wondering what to do now?

As you know Hubert is seventy ish and I have no idea how long he will last, but I tend to think forever. His control freak

nature will stop him going I think...

Anyhow, as I was saying, Hubert is unlikely to go soon and life will not change if he doesn't. Again, as you know, my family are now quite financially secure due to my intelligence and your guidance but one of these days Hubert is bound to find out something. And that's the problem.

So I was wondering, Lord, should I take the family away, a long way away, and when Hubert finds out hope he doesn't find us? Or should I use some of Hubert's..... Satan's..... own money to.....rid the earth of his malign presence?

He sat back on the pew. He knew God would not give him his answer now but he surely would. He always did...

As they were walking home they passed a travel agents and Eric saw an advert for Thailand.

'Fancy going?' he asked his wife.

She read the blurb but wasn't interested. 'Not really. Maybe later in the year. There's a lot on this year, especially for the kids. And we tentatively discussed that extension....?'

'True...'

'Dad, dad,' one of the kids yelled, 'look at this. Can we do this? Can we...?'

He looked at the advert showing men with rifles paintballing. He slowly smiled. So we're not going abroad but we are going to associate with men who have guns.....

He looked up.

Thank you God.

Chapter 58

Ehwun 3

H had a long conversation with Benshima and told her about his new found little sister. Sammy had confirmed she was indeed his little sister from Registry Records and was now looking into everything else about her. H wanted Benny's help as he was struggling. He didn't know quite what to do and he wanted time to get it more into perspective and so Benny offered to help sort out the logistics.

She visited Helen and they moved her into a private side ward and a week later H had her moved to a private clinic where she had a visit from a consultant H knew from one of the casinos and he took over responsibility for her well being...

It was two months before she was able to be discharged and she went to live with H and Benny until it was decided what happened next. Her clothes were left at the Refuge and Benny took Helen in 'to town' and bought her a temporary wardrobe until such time as she put on more weight and then she would be bought another...

Sammy the Search had finished and presented his report to H.

H already knew that Helen had been taken by her mother to a train station and left in the Waiting Room while her mother got them some food. She never came back.

Her mother had caught the next train to Dover where she had a ticket for a four week cruise to her new home in Australia. The man that was going with her never turned up.

That was in 1984.....the year H had killed his father.

So the little eight year old was taken into Care.

From Care to foster homes and then Care again..... And then a bed sit and drugs. Dead end jobs, dead end men, dead end feelings from the drugs. Then a job in McDonalds and somehow she kicks the drugs and gets her life together. Then she meets a kind, caring man and goes to live with him but he beats the shit out of her. She leaves but he pleads, and he pleads, and he pleads and she goes back to him and it's good for a while. The flowers, the kisses, the cinema, the dinners and then he beats her senseless again.

So she runs away but he tracks her down to her Refuge and waits for the moonless night when he can get her as she returns from a friend's house and beats her senseless. He kicks the shit out of her, rupturing her spleen, breaking seven ribs and her jaw. And he's made a good job of smashing his boot down on her vulva. She's found five hours later half dead and taken to hospital and when she can, when she has the strength, she fumbles in her purse and takes out the yellowing paper clipping with H's photo on it and rings the number she has written on the top.....

Sammy the Search located her mother still living in Australia and now married to a lawyer. He also gave H all the low-down on one Andrew 'Drew' Stone. Forty two years old, Administration Manager at a valves company, half house owner with the mortgage company, car on finance, £3760 on credit cards. Bound over once for assaulting a woman. First wife left him because of his violence but refused to press charges. His Police File reported that they felt she hadn't done so because of 'possible intimidation'.

H marvelled yet again at Sammy's sources.....

Chapter 59

The Gargoyle

The grotesque carved stone, the term for a gargoyle, sat, as it had for two hundred years, and watched the street below.

Either side of him on the building sat two more gargoyles, but they had a practical use, they acted as a downpipe for rainwater. This gargoyle, let's call him Geoff, Geoff the gargoyle, was a fake. Geoff had been put there by the original architects to balance the aesthetic effect of the front of the building.

Geoff was in the form of a lion as its owner wanted not only the water moving but ancient evil spirits as well.

So Geoff was a lion.

Geoff knew it was all bollocks but a job was a job....

Geoff had sat there, all those years, all that weather, all those Kings and Queens, all those politicians that seemed to come and go but of which there was no trace.

But today...? Today was different.

Geoff could feel a difference in his attitude.

Today, thought Geoff, was not going to be a good day.....

Chapter 60

Silence 9

Annie sat on the tiny settee, snuggled up to Rob or, as she affectionately knew him, Rob the Rapist.

After she had fainted he had carried her home, (*Carried her! She was impressed with that*) found the keys in her bag and let them in. He took her to her bedroom, undid any tight clothing then went downstairs and made her a cup of tea. Taking it up and finding she was still out he went into the bathroom, put cold water on a face cloth and then gently dabbed her forehead and face until she stirred.

He moved away a little so that she would not panic.....but when she saw his concerned face, the offered cup of tea and the fact that she still had all her clothes on.....*well.....that was different.*

He wanted to talk to her so he went and sat on the floor by the door. Well, not exactly by the door, in front of it, to stop her getting up and walking out. He had got her; she would listen.

It was quite romantic in its own way. He explained she was a tart; she put out for anybody; could, in fact, be regarded as a drunken slag, or indeed slut..... Annie was deeply offended but protesting seemed a bit pointless as it was essentially true. She wouldn't have put it that way herself.....perhaps more 'outgoing and fun loving' would have summed it up but.....and he was sitting in front of the door.....

So, he said, it was simple. He had a small contracting company that paid ok. He had a nice car and a modest house

which was nearly paid for. He liked her. *God knows why* but he did.

That being the case she would stop, as from that point, getting drunk, smoking and dropping her pants for the male generation at large.

He would, in exchange, take her out, treat her nicely, treat her with respect and expect the same in return.

Was it a deal....?

Annie was dumbfounded.....but for some reason that was totally beyond her she decided to accept. However, there was one problem; Beatrice. Annie explained about Beatrice, knowing full well it was a deal breaker but having no option.

Amazingly that was fine by him too.....

So here they were; Rob the rapist, Annie and Beatrice on the settee watching Coronation Street. Rob thought it was nonsense but the footy was on after so.....

‘Cup of tea?’ he said getting up.

‘Please,’ said Annie.

‘And I’ll make one for Beatrice who drinks more than all of us....’

He patted Beatrice affectionately and went into the kitchen.

I like Rob.

Rob’s nice and he treats me nice.

Since mom has been going out with Rob there are no night clubs, no booze, no fags and no getting fucked by all and sundry.

We sit and watch tele and talk....well they watch and talk, I just let them know what I feel when I can.

It’s wonderful.....

Chapter 61

Lucky boy

Pat Wilson was a lucky man. Always been lucky, would always be lucky....

Just one of those people that God chooses, for some inexplicable reason, to do well. Not particularly bright, but not thick. Not particularly handsome, but not ugly.

Just lucky.

When he was twenty three and the day he was due to get married he won two million on the lottery. Shared it with someone. Two million each.

What were the odds, eh.....?

So he decided marriage wasn't for him, didn't even go to the church, but jumped on a flight to Jamaica.

When he returned, three weeks later, he bought a nice house, a couple of nice cars, a small villa in Benidorm and freedom.

She came round, of course, bellyaching about how much she loved him but it was too late. He now worshipped a lady he had recently been introduced to. Her name was Elizabeth and she was on the front of all the bank notes.....

When he was twenty six he was contacted by a solicitor representing the estate of some unknown, distant relative who had died in Australia. The old dear, as he thought of her now with fondness, left him six hundred and seventy thousand pounds.

What were the odds, eh.....?

He took up internet poker. He wasn't bad at it, but he wasn't what you'd call professional poker player material.

But he was lucky.

He won eighty percent of the 55 - 45 races; won the majority of the 20 - 80 small pair v large pair battles and if he needed good cards at a particular point he got them too.

He also entered a one hundred pound buy-in tournament on line. Three thousand other players and he won.

Well, he would, wouldn't he.....?

What were the odds, eh.....?

And tonight he was at a J J Casino where he always had a good night.

He was lucky there too....

One night he took them for £20,000 with an initial twenty pound bet on roulette that he kept putting back on.

What were the odds, eh.....?

And tonight he was quite confident as well. True he had lost occasionally. But not much, and not often....

He played the machines and won.

He played Blackjack and won.

And then, feeling lucky, he took all his winnings, five hundred and thirty pounds, to the Roulette table and put them on 23 black.

He won, of course. Nineteen thousand and eighty pounds.

What were the odds, eh.....?

He winked at the latest bit of luck in his life. He had met a woman and he had fallen in love. For the first time in his life he was in love with a woman rather than a body. And she loved him dearly...

What were the odds, eh.....?

‘Time to leave,’ he said, ‘just go and change this lot and off we go.’

Outside they would usually call a cab but the night was clear, the stars were out and they decided to walk as far as they could before hailing a cab.

People often said you could never find a cab when you needed one, but he always could.

What were the odds, eh.....?

Chapter 62

The family - Marie 2

Marie hated Hubert as well. With all her being she hated him; but what can you do?

Hubert ruled in oh so many ways.

He ruled physically, psychologically, economically.....he even ruled from the past. When you were small he made you feel small and now, somehow, he made you feel small again.

Like a child; powerless.

That was Hubert's strength.

He made you feel insignificant and powerless.

But Marie knew he could be beaten. She had worked it all out.

She would kill him! It was quite simple.

She would kill him and when she went to Court they would understand what she had been through and they would either let her off or she would get a minimal sentence.

Or maybe she could do one of those plea bargain things and tell the law about Hubert's business ventures and they may not even charge her.....

Maybe she could just go to the law and shop him and they would give her another identity somewhere. Too risky. God knows who was in Hubert's pocket at the station. Everybody....?

It needed more thought.

He had to die; but how was the best way? It had to work; my God it had to work. Only one chance; and if he wasn't dead, then she was.

A gun was the obvious answer. She could easily get a gun.

Yes....a gun.

To help her solve her problem the usual way she opened another bottle of wine, her third, and was only on the first glass when she passed out on the settee.....

Chapter 63

The gargoyle

Geoff the gargoyle looked down forlornly. His attitude was worse, much worse. This was definitely not going to be a good day. He looked right and left at his mates adorning the building. Their attitude was fine; it was just Geoff that had an attitude....

He was amazed that no one had done something.

Ah well...

The crumbling masonry let go of Geoff and the hundred pounds, fifty kilo gargoyle, plummeted to earth.

Yeah; it was going to be a bad day...

It missed his girlfriend entirely, even though they were holding hands as they walked, but crushed the life out of Pat Wilson.

What were the odds, eh.....?

Chapter 64

Ehwun 4

Andrew ‘Drew’ Stone sat at home with his feet up on his reclining chair watching the football match.

‘Rooney, Rooney, Rooney...,’ he chanted with the crowd. He’d never actually been to Man U at home but did get to see them when they came down south.

‘Rooney, Rooney, Rooney.....’

He paused the Sky Plus box and went in to the kitchen to get another cold can of Guinness. He took the can to the sink in case it foamed and held it over his glass. While he gently poured at the right angle he hummed the Glazer song to himself....

He’s gonna die,

He’s gonna die,

Malcolm Glazer’s gonna die,

How we kill him I don’t know,

Cut him up from head to toe,

All I know is Glazer’s gonna die

It was going dark now and he pulled the blinds down in the kitchen then went back into the lounge and pulled the curtains. While he was at it he thought he might as well do upstairs.....

Two minutes to half time and Man U were two one down and Drew was screaming at the tele.

‘For fuck’s sake, Ferdinand, you black cunt, shut him down..... Oh for fuck’s sake...’

‘Park, you oriental twat, get up there, get up there. Run, you slant eyed little fucker, run.....Oh for fuck’s sake....’

‘Get a fucking Zimmer, Giggs, you useless Welsh twat...’

‘Rooney, Rooney, Rooney.....’

‘Glazer is a cu..unt, Glazer is a cu...unt...’

Half time came and he took a big gulp of Guinness and paused the tele again. He picked up the Sun and went to Page 3. Now couldn't you just fuck that..? Fucking hell.... Just look at the tits on that.... He felt his dick stir and looked at the clock and then remembered he had paused the tele. He pressed ‘start’ on the DVD player, undid his zip and pushed his trousers and pants down.

‘Hello, you gorgeous hunk of man,’ he said to his hard, upright but unimpressive dick.

He watched the grainy film as two women and a tethered horse came on his screen. He watched as the one woman masturbated the horse and the other started to suck it....or at least the bit she could get in.

‘Get in there, my son..’ he shouted to the tele, ‘blow her fucking head off.’

He watched, for the hundredth time, as the horse became ever more animated and then came in her mouth, forcing her to move away as she filled up and couldn't swallow quickly enough. Seconds later Drew came and as it was about to shoot into the air Drew quickly put The Page 3 girl over it to absorb some of the blast.

With his trousers by his ankles he stumbled into the kitchen. Putting the Sun in the bin he grabbed some kitchen towel for his dick and to help clean up his trousers.

He heard the door bell go and wondered who it was at this time of night....?

Chapter 65

Healthy eating 4

I'm doing well.

Had my first leg today.

A left leg.

I thought I should have a left leg first as most people are right footed and the right foot would not be as tender as the weaker left leg.

And I must admit I was right. Not that I had done any research you understand. I couldn't go round chomping into people's legs in some kind of Market Research Exercise.

'Excuse me, sir/madam, this is research on behalf of the Cannibal "eat a leg day" and I wonder if you would mind if we did some sampling? No...?'

'Excuse me, sir/madam, this is research on behalf of the Cannibal "eat a leg day" and I wonder if you would mind if we did some sampling? No...?'

'Excuse me, sir/madam, this is research on behalf of the Cannibal "eat a leg day" and I wonder if you would mind if we did some sampling? Yes...? Really? How kind of you. Now I assure you, you will hardly feel a thing. I'll just take this carving knife out of my *Market Research for Beginners* satchel and we'll start.....'

'Come back.....'

'Come back.....'

'Excuse me, sir/madam, this is research on behalf of the Cannibal "eat a leg day" and I wonder if you would mind if we did some sampling? No...?'

See? It doesn't really work and so you just have to go with your instincts. Google tells me that between 70 - 90% of people are right handed so you would assume that applies to legs as well....?

But it seems to me a bit lethargic of them that 20% are 'unknown'. That's about one and a half billion people.....!

Chapter 66

The family - Hubert 5

At the meeting, in the usual place, Hubert's home, they were all there...

The large, old, highly polished table had Hubert at the head.

On his right, as heir apparent, sat Charlie, who had no chance of being Hubert's heir.

On his left Eric, the brains of the family. Hubert thought he was good with money but had no brains.

By Eric was Marie. Hubert had little thought about Marie except she drank too much but that may be just as well as she was pretty fucking useless otherwise.

And by Charlie was Mary. Charlie quite liked Mary. She was smart, perhaps smarter than the others and had nice tits which he liked peering at.

Over in the corner sat little Davey. Quiet as usual as he had nothing to say, nothing to add, nothing to make them more money..... Just messing about with his iPad until he was needed to go and get drinks or something....

But it was part of his education and Hubert demanded it happen and so Charlie, the boy's father, could hardly object. In fact he thought it was good that little Davey saw him on Hubert's right hand. As little Davey would say, '*Kudos*'.

In Marie's hand bag sitting on the floor the small, ladies size gun was ready and loaded. When the time was right, when she plucked up the courage, when she stopped shaking, she would take out the gun and kill Hubert.

Hopefully at this meeting.

If not this one, the next.

She had bottled out at the last one.....

Mary was quite calm. She knew, but didn't know, that Hubert's days were numbered. She knew, but didn't know, that Julius would take over at some point and that would be the end of Hubert. It may be the end of the others as well, who cared, but she would be safe. Julius had assured her of that and she did have an 'understanding' with him. She smiled inwardly. She certainly understood he had an enormous dick!

Eric was also quite content. In the next few weeks Hubert would no longer be on this earth. A friend of a friend in Spain would be flying over and putting an extra eye socket or two in Hubert's head.....

And Eric had everything ready to make a massive hit on the Brown family fortunes before they even got to the funeral....

Charlie felt better than he had in ages.

Hubert would be gone.

He would run the family with Julius as his 2IC. He had got that off Julius. Julius ran his gang like a fucking army. But this time Julius was going to be the Second in Command.

To Charlie.

Or as Julius would say '*The Man*'. Charlie, you're *The Man*....

Chapter 67

Dear Diary 7

James sat in his plane seat and tried to be comfortable but it wasn't easy. Seats made for midgets could hardly be comfortable.

He looked across and watched her as she softly slept. She was so tired but her face was quite relaxed and the worst was now over. Their trip to Switzerland, whilst traumatic, had shown them the way forward. If they were going to part Switzerland was not the place.

He was also tired. What would he do after all this? Would he love again? Would he be hurt again? For a second, before he quickly pulled himself back, he thought of the girl croupier, the one with the long legs and pretty smile.

Not now, he thought. Not now. Another time, a future time, but not now.

She woke as the plane started its descent and the engine pitch changed.

'You ok?' he asked warmly.

She nodded and smiled.

At Customs James declared a silver Swiss watch that he had bought for her. Two hundred pounds duty! James smiled at the nice Customs man as he handed over his credit card. He could have walked through with it but he didn't want more stress at the moment. Better to pay and move on. Move on and move out.

They walked slowly; James pushed the luggage trolley and she held on to his arm. The week in Switzerland had taken its toll

but..... He tried not to think of it. They would part soon and he would miss her. God he would miss her.

But there was no option. They had run out of options a while ago and now there was no turning back. He wished there was but there wasn't.

As they went out into the main hall, herded in a particular direction by the barriers designed to do just that, with the waiting family and friends of passengers, and the men and women holding up names on little boards for people who were getting lifts, James didn't notice a woman leave the crowd and walk towards them. When she was nearly on them he recognised what was her name?....the leggy croupier from the casino.....?

'Hello,' he said to her, 'this is a surprise. Have you come to collect us?'

She smiled. 'Not *us*,' and drew the serrated bread knife from her bag and plunged it into James' wife's stomach.

'You fucking bitch!' she screamed; and as the dying woman fell to the floor she started hysterically kicking her face.....

Chapter 68

Silence 10

Hello....it's Beatrice

How are you today?

I am really good.....really, really good.

Since mom and Rob started seeing each other it has been so much better. As I mentioned; no fags, booze, E or anything....

And I'm much healthier. And I've put on weight, because we also eat better as mom takes the time to buy vegetables and meat, which Rob likes, and now we like it as well.

And salads. I hardly knew what a salad was until Rob entered our lives.

It's weird.

We eat healthier....I put on weight and mom loses it. Fancy that...?

But life is good.

Really, really good.....

Chapter 69

Ehwun 5

Andrew ‘Drew’ Stone woke up in a room at Andy Pandy’s out of the way place...

He was tied to a chair.....?

He had no idea how he got there...?

No idea what was going on....?

No idea what was going to happen next.....?

Chapter 70

Roger Davids 3

Roger sat numbly in the back of the police car as it wended its way to its home. Where it would sit in its garage and be warm and comfortable..... unlike Roger.

Roger would be questioned at length, so one of the officers had explained, and then more than likely spend the night in a cell. What happened tomorrow would be decided tomorrow....

They arrived at the station and the Duty Sergeant was, Rog had to admit, quite friendly. Was this the prisoner and the last meal bit? Were they going to hang him tonight to save on a trial?

Roger grinned at the thought but in fact he was quite scared. It was her word against his and he had her blood on his handkerchief. How could he prove he hadn't assaulted her and caused her to bleed? Maybe someone else had done it and all she had to do was tell them who it was? Maybe she....

They led him into the Interview Room where he was offered tea or coffee and they were again quite friendly. Their friendliness should have calmed him but he had read too many thrillers and he knew the good cop bad cop routine. These would be nice then later someone else would come in, the tape recorder would go off, and they would beat the shit out of him.....

Then, when he was exhausted and could take no more pain, he would confess to a brutal and prolonged rape, sign the confession, and get ten years...

The tea came, Rog shovelled in the sugar again, and waited...

One officer and a plain clothes, *Rog wondered if they were actually called plain clothes officers as their clothes were actually quite plain*, sat across the table from Roger.

The officer asked him to recount, in as much detail as possible, what had happened.....

Roger talked for about twenty minutes, quite often going back with, ‘Oh, and I’ve just remembered....’ and they sat and said nothing. It was quite unnerving.

When he had finished he sat and waited for the bad cops to arrive.

‘Thank you, sir,’ said the officer. He looked at the plain clothes man who nodded. ‘You have been extremely helpful so we’ll be getting you back home to your wife. Would you like another cuppa before you go....?’

Roger’s mouth opened and his jaw dropped. ‘Pardon?’

‘That’s it, sir. You have kindly helped us with our enquiries and we are quite satisfied that you are an innocent party and you can go home now....’

Rog nearly lost it. It had been a long, hard, stressful, stressful, stressful fucking day and now they were telling him he was innocent and could go home. *I told you*, Roger’s mind screamed, that I was innocent, when I was AT HOME!

With as much willpower as he could muster Roger said....nothing. Just nodded. Trying to think of something that was not at all inflammatory he said, ‘I haven’t got a car to get home.’

‘Not a problem at all, sir. You have been most kind in helping us and so it’s the least we can do to get you home safe and sound.’

When his wife let him in she burst into tears and clung to him.

‘It’s all right, love,’ he said, ‘it was just a mistake.’

Then his brain decided that the enormity of the day didn't call for a strong man approach so Roger started crying with her and relief cocooned his body.....

As he finished recounting his tale H and Scotty stared at him.

'What? What?' demanded Roger. 'You've never cried? If you'd had your nuts crushed and then put in a blender you wouldn't cry?'

'Eh?' said H.

'Well that's what they would have done if they hadn't let me go...'

That was one step too far and they all fell around laughing.....

'But why weren't you charged?' asked Scotty, 'I mean, you were obviously guilty. Everyone knows about your nocturnal needs...'

'Excuse me, H,' said Rog. 'Get fucked, Scotty.'

They all giggled again.

'Well, and excluding that slanderous slur of a moment ago and on which I will consult my solicitor, it would appear it was the third time in two weeks she had done it. But in different counties. The police tom toms had beat out the message but they only got it after they had arrested me.

'And anyhow she was ugly.....'

The meeting started and at the end, when all the data had been digested, it came around to the one last problem with the shops. Someone was nicking the money!

'You know,' said Roger, 'I know these are random acts but somehow it stinks.'

'In what way?' asked H.

'I don't know. In fact I haven't got a clue what I'm talking about but it just *feels* wrong.'

‘In what way?’ asked H again.

Roger shrugged, ‘I don’t know, H, I really don’t know. It just seems a bit pat.....although I don’t really know what it actually *should* be like.’

‘You think it’s an inside job?’

‘In a way I do, but it can’t be because they’ve done it four times. Different shops...but somehow when the money has been readily available....’

‘So it’s unlikely that it’s someone from each shop,’ said Scotty, ‘but it could be someone from one shop coordinating it in some way?’

‘How?’ asked Roger.

‘You’re the boss, you tell me...’

‘Thanks.....’ He thought for a few moments, ‘In theory someone could know which store is next on the list and then he rings them, or something, to find out when the money is being collected from the machines. I know he can’t actually do that but you know what I mean...’

‘If there’s anything in what Rog says,’ said Scotty, ‘and who knows, there may be, why don’t we do a check of the phone records? It’s not that big a deal as we have a fairly small area and only four days to trawl. And even that should roughly coincide with the cash transfer from the machines. So what we’re looking for is each shop to be rung by the same number at roughly the same time by a particular shop. If we get a data match all we have to do is find out who is making the call....’

The meeting broke up. Roger went in the direction of the car park and H and Scotty went to H’s office as there were other things to discuss that didn’t involve Roger.

On the way they stopped at a water dispenser where two other members of staff were standing. They waited for the other two to get their drinks and then helped themselves to the ice cold water.

‘Did you see those two?’ asked H.

‘Yes, noticed it before. You mean the looks?’

H nodded, ‘You think they are having an affair? They’re both married with kids....’

After a pause Scotty said, ‘I don’t think so. I think they would like one.....but haven’t. In fact I think it’s Mamihlapinatapai....’

Scotty grinned at H.

‘Mam....what?’ asked H.

‘Mamihlapinatapai,’ repeated Scotty, ‘it’s pronounced....,’ he paused and marshalled his thoughts, ‘.....mah-me-lah-pee-nah-tah-pa-ee.....ish.’

‘Scotty, you’ve lost it. You need a holiday.’

A huge grin enveloped Scotty’s face. ‘I’ve waited years for an opportunity to use that... Believe it or not it’s a word from the Yaghan language, which is now a dead language, which originated in Tierra del Fuego.... And it means something like..... *a look shared by two people, each wishing that the other will offer something that they both desire but are unwilling to do.....*’

H thought about the word and its definition. ‘What a wonderful word. So you’re saying that our two lovers are not lovers, but would like to be. But neither is prepared to make the first move.....they wait for the other to take the risk.....and so nothing happens?’

‘Possibly....’

‘What a wonderful word,’ said H again. ‘Wow..... You’re very clever, Scotty, so let me ask you this.....?’

‘Yes, James?’

‘Who’s nicking our money?’

Scotty closed his eyes, put a finger to his temple, made a humming sound and concentrated. ‘Just a second, James.....it’s coming through.....’

Chapter 71

The family - Hubert 6

Hubert was sitting in his large lounge, daily paper on his knee, mug of tea on a small table next to him. Whilst not an educated man, he had learned and listened enough in his long life to have an opinion on most things.

On many things his opinions were valid in a no nonsense, black and white sort of way. Where they weren't nobody thought to tell him.....

Steve Jobs had died....who cares?

David Cameron gees up Britain.....who cares?

Sarah Palin not going to enter race for White House. His mouth curled in derision. Brains, power, influence, leadership; most of those words didn't work together with the word *woman*.

Greece still fucking about....when didn't they? They should pay their taxes like.....other people.

Fast Eddie Davenport gets seven years. Fancy that. Well it was never going to last. Just a fucking glorified Ponzi.....

He put the paper on his knees and rested his head on the back of the chair. Closing his eyes he started to play, in his mind, the events as he saw them....

He was old...not terminally old, just old, but the order of things wanted to change. It wasn't going to change, but if he allowed it to gather momentum, it may....

Charlie, although he hid it well, was itching to take over.

Eric, although he nicked a bit, was a good bag man. Financially smart and what he nicked was far outweighed by the

controls he had over the revenue streams.

Marie was exceptionally bright.....when she was sober. Although Hubert didn't want her drunk, and she never was when he met her, he thought it may be better, at this point in time, that she was. Her mind and Charlie's brawn would be a bad combination.

Mary.....now there was a one. Bit of a conundrum was Mary. Mary was loyal, hard working, a bit girly but you cling on to youth as long as you can. Even if you are in your forties....

But Mary....you never quite knew where you stood with Mary. You had to watch Mary. He had no idea why but somehow Mary made him uneasy.....

So a coup from within? Unlikely.

To do that Charlie, it would only be Charlie, would have to have him killed and there wasn't a man out there that would do it. Too scared...and rightly fucking so.

Could Charlie do it himself....? No. Charlie talked a good game but he hadn't got the balls.

Would they, could they, form a coalition and oust him? He grinned; *a coalition*. The phrase of the day. Well, if they were anything like the current *coalition* he had no problems whatsoever...

But could they gang up on him? Was that viable? No. Too many problems in that. Too many ideas, too many egos, too much sibling rivalry. No, that wasn't an option.

So his only fear was an attempt from outside.....

His thoughts ranged farther, to what he was planning.

It was obvious that Julius and his lot were out to destroy him but, of course, they couldn't. Oh they could huff and they could puff but the house was too strong to blow down. They were just up and coming amateurs....moving too far, too fast. Their day

may come, but not while he was alive. They may be Charlie's problem...

A line from a Dire Straits song came to him; *the man's too big, the man's too strong*..... So fucking true and he would show them so. He hadn't ruled the roost for all these years to have it taken away. And he hadn't built up his empire for all these years without being a ruthless, murderous bastard. Certainly in the past there had been attempts to take over from without but those responsible had been dead now a long time.....

Over the years he had met many of the leaders of prominent gangs in the major cities; Birmingham, Liverpool, Newcastle, Glasgow etc etc. Every big city had something organised. It was a bit hairy if it wasn't. All those competing factions, all that strife, all that spilt blood. Some fucker had to have the say...

Hubert had driven, on his own, to the outskirts of Liverpool to meet Scouse Mikey, which was a bit weird as his name was Arthur Cuthbert....? But, for whatever reason, Scouse Mikey he was and Scouse Mikey ruled the main faction in Liverpool; which meant that Scouse Mikey was an evil, evil fucker. He had to be as Liverpool had been a dwelling place for street gangs since the mid nineteenth century; in fact the papers in the late 1880's complained of the same problems that they would today.

And in the 1980's Liverpool was tagged as *smack city* due to the massive proliferation of heroin and organised crime. And to rule in a place like that, a drug place, a violent place, a life comes cheap place...you have to be a bit special. Hubert was special, Scouse Mikey was special. Anyone that ruled a lawless place was special. They had to be....

Hubert and Scouse Mikey had agreed a deal which would be implemented when the time was right, all the details sorted and

Hubert paid over two million in cash or the equivalent value in wholesale value drugs.

Scouse Mikey and literally hundreds of his men and 'sub contractors', would travel down and annihilate Julius and his men. One night of extreme violence and carnage. And then they would disappear into the night to leave Hubert to decide what he wanted to take from what was left.....

And that time was soon. Quite soon.....

Chapter 72

Ehwun 6

Drew Stone had been sitting there for an hour, tied to his chair. He heard the odd sound from the next room, perhaps a tele, but he wasn't sure. He shouted several times but they either didn't hear him or....or....? He knew he needed to go to the loo soon or he would piss himself. The door opened and a big man walked in.

'Drew,' he said.

'Mate,' said Drew quickly, 'I don't know what the fuck is going on but I could do with a piss.'

'If you could hang on a bit, Drew, we can get that sorted.'

'Not too long, mate..... Mate, what's going on?'

H was amazed that Drew here was not at all alarmed at his situation. He didn't know where he was, he was tied to a chair and yet he was asking what was going on as though he were asking about the weather. Peculiar.

'Not much really, Drew. I'm going to have a chat with you. I'm then going to introduce you to some friends of friends and then I would think you're going to die.'

H smiled warmly at him.

'Yeah, good one, mate,' said Drew. 'No, really, mate, what's going on?'

H pulled up a chair. 'How you doing, Drew?'

'Not bad, not bad. Work's a bit hectic and I could do with a cleaner now I'm on my own at the moment but not bad, not bad.'

H was a bit lost. 'Excuse me a sec, Drew,' and went out to the next room, closing the door behind him. He sat at a table and went over what had happened. According to Andy Pandey Drew is watching Man U on the tele, he gets bopped on the head, bundled

into a car and arrives here where he is tied up and left alone. He wakes up and seems to have little concern..... indeed quite happy to chat.....?

Eh?

Eh?

He must be mental.....

H looked at his Rolex then went back in. 'Drew, I think you know a friend of mine?'

'Who's that, mate?'

'Helen.'

Drew's forehead wrinkled. 'Don't think so, mate.'

'You lived with her up until a while ago.'

A light shone. 'Oh her, the little tart. Heap of shit she was.'

H put his hands behind his back to hide the fists. 'You knocked her about a bit, *mate*.'

'Fucking slapper needs a good slapping. That's the way it is. That's the way they like it.'

Drew was still sitting there, tied up, and chatting as though he was at the pub. Eh? Eh? Well it was the right man but H was rather hoping he would have been a touch more perturbed than this..... He heard a car outside and then a key in the lock. 'Excuse me, Drew.'

H went out of the room, through the adjoining room and into another where Andy Pandy was gingerly leading three hooded women. When they were in he sat them down and then took off their hoods.

'Ladies,' said Andy beaming, 'welcome to my humble abode.'

'About fucking time,' said Hilda. 'Can't say that was pleasant.'

'It'll be worth it, Hilda, didn't I promise you...?'

‘You did, Andy.’

‘And don’t I keep a promise?’

‘You do, Andy.’

Hilda remembered one of Andy’s promises....

Hilda was a Madam. Had been for many years. Hilda and Andy had been friends for many years. Andy didn’t take advantage of Hilda’s services as fucking women wasn’t really that exciting. But she did let him watch....which he found more exciting.

One day a rather aggressive man smashed his way into her house of pleasure, smashed a few pieces of furniture, smashed her face and told her he was taking over.

Hilda went to Andy for help.

‘I’ll help you,’ said Andy Pandy, ‘I promise...’

Hilda stayed in a hotel for three days until Andy Pandy knocked on her door. She let him in and he carried two Tesco bags.

‘That’s kind of you, Andy,’ she said.

‘My pleasure.’

‘Where shall I put them?’

‘On the table over there.’

‘Ok. Anyhow I can’t stay so you go back and I’ll see you soon.’

‘Right oh. You sure you can’t stay?’

‘No, sorry, Hilda.’

She let him out and then the conversation came back to her. ‘Anyhow I can’t stay so you go back and I’ll see you soon.’ That didn’t make much sense...ah well. She went to the bags of shopping, opened one and jumped back in fright. Oh Jesus...oh Jesus....

She tentatively opened the other. Oh Jesus....oh Jesus....

She packed her clothes, went to Reception, paid for the room and drove back to her house of pleasure. On the way she went via the tip and threw the two bags on as far as she could.

She didn't need them; she already had two hands and two feet.....

H looked at the girls. You just never knew, thought H, you just never knew...

Andy had approached Hilda with a proposition which lit her eyes up. And she knew two girls that would be more than happy to help...more than happy. Andy explained that they would have to be blindfold on the journey there and back so make sure they had been to the loo first as there would be no stopping. It would take an hour...or so. Each woman had brought a small bag.

'Cup of tea?' asked Andy which he duly made and they sat and drank.

'Just remembered,' said H, 'he wants to go to the loo.'

'Really!' said one girl. 'Me, me.' H looked at her in astonishment. 'Give him to me first; I've got just the thing.'

H looked at Andy who shrugged. 'Through there,' said Andy. 'Help yourself...'

The girl picked up her bag and the two others tramped out with her. When they went in Drew's demeanour changed dramatically. 'What the fuck do you fucking want?' he snarled.

'Open up his trousers,' said the girl as she opened her bag.

'I'll fucking kill you if you get near me,' screamed Drew. The other two girls went for his zip and Drew pulled and twisted at his secure bonds but it was no use so he spat at Hilda who wiped herself and then flicked her finger in his eye and he screamed in pain and his eye smarted and watered. They opened his pants and exposed his dick.

'What's this?' said Hilda, 'did you leave the rest at home?'

‘You fucking bitch!’ screamed Drew. ‘You fuckin wait..’

Her finger moved to his other eye and hovered.

‘Yes...?’ she said menacingly.

‘I will so have you,’ he screamed harder, ‘you’re so fuckin dead!’

She smiled and then watched Lisa take a tube from her bag, take the top off and put a little of the liquid on the tip of his penis.

‘What are you fucking doing?’ he screamed ever louder.

‘That’ll be fine,’ said Lisa, ‘let’s give it a minute and have another tea?’

They filed out. Andy made another tea.

‘Don’t keep us in suspense,’ said Hilda, ‘what was it?’

Lisa smiled like an angel. ‘Super glue.’

Even Andy was impressed. Now let him try to piss....

Chapter 73

The family - Hubert 7

Hubert had built himself into a rage and he was in table thumping mood.

‘What the fuck is going on?’ he bellowed. Marie winced at the violence in his lashing voice. ‘We had another dealer knifed last night, the fourth time in two weeks, and you can’t give me an answer? Give me a fucking answer!’ he screamed.

Charlie opened his mouth but decided to say nothing. It could wait...

Hubert looked at Eric but moved on. No point.... His eyes skirted over Marie who was visibly shaking and then rested on Mary. ‘You got something to say?’

She shook her head and looked down.

‘So none of my wonderful family has anything to say? You take the money, you trade on my name, but you contribute fuck all! For fuck’s sake!’

He got up and walked slowly round the table, automatically looking down Mary’s blouse. As he went past little Davey he tousled the lad’s hair. He stopped by a window, peered out at the beautiful manicured gardens and slowly shook his head. *Wankers*

He stood there for several minutes and no one moved. No one made a sound. No one stuck their head above the parapet. Hubert may have thought they were dumb, but they weren’t that fucking dumb....

Charlie surreptitiously looked at his watch.....soon.

Eric didn’t care about the rant. It would all be sorted.....soon.

Marie, still shaking, reached down and put her hand bag on her lap. She reached in, felt the form of the small gun and then closed it again. This could be all over.....soon.

Mary was scared stiff but knew they were entering the end game. She didn't know where, she didn't know when, but she was quite sure it would be.....soon.

Outside one of Julius's men was punching in the entry code to open Hubert's security gates.....

Chapter 74

Healthy eating 5

Really got into this.

Had two legs now and I must admit I didn't find that much difference between them. Thought the right would be much tougher but...it wasn't.

Funny that...?

Ah well.

Ordered a small telescope off the net and have it on a tripod and it takes me straight down to the entrance of the casino and allows me to see the people going in and out much more clearly.

I look at them and wonder what they would be like? The skinny ones would be a waste of time and I think the big ones should also be avoided. Fat...too much fat. And it's bad for you.

So the inbetweenies.

And the lady ones.

Yes.....

The lady ones.....

Chapter 75

Silence 11

I'm out with mom tonight.

At a Club.

No, don't get worried, we're not back to our old habits.

One of the girls is having a hen party and of course we're invited. And....listen to this, listen.... we've drunk hardly anything; no fags and no illegal substances.

Is that good or what?

Is my mom good or what?

In fact it's ten o'clock now and at ten thirty Rob is going to collect us in his car and take us home.

Is Rob good or what.....?

At ten thirty Annie took Beatrice outside to find Rob and he was, as she knew he would be, waiting there. His car was parked on the other side of the street in the only spot he could get.

'Hello, love,' he said and kissed her on the cheek. 'Good night?'

She found his hand, squeezed it, looked into his eyes and her face lit up. 'Better now.'

He kissed her lips softly.

'Good night, Beatrice?' he said lovingly, caressing her softly as he did so. 'Come on, girls, home for us.....'

They were half way across the road when Rob realised they were going to die.....

Chapter 76

The family - Hubert 8

Hubert sat down and took a deep breath.

‘Ok, you’re all pretty fucking useless so it seems I have to do everything myself. In the next few days things will change. Big changes, dramatic changes. When that has happened there will also be some changes in this room.....’

Without any warning the door opened and a dozen men burst in carrying semi automatic weapons.

‘Don’t move!’ one shouted. ‘One move and that person dies. More movement and you all die!’

Hubert stood up but two muzzles one inch from his temple persuaded him to sit down again.

Each person at the table had two men, two strong, athletic men, standing by them pointing guns only inches from their head.

Julius walked in.

‘Of course,’ said Hubert sarcastically. ‘The dwarf visits the land of the giants...’

Charlie watched with glee as it played out. Let Julius have some fun before he showed his hand.....

Julius smiled. ‘Hello, old man.’ He looked round the room. ‘Where’s your carer?’

Hubert smiled and took a deep breath. It wasn’t a fun smile. It was a smile that held back everything that Hubert was. It was a smile that said *you are now going to die - by any means possible; you are going to die.*

They had largely ignored little Davey and so he stood slowly, *a gun trained on him*, and then moved round and stood behind the protection of his grandfather.

‘This is one step too far, Julius, one step too far,’ said Hubert quietly. He thought for a moment. ‘Who gave you the code, Julius? Who opened the gates?’

Charlie couldn’t help himself smiling. Hubert stared at him in amazement. ‘You did this? You betrayed me? You? My own son?’

Charlie shrugged, ‘The king is dead, long live the King.’

Hubert tried to lunge at him but he was held securely in his place by strong arms. He tried again and so one gave him a tap with a rifle butt to the head which forced him back and dazed him.

Charlie stood up. It was time to explain the new rules...

‘Let me...,’ he started to say but was rammed back down into his chair. He looked at Julius who put a ‘be quiet’ finger to his mouth.

‘But we.....’ blurted Charlie, but Julius nodded to the men standing over Charlie and one gave him a hard smack with a butt that made his head spin. Through glazed eyes Charlie tried again.....

‘But.....’ Julius nodded again and two guns were pushed hard against his temple. Julius did the *quiet* sign again.

‘You’re fucking joking me,’ said Hubert. ‘You betray me to these fucking morons and they fuck you over? How fucking stupid are you?’

Charlie still couldn’t grasp it. It was all sorted. He was going to be *the man*. Julius would say ‘you’re *the man*, Charlie’. What was going on? What was wrong? He couldn’t have got it so wrong.....? Surely.....? Maybe this was still part of the plan? Maybe Julius was trying to confuse them even more? Maybe Julius was.....?

‘So what now, Julius?’ said Hubert. ‘You taking over? As fucking if any of my men would allow that.... So what now, Julius? Or haven’t you thought it through? This fucking moron

gets into bed with you and gives you the code to my gate but, in reality, you've got fuck all else.....'

Julius just looked at him but said nothing. Hubert noticed that his men stood there, erect, still, like a Praetorian guard.

'So, Julius? So.....? Nothing? Just a half arsed plan that's going nowhere?'

Hubert was thinking fast. There was an upside here....

'Julius, I admire your balls coming in here and doing this. And I admire the way you schmoozed that schmuck over there, so why don't we join forces? But you come in with me..... I have the organisation, the contacts, everything you need to be successful.....in time. What do you say, Julius? Why not?'

For the first time Julius spoke. 'Because your plan has a flaw, Hubert.'

'What's that?'

'You are going to die today.'

'You can't do that, Julius, you know you can't. You would have too many enemies....'

A soft voice came from behind Hubert. From little Davey who Hubert had forget was still standing there.

'I won't let him kill you, granddad,' he said.

Hubert couldn't help but grin. The sheer idiocy of the statement made him grin. Here was Julius with a dozen heavily armed men and little Davey was going to protect him. He was surrounded by fucking imbeciles.....

'Thanks, Davey,' he said sarcastically.

'Julius,' he continued, 'let's look at this in a wider way, a more strategic way, a way that enables us to.....to.....'

He stopped talking and sat there with his mouth open.....they waited for him to continue.....he tried to say something.....then he slowly slumped forward and his face hit the polished table. In his back the handle of a knife protruded.

Behind him little Davey stood tall and said quietly, ‘I told you I wouldn’t let *him* kill you....’

He looked at Julius who stood rigidly to attention, stamped his right foot hard on the floor and brought his fist across his chest in a salute.

‘D,’ he said loudly.

A moment later, in unison the others followed. The foot stamp, the fist across the chest; and ‘D’ echoed around the room.

The praetorian guard were ready.....and waiting.....

The family had no idea what was going on? Each one had set in train, more or less, a plan for getting rid of, or at least escaping from, Hubert....and now he was dead?

And standing in front of them was little Davey who had knifed Hubert to death? What?

Charlie was the first to react.

‘Ok, I don’t know what the fuck is going on here and I have no idea how you managed to persuade or drug little Davey to kill Hubert but enough’s enough. I invited you here, yes, invited you, to allow us to conclude our....business arrangement. So I suggest we stop fucking about and get on with it. Now, the first issue is.....’

Julius was watching D intently and when D nodded in the direction of Charlie he raised his gun, a muffled ‘pop’, and a bullet flew through Charlie’s head. His head jerked back and blood started to cascade...

The women screamed and started to cry.

D looked at one of the men next to Hubert’s chair and pointed at Hubert. He dragged Hubert off the chair and then two of them dragged him to a corner. D sat down and beckoned to the men next to Charlie to do the same, which they did.

‘Julius,’ he said, ‘come, join us,’ and he beckoned to Charlie’s vacant chair at the other end of the table. One of the men moved

the chair to its new position and Julius sat.

D spoke slowly and softly.

‘I want you to stop crying and I want you to listen. You are safe here. If I wanted you dead you would already be dead.....’

They looked at him in amazement. Who was he? Why was he sitting there? Why was Julius subordinating to him?

‘There are some changes here now. Mary and Marie, you are no longer part of this business. You will both be given a monthly income which will provide for you. It will not keep you in the way you are accustomed but I have no need to keep you in economic slavery. So it will be modest but more than enough for you to have good lives.’

Mary and Marie said nothing. Both were quite lost.

‘Eric, it’s the same for you. You no longer have a role here. However before you go you will give back half of what you have been stealing. You have seven days to do that....’

‘I haven’t stolen anything,’ denied Eric. ‘Nothing. As God is my witness.’

‘You have seven days. If the money is not with me in seven days then you join Hubert and Charlie.’

‘Look, I’ve told you, I’ve never stolen anything...that’s nonsense.’

Eric knew they could prove nothing; he had been far too clever for that. So this was just a bluff and when it all settled down he would go away somewhere. Half a world away.....with the money.

‘Are you telling me you’ve stolen nothing? Is that what you’re saying? That I’m barking up the wrong tree here?’

‘Absolutely.’

‘Okay,’ said D.

Eric relaxed a smidge. He had no idea what this child was doing sitting here but he didn’t know too much about bluffing.

Dickhead!

D nodded at the man standing by Eric and he raised his gun and put a bullet in his head.

The women screamed again. Marie shook like a leaf and started screaming.

‘Be quiet,’ he said softly. He held his hands in front of him then lowered them slowly. ‘Be quiet.....’

With a great effort they composed themselves.

For some reason Marie, who was now safe, suddenly lost it. She suddenly started to rummage in her hand bag and came out with the little gun in her hand. Two guns went immediately to her head but D said, ‘No! She won’t hurt me...that was for Hubert....’

She pointed the small hand gun at D but her hand was shaking like a leaf in a storm which just about summed up her emotional state.

He looked her in the eyes, eyes that were streaming with tears again. Slowly he shook his head and held out his hand for the gun.

‘They’re dead, Marie,’ he said softly, ‘you’re safe now. Give me the gun.....you’re safe now.....’

Her eyes were wide and wild and her mind bursting with confusion and panic. She didn’t know who to kill and so the obvious person was.....

She suddenly pointed the gun at her own head; she pulled the trigger but the gun was dashed away by a guard and the bullet hit the ceiling. He took the gun off her and she slumped back in her chair.

‘Marie,’ said D softly, ‘you’re not well. I will arrange that you get proper medical help and Mary will support you through it. Isn’t that right, Mary?’

Mary looked at him, this child, but felt herself drawn to his will. 'Yes....Marie needs help.'

'And you will stop taking cocaine and get yourself a proper life.'

'How.....' but it would have been a daft question when her supplier was sitting there. 'I'll try.'

'You misunderstood me. It wasn't a request. I am telling you what to do. Do you understand?'

She nodded.

'I didn't quite hear you....?'

'Yes...I will.'

'Take them into the lounge,' he said to the guards and they were escorted, Marie half carried, out.

Julius sat looking at D, waiting for his instructions. He had no idea how he came to be number two to a 'child' but he was. And he knew D would take them to a height they would never have seen without him, and transcend anything Hubert had done.

Julius was sure about this.

Had been sure from the moment D had put the gun in his ribs.

There was also one more thing that he knew.

D was....*The Man*

Chapter 77

Roger Davids 4

Scotty gave the job to a bright young lad in the JJ Security accounts department who was good at maths, magic in Excel, and told him what he wanted.

The next day the lad sent him an email with the spreadsheet attached and when Scotty opened it, it showed, in glaring colours, the number match up between the robbed shops and another shop in particular. And by the same phone extension. And by the same person.....

A meeting was arranged between H, Scotty, Roger Davids, Paul Turner the new boss of JJ Security and Jerome Nelson who headed the door security at the Night Clubs.

Everything was explained and Scotty provided what appeared to be the damning evidence.

‘What do we do?’ asked H. ‘It seems that one of our staff is telling his mates, who are waiting to rob us, the right time to do so. I want the thoughts of each of you. Paul....?’

‘There is no choice. We tell the police and work with them to sort it out.’

‘Scotty?’

‘I agree with Paul. It’s far too dangerous for us to get involved.’

‘Roger.....?’

‘I think we should wait for them, grab them, castrate them, gouge out their eyes and then kill them....’

H smiled. ‘So you agree with the others....?’

‘Yes.’

‘Jerome....?’

‘It’s up to you. Give them to the police.....or give them to me.’

Roger and Paul Turner had never met this quietly spoken giant and both thought that, under the wrong circumstances, they wouldn’t want to....

H knew they had come to the right decision but where was the fun in that? Where was the revenge? Where was the retribution? Deflated he said, ‘The police it is. Roger, can we leave that to you to sort out? It’s your show... Scotty, would you liaise with Roger, please, in case, for some reason, this turns sour and we need a united front....’

As they filed out to leave H motioned to Jerome to stay. They sat down on easy chairs.

‘Coffee?’ asked H.

‘Just hot water will be fine.’

‘I think I’ll do the same.’ H picked up the phone. ‘Large latte and a mug of hot water, please.’

Jerome grinned and H shrugged.

‘Tomorrow,’ said H, ‘I’ll do it tomorrow.’

‘No, you won’t.’

‘No, I won’t. Hot water is god awful boring.....’

‘True...’

‘The clubs are going well....’

‘You mean...no hassle?’

‘Exactly.’

‘That’s what you pay me for.’

H was aware this conversation was not going anywhere. Jerome was the consummate professional; you gave him a job, he did it. End of conversation. He changed the subject.

‘Still training?’

Jerome smiled.

‘I don’t seem to be working well today. I’m asking bloody stupid questions. Ok, you still train; do you still teach?’

‘Yes, I still teach.’

‘Could I come along and watch one of the sessions?’

‘Of course. Any Sunday. The trading estate about a mile from Gavin’s gym. It’s a school that teaches dancing and I have it Sunday mornings.’

‘Why haven’t you moved to Gav’s facility?’

‘In case.’

‘In case....?’

‘In case anything should happen here. This way I still have my independence.’

H nodded. He understood independence...

H went that evening to watch Jerome in one of the rooms that was essentially a dance school. Walking quietly through the main room where children of all ages were punching away quite happily he knocked and opened a side door and peered round. Jerome spotted him and beckoned him in with a movement of his head.

H went in and sat down....

‘Should have been three tonight,’ said Jerome, ‘but one’s sick and so just these two.’

‘Just...?’ said one. ‘.....Two Second Dans is *just*?’

Jerome launched a ferocious kick that sailed over the head of one of the ‘pupils’. ‘Concentrate,’ commanded Jerome. ‘This is my boss, James James. He’s come to watch you strut your stuff.’

Both Second Dans faced him and bowed. ‘Steve Towers,’ said one. ‘Martin Jones,’ said the other.

‘Back to it,’ commanded Jerome.

Jerome, the quiet, gentle, mild mannered Jerome stood six foot three or four in his white jacket and black trousers. Eighteen stone of unbelievable violence waiting to be unleashed.

H watched the first movement....

Martin went with a fist to Jerome's face. Jerome moved slightly, brought his right hand over Martin's wrist, then with his left hand he pressed down hard on the underside of his elbow, causing the arm to bend severely down, but also trapped by Jerome's other hand. Jerome leaned his weight back and the trapped Martin, now in pain, followed.

'Hit me,' said Jerome.

From his ungainly position Martin swung a punch but Jerome merely leaned farther back.

'You may land one,' he said, 'but it will only sting.'

He moved his left arm over Martin's trapped arm and 'broke' it. Then a fast, hard fist to Martin's left ribs to break them. Then a hard knee to Martin's leg, just above the knee, another break, then his left knee came in and broke the knee joint of the same leg.....

Taking Martin's broken arm over his head Jerome went behind him and pulled him backwards and down.....taking his right leg back he brought it forward and his knee smashed in between Martin's shoulder blades.

He looked over at H. 'The end.'

The acolytes practiced the move several times...

Martin had to go and teach next door so Jerome was left with Steve Towers.

He gave Steve a wooden knife and H saw him put one surreptitiously in his belt at the back.

'Knives,' said Jerome, 'what do we do with someone with a knife?'

'Run,' said Steve.

‘Exactly.’

Jerome looked at H. ‘Never, I repeat never, get into a knife fight unless you have to. You just don’t know what they’re going to do...?’

H nodded like a schoolboy. In reality H, hard bastard that he was, was in awe of Jerome. Jerome made it look so easy. True he had been doing it for years, true he was fucking enormous, but his movements were graceful, unhurried, balletic; and yet in seconds he would maim you beyond belief. Truly amazing.....

H looked at Steve Towers. A Second Dan.....? Another unassuming man. Softly spoken, genial face, balding and a local butcher. You never knew...? You nick the meat; you were meat.....

‘Anyhow,’ continued Jerome, ‘you have to understand the concept of knife fighting....how long is it....how sharp is it....what are the weather conditions....is it night....can he actually use it....can you take a stab wound as part of your defence attack strategy?’

‘Right,’ he said to Steve, ‘attack.’

Steve lunged with the knife which Jerome blocked and then whipped out his own knife and held it at Steve’s throat.

‘What went on there?’ he demanded. ‘What went wrong...? Things happen quickly. What went wrong?’

Steve looked sheepish. ‘I wasn’t ready for the unexpected.’

‘Too true...Ok again...’

Steve lunged again, Jerome moved back, lashed out and broke Steve’s knee; he grabbed Steve’s knife hand and smashed him in the throat.

‘Of course,’ he continued, ‘every move is flawed. The knife is lethal. Everywhere that knife is, so are you...’

‘Again...’

Steve lunged again. Somehow, H couldn't work out how as it was so fast, Jerome had tied his arms up and Steve's knife hand was trapped at the back of his neck.

'Why have I done that?' asked Jerome.

'To slash my throat with my own knife...?'

Jerome grinned.

'Ok, you try....'

H watched for a while longer and then left, leaving them to it. On the way out he passed a child, perhaps six or seven, in a karate suit.

'Got a knife?' asked H and assumed the stance.

The child looked at him, an enquiring look on his face.

'A wife? Shall I get my mom?'

H giggled, tousled the lad's hair, said it was ok and left.

Driving back he knew why he had no trouble in his Clubs.....

Chapter 78

Dear Diary 8

At the end of the funeral, at the church grave where she was now buried, James looked down at what was once his wife. Now she was in a casket, the best he could afford. And she stared up at him through earth that he knew she could penetrate but he couldn't.

Tears welled again in his red, sore eyes and he wanted this day to end. In fact if he had his wish he wanted his life to end. He wanted to be with her. The only woman he had ever been out with, kissed, made love to and married in his whole life.

He knew he was overreacting.

The murder had been, to say the least, unexpected; but her death hadn't. The breast cancer that she had fought several times and several times thought she had beaten had come back and this time it stayed.

The cowardly fucking god awful fucking bastard bastard cancer had stayed! It had found a place in her body where it had escaped detection and when it was strong again it had attacked with such force that she had been overwhelmed.

Poor Kath.....poor Kath.

She only had weeks to live but she fought like hell. Even though she had hardly any strength she walked where she could and showed the world she was fine.

But she wasn't.

And so they had travelled to Switzerland, to Zurich, and visited Dignitas. Dignitas was the name of the clinic that helped with assisted suicide, but almost immediately they knew they

were there on a fool's errand. It was a nice place but on an industrial estate. That wasn't right. That wasn't what they felt dignity smelt of.

Kath felt she would prefer the pain of dying to prolong her living and, if she could, she would die in their small apple orchard under the sun or the stars.

That was dignified....

But then this.....mental woman arrives and kills Kath! For fuck's sake! James Crowley shook his head slowly and wondered, yet again, if it was his fault? Had he led her on in some way? He had certainly spoken to her on occasion, but he spoke to all of his staff at the Casino; that's what managers do. But nothing else. He had never flirted with her, never ogled her, never touched her....

So why....?

Chapter 79

The family - D

It had been a busy time...

Hubert, Charlie and Eric were dead.

D had sent Mary and Marie away to Mary's villa in Spain with strict instructions as to their behaviour - come down off the booze, come down off the drugs. Stay there until you do.

To make sure he also arranged for two female nurses to go with them.....

Hubert, Charlie and Eric were put in a car, already smashed into a tree, and set alight.

Nothing was left. Nothing at all. Just a burned out wreck and human ashes. Copious amounts of petrol made sure of that....

And the skulls had been smashed to smithereens....

D sat down with Hubert's wife and explained the situation to her. 'So.....' she said slowly, 'if I've got this right.....you have killed my beloved husband, my two dear sons, and sent my daughters away.....?'

'Yes.'

'And do I die too?'

He shook his head. 'No.'

'Why? Aren't I a threat? Don't you think after massacring my family I will do everything in my power to have you killed?'

'Will you?'

She stood up. 'I want a cup of tea. You?'

'Yes, please.'

They went into the kitchen and as she filled the kettle at the sink she said, 'My husband buggered you?' She turned round.

He nodded.

'When did it stop?'

He said nothing.

Turning back she shook her head slowly and closed her eyes. 'And Charlie did?' He said nothing so she looked round again. He nodded.

She turned back to the sink and he saw her shoulders shake as she cried. He sat and waited and after several minutes she turned to him. 'I'm sorry....'

He just looked at her.

'I cannot forgive you for what you have done but I can understand it. You have asked my daughters to no longer have anything to do with this....business....and I want the same dispensation. I give you my word that I will never harm you, we have harmed you enough, so all I ask is a nice place near the sea where I can spend my remaining days and be happy and peaceful.'

'Of course.....'

'And one more request.....'

He waited.

'I don't want to be put in a home. No matter what state I'm in I don't want that. Will you promise me that?'

'Yes.....'

She finished making the tea and as they sat and sipped she said, 'I always thought Hubert may die a violent death.....but not from you....'

Chapter 80

Marketing...

H sat in his office looking through the sales stats. Not bad; in fact quite good. There would be a few bonuses this month....

The door opened and in walked Scotty. Scotty had commandeered an office down the hall for a day or two and conducting interviews to find a Marketing Manager.

‘Boss,’ he said excitedly, ‘come with me.’

H grinned. After all this time Scotty, el supremo to many employees, still called him boss...

H followed him down to the office where the interviews were being held and went in. He sat in a chair behind Scotty’s desk and they faced the applicant.

He was maybe early fifties. Dark striped suit, a bit solicitorish, soft blue shirt with white collar, red bow tie with white polka dots, mirror finish patent leather shoes, dark hair parted in the middle that swept back at the sides like Atlantic rollers.

H knew he was in the presence of a *marketing man*....

‘Sebastian,’ said Scotty, ‘this is Mister James. I thought he may be interested in what you had to say?’

‘The message is quite simple, Mister James; if you want a marketing presence, with a hard push front end coupled with a flexible back end then I am your man.’

‘Perhaps you could go over again what you were telling me...,’ said Scotty.

‘Of course. I am what you would call a top down, grab it by the throat generalist. I do a to b, b to b, and b to c gorilla

marketing and brand recognition. I was telling Allan, a few months ago I worked on a massive campaign to position a brand and I did it by working it in as a fromage to Picasso.....’

Scotty softly kicked H’s ankle.

‘Picasso?’ asked Scotty.

‘Yes. I did initially think of using a fromage to Sylvester Dali but decided that Picasso was more appropriate.’

‘And how has the campaign gone?’

‘Remarkably well.’

‘In what way?’

‘And of course I have considerable expertise in web site design, being called in to consult with major brands on how their sites should look....’

‘Which brands?’

‘That’s a difficult one I’m afraid, as I have to sign a Confidentiality Agreement to work with these people as it looks bad that they are having to get someone from outside to help them.....’

‘I can see that,’ said Scotty, ‘perhaps a small clue....?’

Sebastian thought for a moment. ‘A small clue, but it mustn’t leave this office.....?’

H and Scotty nodded.

Sebastian leaned forward and said in a very soft whisper, ‘He has an island.....’ He held a finger to his lips.

‘No? Really?’ exclaimed Scotty, ‘so you are the man behind their marketing expertise? Behind their massive image?’

He held his finger to his lips again.

‘Wow, I’m impressed. And any other brands you can give us a hint at.....?’

‘If you wouldn’t mind I really have said too much already...’

‘I understand. Yes, saying too much can be a bit of a problem. Could I ask you what these Brands pay for your services as we

may be out of that league somewhat?’

‘It depends really, but either about one or two thousand a day or a fee for the whole campaign.’

‘That’s a lot of money?’

‘Not when you look at what I add to the top line.’

‘Ah yes, the top line..... But I’m not sure you’re just not too good for us; and too expensive? I mean, we’re paying forty five grand a year which is just a few weeks work for you....?’

‘Money isn’t that important to me. Architectural fulfilment is far better, don’t you think? And I would like to get into this industry; into a more feet on the earth position and move the marketing to a more camisole role.’

‘But what would you do for us? You’re obviously a top flight marketing man, but what would you do for *us*?’

‘Well.....I had a look at your web site and, without being critical, it is a bit jaded, don’t you think? And when I was waiting in your reception area I tended to feel the decor really could do with a good old rethink....? But more than that I feel that I could be a focal point to bring the Group together. Make the whole greater than the sum of its partners..... My, all be it a quick analysis, would tend to suggest that the Group management are function focused, project driven, system led, nose to the grinding wheel; and what you need is someone with a more intellectual, analytical and philatelic approach; perhaps even looking at the whole thing from a Confusion point of view.....?’

H excused himself from the meeting with Sebastian and left him to Scotty. Just down the corridor he stopped, walked to the wall and gently smacked his head against it several times.....

Chapter 81

Pope Julius III 5

Pope Julius sat at home and thought...

He had had it all worked out and then....D came along.

D.

The child, *why did he see him as a child*, with the man's brain; and a complete and utter ruthlessness. It didn't show, there were no outward signs of his violence, but when you talked to him....you knew.

He was quiet, almost gentle....but you knew.

And a brain like a computer. A strategic brain that was obvious from all his years of planning. Watching, listening, fading into the background.....and planning.

And he didn't go off and do his own thing to hit back; or argue; or rebel..... He just took it and waited....and planned.

And then, no fucking about....he took it all. Lock, stock and fucking barrel.

Kudos, my man, kudos.

And Julius knew where they were going next. Didn't actually know, but D had tentatively sketched it out. It wasn't exactly world domination but fuck me it was exciting.

It was the moulding of the Browns and Julius's men into a *force*.

Yes...a *force*.

In all its meanings...

A Military *force*

An intellectual *force*

A *force* for change

A moral *force*, in the sense that they would control their empire as they would want it to behave

An influential *force*

And Julius could see it.....it was there, ahead, waiting for them to take and rule.

And Julius, hard devious bastard that he was, knew that he could trust D. Completely trust him.

And they would rule. It would be a 'they' as they complemented each other, but D would take them, as they say, 'where no man has gone before....' It didn't quite fit but it was close.....

He was downstairs, in his sound room, where speakers the size of a bus were located. But now it was quiet.

Usually there were quite a few people there; listening, dancing, fucking..... But now it was quiet.

Only Pope Julius III in this large house and in this large sound room.

Just Julius...and his thoughts.

D had mentioned, but not mentioned, about discipline. Julius had great discipline with his troops but, D had said, but not said, what about internal discipline? Inner discipline....?

Do you really want, D had said, but not said, debauchery in your house? Your own house?

Do you really want, D had said, but not said, everybody's spunk over your furniture: bodily fluids with aids and hepatitis...?

Is that what you want the world to see....?

Is that what *you* want to see...?

In *your* house.....?

And although Julius was sure he had never had that conversation with D he had somehow looked at his situation again. Did he really want all that? Here? My own home?

Or if all that happens here is it really my home?

Or is it a brothel?

Or hotel?

And so he looked at his home and realised it wasn't his home. It was where he held court, had parties, fucked.....

And so he had decided to do what D had said, but not said, and make this into his home. His sanctuary.....

He could fuck the world elsewhere....

A part of him was excited at the prospect of his future with D. *Fucking* wow. Yes it was going to be a *fucking* wow time....

A little while later his expensive Mercedes SL 63 AMG pulled out of the electric gates and he headed into town.

In his elated state he didn't notice the car pull in behind him.....

Chapter 82

Healthy eating 6

I have nearly come to the end of my experiment and it has gone well.

Had two feet, legs, a hand, arm, ears, part of nose, some waist flesh, eyelids.....

They all taste quite different with quite polarised textures.

Tomorrow I am eating a heart.

Won't that be amazing! A heart that a moment before had been beating and is still warm.....

Doesn't get any better.....

Chapter 83

Pope Julius III 6

Pope Julius drove gently towards town. He was a fast driver but today he wasn't. Today a strange, yet wonderful calmness had enveloped him. He knew what nirvana was and today he felt he was experiencing it....

He also knew Pythagoras had proposed the Harmony of the Spheres where all the planets produce their own sound frequencies, he called it a hum, and at certain times those harmonics complemented each other and that sound, that harmony, swept over the earth and those people that were in tune with the harmony experienced a heightened quality of life....

So today, maybe, perhaps, all those planets, immense or otherwise, were combining to make music which Pope Julius could feel within his soul.

For a moment he thought about putting Nirvana on the sound system but, awesome though it was, it hardly fit the mood.... He noticed the sound of the exhaust of the burbling V8 and even that seemed to have a soft, tonal quality as though it was also bowing to a greater power.

Today he was at peace with the world.....

Maybe that's why he didn't notice the car following him.....

She had followed him several times. To make sure she knew what, roughly, he was going to do.

She put her hand down her skirt waist band, down her knickers, and felt the scars that his acid had left. She looked over

at the small canister on the passenger's floor well. She didn't know what he had used but she had been assured this would be more than effective; for cleaning out drains obviously.....

Her number plate had been changed and she wore a blonde wig.

He stopped at the traffic lights, as he had done before, except this time she saw a tanker coming down the street. It wasn't going too fast, it was a main street, but it was going fast enough. As the tanker came close she put it in first and pushed Pope Julius into the path of the tanker....

Realising what was happening he yanked the steering wheel over and floored it, but it put the Merc into a more unstable position and the tanker pushed it over on to its side and it started to roll down the street.....

She watched it crush some people crossing the road and the enormity of what she had done hit her.

Somehow....somehow....she hadn't seen it like this.....

But it was too late now, she was committed. She pulled out onto the street and tried to find somewhere to park but it was useless. Swearing to herself she went down another street until she could find a space but just as she slowed someone got in before her...

For Christ's sake! She thumped the horn in exasperation and got a raised finger in return.

She was quite a distance away before she found a spot and it would take a few minutes to get back to the accident...

Picking up the canister she leapt out and started to run to where Pope Julius's car had stopped, on its side, with Pope Julius's bloody head sticking out of the smashed window.....

Chapter 84

Night out

On the way back from their night out Benny did what H had persuaded her to do early in their relationship and Benny decided she quite liked it too....

She took off her top and bra, let free her exquisite bosom, then took a cashmere cardigan from a glove box and put that on; but didn't fasten it. In fact the cardigan was wide open with Benny's tits exposed to all and sundry. Should they ever look in, which they didn't.....usually.

But there was still something rather dangerous doing it.....

H enjoyed the sight, loved the sight, of Benshima's breasts but the weird thing was, even though she was next to him, he hardly got to see them. A quick glance occasionally and that was that. He'd learned a long time ago that once his eyes alighted on those beautiful orbs it was very difficult to pull them off again. As an expensive graze against a wall one evening proved.

And Benny cheated.

Her nipples were big and tonight she had coloured them with a bright red lipstick.

Going through the night club area H slowed down as he saw some people cross the street. Simultaneously, from a little farther up the road, he heard the loud crash, saw the car get hit by the tanker...and watched it cartwheel towards the people crossing.

It smashed into them sideways on. A man was thrown to the side and hit a shop window. A woman was thrown into the air and she came down, back first on H's bonnet and the back of her head hit

the screen and she lay quite still. After a few moments her face lolled to one side.....blood was oozing from her mouth and nostrils and her open but blank eyes were staring at the half naked Benshima.....

Chapter 85

Silence 12

Please help me.....

Please help me.....

Please help me.....

Please help me.....

I'm...going....to....die
!!!

Chapter 86

Silence 13

Neil, siren on, was picking his way through the traffic in the ambulance. Neil and his colleague Terence, known to all as Tezza, much to the disgust of his mother who had named him after St Terence, an officer in the Roman Army who, after witnessing the deaths of Saints John and Paul, had converted to Christianity and in due course became a martyr himself.....

Anyhow, Neil and Tezza were on their way to a Road Traffic Incident.... *the police deciding a few years ago there was no such thing as an accident, so someone must be to blame.....*in their motor after just leaving the scene of another major traffic incident. They had raced there to find....an empty street. They stopped and asked a pedestrian if he knew of an accident and the lady pointed to a cafe across the street.

‘The survivors are in there...,’ she said with just a hint of malice.

They pulled up outside the caf, enquired of the person serving behind the counter and were pointed again. They went over to the couple sitting there, the man bawling his eyes out, and nursing a bloody finger.

‘Please help him,’ pleaded the lady, ‘he doesn’t like blood.’

As if on cue the man keeled over in a faint and smacked his head on the Formica table.....

And so.....a fucking waste of time.

But they quite often were.

Sometimes you raced there to find....not a lot.

Sometimes you raced there to find.....fucking carnage.

Limbs here and there, holes punched in soft flesh, glass and plastic everywhere as though a bomb had gone off, the awful smell of diesel that clung to you for days, the god awful smell of burning flesh that clung to you for even more days, and voyeurs lapping the whole thing up.....

In fact quite often the accident caused an accident....or two. Quite often people driving past hit the back of the people in front of them. In fact on several occasions staring motorists had run into the backs of stationary police cars. Explain that one away.....?

Neil was a good driver; he should be after ten years weaving through traffic, but not everyone was. When Neil and Tezza were paired up Neil tended to do the driving....it was better that way.

A long way ahead Neil saw the traffic lights. Neil was used to looking a long, long, long way ahead. In another job he would have been a strategist, dreaming up long range scenarios, but in this job his abilities allowed him to plot his course long before he got there.

He computed all the vehicles in his way, knowing from experience what they were likely to do, *or not*.....

He had to be a shepherd and they were his flock. You had to take control; you had to make them react as you want them to.....

Hitting the button that activated all the sirens, he could feel the dead stirring. He watched as they started to move over to the side of the road, the ones that had heard him, or seen the lights that is. The ones on the phone, radio turned up, stoned or drunk took longer. Sometimes they just didn't move at all.....

He had to take control of the traffic lights and so he moved to the other side of the road as he approached so the oncoming traffic could see him and, hopefully, move over and stop.

He used to go through the lights quite quickly when he was sure it was safe ahead but one day he was following another ambulance, doing the same thing, when it was hit by a police car

in the middle of the lights coming from a different direction to a different emergency. He had seen his road ahead as clear as well....

So now Neil went fast enough so he could also see to the side.....

Still on the other side of the road the cars had all pulled over...made a change.

When Neil and Tezza arrived at the scene quite quickly as they were already close, Neil knew there was a problem. A real problem this time.

They grabbed their reflective jackets, got out and scanned the area.

The large, heavy truck with its front caved in was always a bad sign. $E=mc^2$ and all that. And there was a lot of mass in a heavily laden truck. An expensive car was on all four wheels although it was obvious it had rolled several times. A man's head was leaning out of the window covered with blood.

A few yards away a woman who looked in a bad way was lying on a car bonnet. A little to the right a man was in a heap; trying to move but more than likely broken leg or something.....

Neil rang in his assessment which was another ambulance, the police, a fire engine, or as they were affectionately known, drip stands; as they quite often helped out by standing there and holding the drips in the air after the wounded were cannulated. He also told them of the probable injuries but he and Tezza would now block off the scene, move the people back and start doing a proper medical assessment of the casualties using their Triage procedure; Airways, Breathing, Circulation.

Check the quiet or silent casualties first. Are they dead or do they just need help to breathe? Perhaps even just tilting their heads back to clear their airway may save their life...

Then look for the major bleeders, who may just need a dressing to stop them exsanguinating, essentially bleeding to death, at the scene.

Tezza was moving to the man in the car when a woman hurried out of the crowd carrying a flask. She reached him first, unscrewed the cap and raised it above his head when Tezza held her arm and gently pulled her away.

‘Bit late for a drink, luv, but thank you for caring. Leave it up to us now, eh?’

The lady with the blonde wig and the canister of acid didn’t know what to do? She had caused all this and now she had to walk away? Why? She had a canister of acid to pour over the man who was just inches away from her.....

All she had to do was.....

‘Come on, luv,’ said Tezza again, moving in front of her and blocking the path to Pope Julius III. He saw confusion all over her face but didn’t know why? ‘Why don’t you go home, luv?’ he suggested.

Absently she nodded and slowly backed away.....

Neil now had a complete picture and could prioritise. Woman on bonnet very bad, perhaps critical, as was her child; man in car very bad; man in heap bad but not life threatening....

He moved to Annie and as he did he heard more police sirens and another ambulance. The cavalry....

A man was cradling Annie’s head on the bonnet; obviously someone with some first aid training, or a nurse, or a doctor, or an escaped mental patient....who knew?

‘St Johns,’ said the man. Neil nodded and smiled although he also knew there was a St Johns Bar and Restaurant up the road.....

‘I think you’re going to need a spinal board,’ he continued.

Neil was already at that point himself and he shouted over to Tezza to bring one. The other crew could tend to the others. Neil saw the blood that had escaped from her nose and ears had trickled on to the brilliant white Mercedes and the contrast was vividly dramatic.

‘Can you hear me?’ asked Neil to Annie. *No response.* ‘Do you know her name?’ The man shook his head. ‘Can you hear me, luv....?’

He pulled up her eyelid to see her eye and the amount of oxygen it registered.

‘Open your eyes, love,’ he commanded Annie as though she was Lazarus. *No response.*

He pinched her ear. *The faintest of responses.* That was something.

Tezza arrived with the board and they gently moved her on to it; the St Johns man keeping her head still, the neutral alignment position, head straight forward, not up or down, left or right...

When she was safely strapped in they took her to the *motor*.

Back in the ambulance Tezza took the wheel; Tezza’s driving was always better going back.

Neil made Beatrice comfortable then cut Annie’s clothes from her to see what injuries he could ascertain. After as thorough an examination as he could manage he rang the waiting A & E.....

The ambulances screamed through the streets, their sirens howling and wailing and waking up the world. Rob was in one and Annie and Beatrice in another.

Pope Julius III would follow as soon as they could get the car door unjammed.....

The paramedic with Annie and Beatrice was desperately trying to keep them alive. They knew it was unlikely.....but they kept hard at it, using every trick in the book.

The ambulance hurtled to a gentle stop at the A & E entrance; a skill Neil had acquired over his years as his first ever stop catapulted just about everyone and everything dramatically towards the front....

A team with trolleys and all the necessary kit descended on it immediately. Overseen by a Sister with years of experience they seamlessly rushed it all back in to the resuscitation room where Annie and Beatrice would be assessed and, hopefully, stabilised. Nothing could be done unless they stabilised...

Annie's body was in shock, which may mean.....?, which may mean.....? Wait and see.... Just stabilise her.....

The Emergency Department consultant took control of the trauma team and orchestrated the events, one by one, bit by bit, as Annie's body went through a series of baseline observations.

To the uninitiated it may all have seemed a bit chaotic, a bit frantic, as the instructions were given out; nurses moved to do this and that, went hither and thither. But in reality a seasoned observer would be watching and admiring; to the seasoned observer it was like watching Swan Lake.....a master class in choreography and every movement the minimum needed to achieve the required result.....

Annie was unconscious so they put a tube down her throat, connected to a ventilator that helped her breathe. At the same time they had gone immediately into what was known in the trade as ABC; airway, breathing, circulation. Nurses attached monitors everywhere and checked them fastidiously whilst the anaesthetist monitored the airway.

Intravenous fluids were given to maintain blood pressure....

They inserted a cannula into her arm to allow sedatives and muscle relaxants to gently bring her body and mind down from

the trauma it had experienced.

Her blood type was on hand if she needed it but, as yet, there was no sign she did.....no obvious signs anyway.....

Annie's eyes flew open and a nurse hovering over her gave an involuntary yelp. She should have been used to it, but sometimes it was difficult when it took you unawares...

Annie had no idea what they were doing....

And due to the attention her mom was getting Beatrice was still waiting to be seen.....

The rest of the team paid little attention to Annie's involuntary eye movement. It tended to be a problem when they didn't move at all.....or maybe at that point the problem was over and the big problem, *the Form Filling*, started....

A CT Scan was organised to generate a three dimensional image of Annie to detect where her body may have been crushed..... X rays followed.

The anaesthetist monitored her constantly and the surgeon did what he could to assess her condition. Based on the state she was in he thought it would take thirty minutes....maybe an hour, before she would be anywhere near ready to go to the theatre. Assuming she lasted that long.....

But it was a long process.... You didn't boogie on in there and sort everything out in one go. It was a process. You started at A; and when A was ok you moved to B; and when B was ok you moved etc etc.

It wasn't, of course, completely unknown for some smart arse surgeon, usually quite young and arrogant, perhaps overestimating his current diagnostic and surgical abilities a

little, to rush straight to C and ignore A and B. That also usually resulted in Form Filling....

And excluding that remote possibility, if someone ballsed up C then D may never come.

And you may even get all the way to G and find it was completely fucked! Certainly the monitors had warned you but you never knew until you opened them up. So you go from one emergency to another.....

At nearly fifty minutes Annie had hung on, her high blood pressure had subsided, pulse down and the obvious pain she was in had been muted by the pain killers. She had stabilised enough to allow them to wheel her down the corridor to the waiting theatre, surgeon and his nine strong team.....

She was transferred from the equipment she was attached to and became one with all the facilities that would monitor her, attend to her needs, comfort her and, hopefully, keep her alive....

The next part would be critical but she was stable enough that it had to be done now.

The surgeon would have preferred to wait but he knew he didn't dare. This was either a win, win; win, lose; or lose, lose situation.....

He took a deep breath, calmed his breathing so that no anxiety could be detected in his voice, and forced open his hands which he realised had been clenched.

'You know what to do...' he announced to the waiting team, 'she has to have a caesarean now to try and save the unborn child.....'

Tiny Beatrice, unaware of the highly skilled team trying to save her and her mother, but who knew instinctively she was in danger of never being born, continued kicking frantically.....

Chapter 87

Starting again

It was Saturday afternoon and he and Benny and Ben were on one of the patios. H couldn't get rid of the dreadful heavy feeling that enveloped his body and made his brain feel dull and unresponsive.

'Benny I have to go to bed. Would you like to join me? Watch tele, nod off, snooze....?'

She looked at Ben who was fast asleep in the shade. He'll be fine....

'Ok.'

H went into the house and brought back a small microphone that he put by Ben and took the receiver upstairs with them.

In bed they settled down and Benny snuggled up to H who held her protectively with his arm. He watched tele but sleep eluded him. Benny was quite relaxed and had her eyes shut. Not asleep but not awake either.

H had no idea why but after about twenty minutes he gently pulled his arm from under her, rolled on his side and started kissing her breasts.

Then he sucked her nipples.

Then he felt himself getting hard.

Then he put himself on her, between her legs.

'Put me inside you,' he asked her softly.

She held his penis and gently inserted it in her.

H started making love to her and realised that he could *feel* something. That had never happened before and to feel he would

usually have to make his body *do* something, or think of something that turned him on....which wasn't easy.

But this time.....

But this time.....

It only took about three minutes and then he had an orgasm and Benny clung to him with all the strength she had.

When it was finished he looked at her and smiled. He kissed her nose softly and when he pulled away she saw the wonderful smile on his face.

'Wow,' she said, 'I felt you come.....'

He nodded, 'And me.....'

'Wow,' she said again.

'Wow,' he echoed.

He moved off her and put his arm round her again, cradling her.

'That's the first time in my life I have ever experienced an orgasm like that. Something I assume everyone else takes for granted but it's taken me years to actually *feel* and *experience* one. I can recommend it. In fact I may take an advert out in The Times and tell everyone of the Great Event.'

'I shall make a note on the calendar and we shall name this day Great Event Day,' said Benny, 'and bells will peal throughout the land.'

She wriggled. 'I'm wet.'

'I'll get you some bog roll,' and he got up and went into the en-suite, coming back with a toilet roll.

She looked at him and giggled. 'How wet do you think I am?'

'Look, it's my first time. I'm amazed you didn't drown.....'

He got back in bed, Benshima dried herself as best she could and then she snuggled up to him again.

As they lay there they heard Ben crying. They then heard a voice say, 'Shut the fuck up!'

H was instantly out of bed, put on underpants and ran downstairs.....

He was holding Ben. H had no idea how someone could get through all the alarms but there he was....

About thirty. Wiry, about six feet, jeans, small tattoo on his right arm, cropped hair. In his right hand he had a knife; cradled in his left arm he had Ben. The knife and Ben's throat were very close to each other.

H's brain was furiously computing distances, angles, speeds.... A supercomputer whose sole purpose was to work out how best to kill the person standing there.

And leave little Ben unharmed.....

'What do you want?' asked H.

'Money.'

'I can give you that. I have about two thousand pounds in cash. Take that and go.....'

'That's not enough.'

'Don't be fucking stupid,' snarled H, and then immediately softened his voice. 'It's all the cash we have.'

The man looked around him. Wild eyes danced hither and thither. 'You're rich. Two grand is a pittance.'

'I agree. We are rich, but we don't need much cash. We use credit cards.'

'I want more.'

'I can't give you any more unless we go to a cash machine.'

'Yeah right. And I'm Santa fuckin Claus. You think I'm stupid? DO YOU!' he screamed, and little Ben joined him. 'SHUT UP!' he screamed at Ben.

H was in a heightened state. Everything he had, everything he knew was now geared up for the utter destruction of the man in front of him. H knew, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that very soon this man would be dead.....

He realised Benny was behind him and looked around. It surprised him that he noticed her beauty at this time.....

‘So how do we do this?’ he asked the man. ‘How can I give you more money when I don’t have any more here?’

‘It’s simple. You take me and the kid to an ATM. You get me ten grand.’

‘I can’t do that. ATMs have a limit on them which is usually about five hundred a day. That’s it. Do you really want to go into town, with all that risk, for an extra five hundred?’

‘You’re fuckin with me!’

‘No. Why would I do that? You’re holding my child....’ He turned to Benny, standing there in her towelled robe, ‘Isn’t that right, Benny?’

She nodded to the man.

Still looking at her H said, very quietly and through a mouth that didn’t move, ‘In a minute drop your robe,’ and then he turned back to the man.....

‘So why not take the two grand and go. We won’t ring the police.’

‘As I said and I’m fuckin Santa Claus.’

H waited and watched the man’s face. Come on Benny.... come on..... And then it happened. The man looked at Benny and stared. His mouth actually dropped.... It was all H needed and he hurtled to them, grabbed the knife wrist and twisted it over until it broke, then carried on down until his shoulder dislocated. As the man fell backward he let Ben go and Benshima moved in, picked up Ben and withdrew as quickly as she could, comforting the little child as she did.

With H still holding on to the arm, as the man dropped onto his back, H moved over and dropped his whole body weight, via his knee, on to the man's testicles. It wasn't a classic karate move but it was classically effective and extremely fulfilling.....

The man screamed like H had never heard anyone scream before. Ben started up again as though they had this duet thing going...

H knew it was time....

It was time this was over....

It was time this person, this vile creature who had invaded his world, left to join another. He let his muscles relax; he let his mind relax; so that all his power would be focussed and utterly lethal. He took his fist back and then he felt a hand on his shoulder.

'No...' said Benshima softly, 'no.....'

Somewhere in his brain he responded to perhaps the only voice it would respond to at that moment. He slowly looked at her.

She shook her head. 'No..... we give him to the police. You stop now....' she said gently, 'you stop now.....'

His eyes looked at her and she could see the violence, the hatred, the rage within them. He wanted to kill. He wanted to kill the man in front of him who had threatened a little child and invaded his world.

'James,' she said quietly, 'no more. Stop now....'

She held out her hand to his and he took it and allowed himself to be lifted off the man. She led him a few feet away.

'He's not going anywhere; ring for the police, James.'

'But....'

'Ring the police, James. Now.....' and she beckoned to the phone.

'But...'

She said nothing. She stared into his eyes and he saw the love.... Taking a deep breath he went to the phone.....

With the interloper a bit more bruised and tied up; and with two broken arms, when Benny wasn't looking, and the police on their way, H said, 'He said he was Santa....'

'So....?'

'An anagram of Santa is.....Satan.'

Chapter 88

D

After Julius recovered from his car crash he and D quickly established their credentials as the new kids on the block. Hubert's right hand men were given clear and unequivocal choices....you now work for D or you don't work at all.

Right hand men, although usually blessed with more brains than their underlings, still need a leader. They work well when led. They have found their level and are happy there, no matter, within reason, who the master is.

Of course there are always one or two.... The one or two who are convinced, rightly or wrongly, that they have what it takes to be the leader. The one or two who were waiting for Hubert to get to a stage where they could take over. Of course the one or two can't both be a leader as that is a contradiction in terms but they assume, as they lie in bed plotting it in their mind, that they will kill the other.....

They don't see *themselves* as dead....and they certainly don't see some young, effeminate, sweet talking, manipulative little fucker boogying on in and taking it all under their noses.

So your leadership chances now rely on allies; and those allies are the same people who would have been your competitors a little while earlier. An unholy brew....for many reasons. But what they do know, without a shadow of a doubt, is that it won't take too much to mobilise the troops within the Browns to get rid of the little smart arsed prick and crush a few low life black fuckers.....

But D and Julius were not like Hubert and not like Hubert's right hand men. They were old school. They used bullets and knives and bombs and threats and anything else it took.....

D and Julius were modernists. They knew they needed information and torturing wasn't, currently, an option. They knew they would get an assault from within Hubert's small circle of confidantes and it wasn't too difficult to work out from whom. From two, maybe three.... at most.... They just needed to know where, when, how.....

And so, as modernists, they bugged the phones, installed tiny cameras in their houses, and waited.....

Waiting wasn't really the word.....

The two favourites were up and running.....from the off.

It was quite apparent that they would try, working together, to foment unrest within the Browns, establish allies and, when the time was right, take over.....

Julius's men constantly monitored them and when they had the information they wanted, Julius took it to D and they decided what to do.

The two men met late one evening, coincidentally, at the same dark, quiet, deserted airstrip where Pope Julius had met Mary and given her a good fucking. Well she thought it was good but Julius knew he could do better...

They were careful men and had agreed to attach themselves to each other as their cars approached the airfield and then go on together. That way there were no hidden surprises. Not that they didn't trust each other of course, it was just they didn't trust each other.....

They parked and Aled, whose name was often mispronounced as *welsh cunt*, tentatively left his car and went and got into

Nick's. There had been some debate as to who should get into whose car and so Nick said, 'We should toss for it.'

'I assume you mean a coin?'

'Well, I ain't tossin you, mate.'

Aled, whose private life was well hidden, was a touch disappointed.

After several minutes plotting Aled saw a hand gently knock on the driver's window..... When it stopped knocking a finger beckoned them to come out. Aled's hand went immediately to his inside pocket but a knock on his window with a 9mm Uzi submachine gun stopped him instantly. Nick's hand was at the ignition key and he was fucked if he was stopping for anything but the window shattered as the lone bullet through his wrist put a halt to any thoughts of escape....

They were dragged out of the car by Julius's men who bundled them to the ground. Only the light from the stars and the occasional quick peek from the moon were observers of the event.

From the shadows D and Julius joined them.

'Why are you doing this?' asked D.

'Doing what? We were just meeting for a chat, just a chat....'

D ignored the nonsense. 'Why are you plotting against me?'

'I.....we.....you've got it all wrong.....' They shut up.

Behind them they heard their own voices, coming out of the dark; scheming, plotting, planning.....

'I will ask you again,' said D, 'why are you plotting against me?'

Aled, the more intellectual of the two, knew the game was up, protests were a waste of time and it needed a whole new strategic position.

‘It’s quite simple really,’ he said with as much bravado as he could muster, ‘we didn’t think you were up to the job. We thought we could do a better job and we didn’t think you’d exactly listen to us if we had come to you with the proposal and so we decided to do something ourselves....’

‘Not exactly us,’ chipped in Nick. ‘It was Ally’s idea...’

‘And you were going to kill us?’ asked D.

‘Of course.’

‘Not necessarily,’ chipped in Nick again, ‘we more than likely would have just given you the option to leave....’

‘You spineless fucking prick,’ spat out Aled.

‘Fuck you, you Welsh cunt!’

Aled threw himself at Nick but they were parted instantly.

D thought for a moment. ‘I admire that you had the guts to try a takeover and I admire you had the guts to have this conversation. What I don’t admire is sloppy thought, sloppy plans, sloppy communications, and sloppy security in men who think they are leaders.....’

D looked at Julius who nodded.

‘I wish you well...,’ said D and he and Julius turned and walked away.

The two men froze... what the fuck?

A moment later it started. Julius’s men, expert at punishment, piled in with fists, boots and gun butts raining down on the two unfortunates. Several minutes later they were both unconscious; bloodied bodies with broken arms, legs, fingers..... Their faces were bloated caricatures of what they had been with blood coming from their mouth, nose, eyes.....

Their hands and feet and mouths were bound with industrial packing tape. Then they were hauled fifty yards away to a concrete pit that had once been used to store gas cylinders. They

lifted the metal lids and threw the men in and then closed the heavy metal lids again.

The Praetorian Guard left as quietly as they had arrived....but with two extra cars that would also never be seen again in this world.....

Deep in the shadows, keeping still and quiet, inquisitive eyes had watched everything.....

Chapter 89

Dear Diary 9

Dear Diary

I don't like it in here.....

But there is a man, a warder, who smiles at me.

He wears a wedding ring but I think he's single.

He looks single.

I think he does it to keep the other women away.....

Chapter 90

D 2

The two missing right hand men of Hubert's old guard quickly dispelled any further possibility of an uprising in the ranks...

Back in the pit Aled and Nick were alive.....but only just. Aled had regained consciousness briefly and, for a moment, a terror filled moment, watched the watchers.

The watchers had watched for nearly twenty four hours. The watchers were, in this instance, the aristocracy. In their world there were essentially three levels of society. The Lords and Ladies, the middle classes and the lower orders.

The Lords and ladies occupied the areas with most food and water. In this instance they had populated the hangars on the airfield that stored grain. They grew, they copulated, they multiplied, they prospered...

The middle classes occupied the fields and general terrain. They had less food and so there were less of them.

The lower orders rummaged around in the sewers and bins, scavenging whatever they could.

And they all knew where they stood. That was the order of things. That's how they co-existed. Occasionally of course there could be, for some reason, a food shortage. At that point the hierarchies went out of the window; at that point you fought to the death to survive.....

The two men had been deposited next to a grain store and so, as far as the Lords and Ladies were concerned, it was theirs. They had smelled the warm flesh, fresh blood, urine and sweat of Aled

and Nick and knew it was what they wanted. What they needed. What they liked. A nice protein filled diet for a change. And meat with a high water content. It didn't get any better....

And so scouts had been sent to assess. Rats may be many things, but stupid isn't one of them. They were quite happy to monitor the situation for as long as was needed to make sure this wasn't a trap. They had been trapped before and, had they been into The Who, would have sung 'We won't be fooled again....'

More and more gathered close but they just waited. When the scouts said it was ok they would move in. Not before. *We won't be fooled again.....*

And there were a lot of them. More than you would ever think. But evolution and the maths decreed it. A female rat lived nine to eighteen months. Sexual maturity at two to three months. So.....

You get born and ten weeks later someone is fucking you. You have a litter of eight to ten little rats and you can have up to seven litters a year.

And that's only one of the little buggers.

And so a female can produce about twenty four other females a year; producing twenty four other females each; producing...etc etc

You do the maths.....

It was time.....

The first one went in, watched by nearly three thousand other rats.....all waiting. He sniffed Aled's cheek, ready to move quickly away.....*we won't be fooled again.....*then he opened his mouth, inserted his two large incisors into Aled's cheek, closed his mouth and backing away, ripped part of Aled's cheek away exposing the inside of his mouth....

The rats descended en masse and started ripping at whatever they could get at. Aled and Nick, still just alive, being eaten....alive.

Even in their comatose states they could feel the incredible pain of sharp teeth inserting themselves and then ripping a piece of flesh away. Their flesh.....

Nick couldn't help but feel it when one ripped out his eye.....and when his mouth involuntarily opened to scream a silent scream, another dived in and ripped out his tongue.....

Most rats eat, on average, only about 30 grams of food a day. Today they were being greedy, just plain greedy.....

How often did you get fresh meat of this quality.....?

Nearly five hours later Aled and Nick were just bone.....and the *Rattus norvegicus* had big bellies.....

Chapter 91

The robbery

H and Harry Cohen had spent weeks analysing, preparing, constructing and then finalising the plans for the robbery. A robbery that would pay loads of money and would serve as their last, final, never to be repeated, triumphal escapade. One that would be talked about for years.....

They were going to ravish the old lady of Threadneedle Street....the Bank of England!

H and Harry had worked out it was the last place anyone would rob. True it was heavily defended but with billions and billions in gold and reserves it was a prize worth taking...

The army convoy moved slowly through London. There were several troop carriers, armoured vehicles and, in the middle, two tanks with their enormous gun turrets pointing forward.

Traffic crawled behind them but there was no chaos as traffic crawled everywhere in London.

Condition Three

They turned a corner and as they did a little old lady with the obligatory little dog that looked more like a caterpillar wandered slowly across the road. Even at their low speeds they still needed time to stop and the first vehicle managed the manoeuvre just inches from her. The rest shuddered in line behind. Oblivious to their presence and her narrow escape she very slowly continued on her way; also oblivious to the comments from the troops that were reminiscent of ‘excuse me, dear old lady, perhaps a touch quicker.....?’

As they entered Threadneedle Street H gave one last command.

‘You all know what to do....now....rear column stop and block the street. Forward column move to the other end and block that. Personnel carriers get your men to the middle and get them off as quickly as you can. Tanks.....get ready to move in....flares at the ready.....horns at the ready..... tear gas at the ready. Masks and ear protectors on..... Commanders confirm please.....?’

Condition Two

He waited a few moments as each one confirmed their readiness...

One didn’t....

‘Are you there, Alpha One? Can you hear me?’

Nothing.....

‘Ok,’ said H. ‘Alpha One seems to have radio difficulty. Get a man over to him. The rest of you.....after three. One....two.....three....go!’

The soldiers spilled out of their vehicles and ran to the entrance. Behind them a sonic sound started from the vehicles they had left. A sound wave that caused much discomfort to the human ear and made concentration impossible.

Flash flares were thrown by the soldiers as they went forward, blinding anyone in range for at least ten minutes.

Tear gas followed.

Harry had talked with the Israelis and they had said that maximum confusion was the order of the day. Always maximum confusion.....

From his vantage point Harry conducted the soldiers.

‘Get in as fast as you can,’ he shouted.

He watched as they rushed in to the Bank. With the technology it was as though he was there with them.

‘Tear gas....flares,’ and he knew the sound was still crippling them. ‘Now.....send in the tanks!’

The two tanks manoeuvred up the steps and smashed their way through the big main doors in to the Bank.

‘Clear the people in the Bank,’ ordered Harry. ‘Tanks, as soon as you see it’s clear, direct your fire at Position B on your maps.’

Frightened, choking, blinded people were being herded by the soldiers and sent outside. Outside was better. Inside they could easily get crushed and the idea was....no civilian casualties.

‘Civilians cleared,’ came a message to Harry.

‘Tanks....clear a path to position B. Troops, once that has cleared move in and start removing the gold.....’

Harry heard the boom, boom, as the tanks started destroying the vault doors.....

A police helicopter arrived overhead, no doubt with some high ranking copper to direct proceedings.

‘Redirect a horn to the copter.’

The ‘horn’ which wasn’t really a horn but a high tech tubular amplifier moved upwards and pointed at the helicopter. Seconds later it started to gyrate all over the place and for a moment Harry thought that the pilot wouldn’t regain control, but he did and it steadied and scuttled away.

The troop carriers backed up to the bank entrance and the human chain, still protected by the flares, sound waves and tear gas, started to load the gold.....

So far it hadn’t taken long and, so far, no big problems.

Five minutes gone and the lorries were nearly loaded. In a minute the ‘troops’ would discard their uniforms, go to casual clothes underneath, and go running from the Bank as though they were escaping.

When the lorries were full they went back on to the main road to allow the tanks to rumble out.

Condition six

As the first tank came through the entrance door it stalled.....

‘Get it going! Quickly!’ screamed Harry.

The tank engine chugged and chugged but nothing happened. The tanks were central to the success of the operation as they had a vital supporting role on the street.

‘Tank Two,’ continued Harry. ‘Push Tank One out and clear of the entrance.’

Condition two

They watched as Tank Two started to push but all it did was make the first tank move diagonally and get jammed...

‘Oh fuck!’ exclaimed H.

‘Look, H,’ said Harry, ‘that wasn’t supposed to happen.’

Condition six

Black storm clouds were massing over the Capital and the wind was rising dramatically.

Harry shook his head. What a balls up; the large carrying copters would never be able to get low enough in that wind. Shit!

‘What can we do, H? What now?’

H raised his hands and shrugged, ‘We’ve fucked it up...again.’

‘It was that stupid tank. Are you sure it was a six?’

‘It was a six.’

‘And the storm. Another six?’

H nodded.

‘And we were going so well.....’

‘Yeah. Bugger..... Ah well.....More wine?’

H refilled the glasses and they stood and looked at the large table. H shook his head. ‘Shame....you’re right, we were going so well...’

‘Maybe next time,’ said Harry sadly.

‘I think we are going to have to think farther outside the box.’

‘It’s not us, H, we’re masters of strategy, it’s the friggin dice.’

H grinned, ‘That we are, Harry, that we are.....’

‘Come on, H, let’s put these straight and go and get some food. Jane is doing a barbeque for us tonight. Under the stars, round the fire...’

They started putting the little models straight. The little toy tanks and troop carriers, the dolls house that had become the Bank of England, the little men that were....anything they needed to be.

Harry picked up the dice with just a look of distaste. ‘It’s your fault,’ he said to them. ‘This is all your fault.’

The dice represented the uncertainties in the unfolding drama and each number was allocated a consequence. So, every couple of minutes they would throw the dice and if they were lucky all was well. Today they had hit a six twice and a six was the worst scenario at that point. So the balls up with the tank and then the storm.....

H had nicked the idea off Luke Rhinehart aka George Cockcroft but maybe he should have it back.....?

H and Harry had come up with the idea of pretend robberies when they realised how difficult it was to find one that paid enough to warrant the risk.

One would surely come; it was just a matter of when.....?

Chapter 92

Ehwun 7

‘Please,’ begged the masochist, ‘hurt me; whip me so hard I bleed.....’

‘No...,’ replied the sadist.

Hilda and the girls were there for a reason; perhaps three reasons. They had been hurt considerably by a man or men... they wanted an opportunity to return the favour....they would keep quiet.

After their second cup of tea Hilda said, ‘I think it’s time, girls.’ She looked at Andy who waved majestically at Andrew Stone’s door and H just smiled. Each picked up their bag and went in to talk to Drew.

Drew hadn’t worked out what they had done to his dick but he did know he was desperate and had tried to piss in his pants, but it wouldn’t come out. And now he hurt... Fuck, he hurt.....

He looked at the women with hate in his eyes and each one had seen that before. The girls were prostitutes and easy picking for the kind of men who had that look in their eyes. Women haters....

Some fucked you then hurt you and some just hurt you...

Bastards!

Bastards!

Bastards!

And there was little or nothing you could do about it. A few days off work, maybe even a few in hospital but then you went back and you were vigilant but..... if they wanted to hurt you they did.

Bastards!

And there was nothing you could do about it....usually. But Andy had offered them this opportunity.....

And so Hilda and Lisa and Kelly were going to talk to Drew to try and see if an hour or two of discussing the subject from both sides would allow Drew to understand that what he, and men like him, did was not only unacceptable to women it was also avoidable through open discussion and adult debate so that the men could see it differently. And the girls had no problem with having an open discussion and adult debate.

Yeah right.....

Each had a pair of scissors and cut off his clothes with him spitting and screaming as they did. Hilda slapped him as hard as she could across the side of the face and his head rocked. When he was naked they stood in front of him.

‘God you’re ugly...’

‘My kid’s got a bigger prick than that....’

‘What a horrible body....’

‘Uuugghhh...you ugly bastard.’

‘No wonder you hate women; you can’t get one. Do you have to pay...?’

Drew’s face writhed with hatred and loathing.

‘Suppose the last time you saw a cunt was when you looked in the mirror?’

‘Drew, Drew, hand job for you.....’

Drew’s face was contorted in rage and pain. He desperately wanted to piss...so desperate...

Then they made him up. Lipstick, eye liner, eye shadow, rouge, ear rings....until he looked like a grotesque pantomime dame. And then they got a mirror. Drew squirmed at the revolting sight in front of him. Revolting, revolting, revolting.....

He started to cry. After a few moments he said, ‘I’ve got to piss. I hurt so much...please help me,’ he pleaded.

Lisa let out a long sigh. 'I.....I feel quite sorry for him now...I shouldn't have been so horrible.' She moved to him, held his dick gently and then cut the tip off with her scissors. He screamed and screamed and screamed and then he started to piss rivers.

'That's better,' said Lisa, 'I think it was one of my Florence Nightingale moments....'

The girls grinned as they watched the steaming yellow fluid mix with the blood from the wound and run in streams down his legs.

'Come on, girls, we're losing money. Hold his head.'

Lisa and Kelly went round his back and tightly held his head while Hilda went to her bag. The small hammer was designed for an upholsterer to knock tacks into furniture. Drew struggled to move but they held him too tightly. Hilda started to tap on Drew's nose. The knocking on the bone was extremely painful and the vibration reverberated through his skull. Drew was so angry his 'I'll kill you fucking cows' was way above his usual range and on the high side of falsetto. After several excruciating taps Hilda hit him hard and they heard his nose break and then blood seeped from it.

The girls had decided that it would not be brute force that would be used today. Men used brute force because they were brutes. They hit you with their fists or they tried to put a knife blade across your face and one of their friends had actually had one put up her vagina. What a sick bastard he must have been... No, the girls had decided to be feminine and so they would use feminine things. True an upholsterer's hammer wasn't entirely feminine but Lisa had recently covered some chairs at home and had seen the hammer in Wilco and had bought it. And if she had bought it, it must be feminine...

'My turn,' said Kelly taking a pair of small, sharp, nail scissors from her bag. 'This may hurt a little,' she said to Drew

who was still wailing in agony. ‘But only a little....’

She slid her fingers into the tiny pair of scissors and then pushed them gently into Drew’s arm. He looked at her with hate filled eyes and then she closed the scissors. He screamed as a half inch wound opened up and blood ran from it.

‘Drew,’ she sang, ‘the first cut is the deepest..., Drewy boy, the first cut is the deepest.....’ and Kelly carried on pushing the scissors in, singing beautifully at Drew, closing the scissors, watching the small wound open.....‘I still want you by my side, just to help me dry the tears that I cried, and I’m sure gonna give you a try...just remember, the first cut is the deepest...’

And Kelly continued doing that for twenty minutes, nearly two hundred cuts, while the other girls did their thing...

Lisa had an emery board for her nails. With Hilda keeping one of Drew’s eyes open she drew it across his retina.....three times.

Hilda, although a madam, had class. She smoked only occasionally and when she did she smoked Eve. Eve was a long, slim sensual cigarette born out of the marketing war in the US for the women’s market between Philip Morris and Liggett. She took one out of her Stratton cigarette case, retrieved a Grosvenor Casino matchbook from her bag, ignited one, daintily lit her cigarette and took a light puff without inhaling. She put the still lit match in what hair Drew had and watched as his hair went up in flames. Drew screamed and they watched him writhe in agony; his hair crackled and stunk as it burned through to his scalp. Drew’s head jerked this way and that in a frenzy of pain and terror but there was no escape.... They made no effort to put his hair out but after a couple of minutes it went out by itself to leave Drew with a smouldering scalp.... The pain was intense, too intense and Drew was getting close to his limit. Hilda took another genteel puff of her cigarette, watched the end glow hot and then put it in Drew’s ear. For a moment it just burned his ear

and then the heat reached his ear drum and burnt through the delicate membrane.

Drew slumped over unconscious. It was too much. Too much pain, too much terror, too much panic, too much of everything..... His mind had given up.....

Hilda went out and got a bucket of cold water. The little fucker wasn't getting out of it that easy... The ice cold water cooled him down, extinguished any minor fire that was still trying to develop and woke him up, albeit in a none too sprightly fashion. His head rose slightly and he looked at his tormentors through one watering eye.

'Why are you doing this?' he whispered, 'I've never hurt you....?'

It was true, he never had. They didn't know him from Adam, Jack, Fred, Tom, Malik, Arthur, Shaun, Delroy, Pete, Hussein, Mick or any other fucker that hurt women. The only difference between Drew and them was that Drew was here.....

Oh sweet fucking joy and thank you Andy. This man, this asshole who hurt women would represent every other misogynistic bastard that was out there. He would get what every other of his kind should, and would, get if the girls had their way. Do unto others..... An eye for an eye..... And the girls certainly wouldn't see it as misandry, more a lifetime of male domination and servitude reinforced by punishment for any attempt to alter the status quo. And the more pathetic, inferior or inadequate the male, the more the punishment....

Lisa suddenly lost it, hurled herself at Drew and booted a five inch stiletto into his balls, skewering one and crushing another. His head flew down to his chest with the pain and then flew back up again when Newton's Laws of Motion took over....

It started a violent outpouring, a feeding frenzy of repressed rage, revenge and hate. Lisa kicked him again...and again...and

again until blood poured from his groin. Hilda repeatedly smashed him over the head with her upholstery hammer until he looked like the dark side of the moon and every inch of his face was covered in blood. Kelly just watched.....

When Hilda's frenzied attack had run out of steam and she stopped hitting Drew just about everywhere Kelly took the hammer from her.

'Go on, Kelly,' panted Hilda, 'smack him some more.'

Kelly shook her head slowly and smiled. She took off her silk scarf and tied the ends together, slipped it over Drew's neck from behind and pushed the hammer through the scarf. Using both hands she started to wind up the hammer and the girls watched as the scarf became ever tighter around Drew's neck.

'Go, girl,' whispered Lisa, 'you go, girl.'

'Go,' said Hilda softly.

Then they both whispered in unison

'Go.....go.....go.....'

and each time they chanted Kelly took it up a notch

'go.....go....go.....'

the scarf was cutting heavily into his neck and he had already stopped breathing

'go go.....go....'

his face turned blue

'go.....go....go....'

his eyes bulged,

'go....go.....go..'

his tongue lolled out

'go....go.....go...'

they heard his windpipe rupture

'go.....go.....go....'

his eyes went vacant and he died as they watched

'go.....go.....go....'

Kelly still turned,
'go....go....go....'
she turned with all her strength,
'go.....go.....go....'
Kelly could turn it no more; Hilda moved round to help her,
both holding an end
'go....go....go....'
they all chanted softly, looking at each other, feeling the force
of three....
'go.....go.....go.....'
the silk garrotte was now eating so far into his flesh that it
suddenly became easier
'go..... go go.....'
they whispered; and kept turning until the silk scarf would cut
in no farther.....

Hilda bent over; panting and exhausted. 'It's over.'
'Is it fuck,' spit Kelly and picked up a chair and started
smashing him over the head. 'Die, you bastard,' she screamed.
'Every one of you fuckers...die!'

A leg shattered off the chair and Hilda retrieved it and went
back to smashing Drew's lifeless body with every ounce of
strength she had left. Kelly smashed the chair on the floor, gave
another leg to Lisa, grabbed one herself and then they circled
Drew taking it in turn to smash him with a chair leg. Ten minutes
later, the women absolutely exhausted, Drew was no longer
recognisable as a human being. The women would argue that he
never was.....

The women fell to the floor on their knees. Their lungs were
screaming for oxygen, their arms ached but their minds had
soared to Olympus. This was power; this was life giving power;
power over life or death. The power that gave you life, that made

you feel alive, was inextricably bound up with control, pain and death...

Hilda, for one horrific moment knew, absolutely knew, what it was to be a man.....

For one illuminating second she felt what women rarely feel but men take for granted. That the ultimate high is control, pain and death...

And those that experienced it went to Valhalla...or prison.

And those that wanted to experience it but hadn't got the guts.....hurt women.....or little children.

Chapter 93

Healthy eating 7

Life

Is death

Warmed up.... (Vaddi Naujlerdl c2012)

Today's the day.

Keep remembering that Dusty Springfield song 'Anyone who had a heart'. Is that right? Or was it Cilla Black? Or Dionne Warwick? No idea..... But I do know it wasn't Eminem.

I find the whole pulsating heart thing terribly erotic. Last night I watched the casino entrance and there was this wonderful lady one.

Tall, shapely, very curvy, flesh in all the right, eatable places.

So erotic. I watched her go in and I waited hours and watched her come out.....

And today I am eating a heart.

As a tribute to her.....

The wonderful lady one.....

With his remaining right arm he slowly edged his wheelchair, this way and that, to the kitchen where he had left the sharp carving knife and all the other implements he had used to slowly cut off the limbs and extremities and taste them one by one.

The amputations had been crude but as a former male nurse he had managed to store, bit by bit, drugs and bandages to stop the pain as he cut, and staunch the blood flow as he severed, each part of his body.

In an almost ecstatic state he picked up the long, thin knife and watched its blade glint as it caught the light. He caressed it lightly across his cheek and a warm smile danced on his lips.

Slowly he inserted the knife into his chest and although he had taken limited pain killers as he wanted to experience this euphoric final act, the pain took his breath away.

He stopped for a second and then continued to push the blade towards his heart.....

Chapter 94

D 3

It took months combing exhaustively through Hubert's affairs but D had managed to put together Hubert's tangled web.

Hubert had amassed vast wealth over his long reign as head of his gang; there were millions in off shore accounts and continual cash streams from the different businesses and the various illegal activities.

D spent quite a while deciding what to do and how to do it. Some things had to go, some had to stay, and some had to be acquired.....

H sat behind his desk, at his office at the casino; D and Julius sat across from him.

The two had not only ruthlessly rooted out their organisation but had also spent time visiting people who should be made aware of the new structure. H wasn't important to his short term strategy but he may be part of a longer one...?

H looked at the man child in front of him and wondered if that was what people saw him as, all those years ago. Suddenly he felt old...

But this man child had somehow taken control of a ruthless organisation! Shit!

From one of the most ruthless men around!

This man child had wiped out half the family!

And yet he sat there; eloquent, intelligent, softly spoken, almost gentle. God knows what he was capable of.....?

A soft knock came from the door and H said, 'Come in.'

The door opened and Helen's head peered round it. 'I'm sorry, I'll come back.'

'It's ok,' said H. 'Come in and let me introduce you.'

Helen came in and shut the door. Gone was the previous Helen. The one H had found in the hospital. The emaciated, beaten up, psychologically crushed Helen.

This one was attractive, confident, and happy. This one had a family now with a loving brother and wife.

'This is my sister, Helen, and this is...', he paused for just a second. 'David and Julius.'

She smiled and held out her hand. 'I'm pleased to meet you.'

D shook it first followed by Julius. For some reason she turned back to D.

'And what are you doing here, David? Lost all your money and begging for it back?' A playful smile danced on her face.

D couldn't help but smile. He didn't gamble, but if he did it would take quite a lot of bad luck to get through Hubert's millions.

'James is selling his casinos to us...', he said softly.

'Really?' She looked at James. 'Really?'

'He's joking.'

She looked back at D.

'I'm joking,' he said.

After a few more minutes of polite chat Helen shook Julius' hand and then D's. 'It was nice meeting you.'

Chapter 95

Janna Janasis

Janna sat in their summer house at the end of the long lawn and looked back at his house. It was beautiful. Eight bedrooms, eight bathrooms....and lots of other rooms. Cosy rooms, spacious rooms, beautiful rooms, spartan rooms, quiet rooms, loud rooms.... Rooms that catered for anything that he and his wife desired.

Not bad for the little boy whose first home was a rickety one up and one down in Baghdad.

But they had left many years ago; long, long before Saddam arrived to rule in 1979.

Janna was nearly fifty five now so would have been....he did the mental arithmetic...about eight, so that would have been about 1965, when he was eight. They had come to England, although Janna couldn't now remember why? His dad got some work in a local factory and his mother managed to get some cleaning. They survived. In a strange new world, one they were willing to embrace as their new home, they had started the process of integrating and belonging....

Janna picked up English quickly and taught his parents. He did well at school and on leaving with O and A Levels he went to work in the transport department of a local foundry. He loved cars and engines and read all the magazines he could beg, borrow or steal. Then he found himself helping to maintain the cars of older friends. His remedial work was more intuitive than taught but what he didn't know the local dealer would unwittingly tell him.

He earned enough to buy himself a dead cheap car, primarily because it was dead, and brought it back to life. In due course he sold it to a friend for a profit. He bought another, a few days doing it up, and sold that one. For a profit.

As he became more proficient and efficient his reputation grew and so did the amount of work he was offered. In the end he packed in his job, rented a small lock up and put his kit in.

Twelve months later he needed bigger premises.

Bit by bit his business grew until he had a small garage and a forecourt to sell second hand cars from. And then, in the early eighties, one of those rare serendipity moments presented itself.

He had undertaken a fair amount of servicing work for a company. One of those companies that liked sixty days credit and.....they went bust. As it happened the owner was a fair man, albeit a bad payer, but he offered Janna something to offset the loss.

‘Jeans? A lorry load of jeans?! What am I supposed to do with jeans? Nobody buys jeans. And what the hell does Levi mean?’

The man shrugged. ‘Look, I’m sorry, but it’s all I’ve got that you can have. Do you want them or not?’

Grudgingly Janna took them and then rang round his mates, to see if he could offload them quickly, but no one was interested. Then one said, ‘Take them to the market on Saturday. See how they go?’

‘Jesus, I’ve got enough to do with the garage. I don’t want to go to a market on a Saturday.’

‘You had a better suggestion.....?’

With his wife in tow he set up the stall he had rented for the day. He had found out the price in the shops and went in at 30% off. Then he waited. Nothing.....

An hour later his first customer. Then another...then another. By the end of the morning he had moved all the stock he had taken with him. Gone. Just like that! Shit! Why hadn't he brought more?

He went back the next week to find there were customers already waiting.....

Seeing an opportunity he contacted the UK Importer, gave them a load of bullshit about how many shops he'd got, and managed to do a deal for stock at very good discounts, and quite good credit.

The market was now doing well so he opened a shop. That did well, so he opened another, then another....and more.

It was 1985 and times were good...

Then...there's always a then...times got better.

The UK Importer told him they were going to advertise over Christmas and would he up his stocks of jeans?

No way. Janna ran a tight ship and getting loads of stock was not his way. In many ways Janna was way ahead of the *Just in Time* philosophy still to be imported from the Far East.

How about if we give you a better discount?

Sorry.

How about Sale or Return?

How many do you want me to have?

Over that Christmas, the Christmas of 1985, Levi did the Levi 501 shrink to fit and stone washed jeans advert.

Ok they didn't.

They actually showed fifty two seconds of Nick Kamen stripping down to his shorts in a laundrette, and a backing track of *I heard it through the grapevine* by Marvin Gaye.

That was over the Christmas period, and back in the old days the shops didn't open on Boxing Day. So when Janna visited the first shop the day after Boxing Day he thought there had been an

accident. The street was packed with people.....but they were all waiting to buy Levis.

Good old Nick. Thank the Lord for Nick. And Bartle Bogle Hegarty, the Ad Agency who had dreamed up the advert....and which was voted the fourth best advert.....ever!

Janna rode the wave. Money rolled in, life was good....but Janna was also a realist. He would say a strategic realist.

He knew fashion was changing. Not just the styles but the frequency and colours. It used to be summer and winter styles and colours; then somehow four seasons arrived; then eight seasons and now you hadn't got a clue what was going to be the next big thing or how long it would last.....?

Too much stock needed. Too much money tied up. Too much risk....

So he sold out. At the top of the market he sold out and became a wealthy man.

Not long after he was telling someone about his serendipity moment and they responded with a quote from Julius H Monroe to the effect that *serendipity was to look for a needle in a haystack and get out of it with the farmer's daughter.*

Janna liked that.....

But you don't stay wealthy by just sitting there and spending the money in the Bank. True you can have a good life; a very good life but..... And of course that money had huge tax advantages if you rolled it over into something else.....?

So.....roll it over and use it? Let it sit there.....?

Janna was a business man.

What else could he do?

Property!

It was the obvious, solid choice.

He didn't go into the domestic market. He didn't need people and all that hassle. He bought commercial property where you got a nice three or five year Lease that was guaranteed. Then when he was more comfortable in his new industry he bought bigger properties where you got ten and fifteen year leases off the big boys with the big chains.

Then he bought old property and did it up. Then he went into new build. Find a plot somewhere. See the potential that others had missed and build on it what was needed. In some cases it was obvious that the area needed a certain type of service and so he would go to MacDonald's or KFC and get them to commit to a lease and he would finance the building.

He was a clever man. He never sold a property; only bought or built.

And then.....

And then....

He broke every rule in his *How to be a good businessman* book. He bit off more than he could chew.

In a city up North one day he saw the enormous derelict factory and the acres and acres of land around it for sale and knew, just knew, it was a mother lode waiting to be mined. He made enquiries only to be told it had been on the market for ages but was now the subject of some interest.

He asked how much and offered to buy it there and then. Deal? Hurried phone calls and a meeting with the sellers the next day got him the deal.

He would look back later and wonder what happened to his brains? To commit himself to this property that he knew nothing about, in an area he didn't know, to build who knows what, to cater for God knows what, was a recipe for disaster.

And so it proved. It was a nightmare. Everything that could go wrong went wrong. He ended up having to borrow a large sum off the Bank and then even that wasn't enough and he needed more.

He was introduced to Hubert Brown through a friend and Hubert, through a Panama company, put in forty million.

Now Janna realised that Hubert was a bit dodgy, you don't put money in a Panama company if you're squeaky clean, but he didn't realise that Hubert headed one of the most efficient and ruthless criminal organisations around.

And then....and this was hardly possible, more things went wrong. It was like a financial black hole. Money went in but somehow nothing ever came out....

And then.....Hubert decided he wanted his money back. No ifs, no buts. Money please.....

That had been six months ago and since then...nothing. Then Janna had heard that Hubert had had a stroke and died suddenly. That's all he knew. The machinations of the Hubert Brown dynasty were not open to him to know more.

So a respite.

And the complex.....was getting there. It was tight. Every penny was needed but with a good wind, actually no wind thank you, it may just work. Just no more problems....no more problems....please.

The mobile, sitting by his glass of wine, rang for his attention. He looked but didn't know the number. He debated ignoring it but ah well.....

'Yes...?'

'Is that Janna Janasis?'

'It is.'

‘Janna, my name is David Brown. I believe we are business partners.....?’

Chapter 96

Helen

Helen lived just on the fringe of London. H and Benny had suggested she have the coach house and be close to them once she had recovered at their home, but she wanted some independence.

So H had bought her a modest four bed home. That was what she wanted. Just enough to be part of a society she could understand and belong in.

One evening she had a phone call.

‘Is that Helen?’ asked the voice.

‘It is.’

‘I’m sorry to bother you but this is David Brown.’

She thought for a moment but David Brown didn’t ring a bell. And yet she knew the voice....? It clicked....

‘The man who is, but isn’t, going to buy James’ casinos...’

‘That’s me.’

She was going to ask how he got her number but what was the point? It seemed to her that in James’ world there was a set of rules that somehow didn’t apply to most people. Or perhaps it was the other way round? James and his friends ignored the rules that most people in society applied to themselves.....?

‘And how can I help you, Mister Brown?’

‘Helen, at the risk of being impolite, I would like to take you out to dinner.....’

‘Why?’

‘Why?’

‘Yes, why?’

He had known this would come, if it got this far, and he really didn't have an answer.

He was mid twenty-ish and ruled a notorious gang. She was, according to his information, mid thirties-ish and was the sister of H. Now H didn't rule a gang but he certainly wasn't to be fucked around with either. In fact he may not like this at all.....

'I'm afraid that's a touch difficult to answer so all I can say is I enjoyed the brief moment in James' office and wondered whether we could do that a little longer and perhaps be friends?'

She thought for a moment. 'There is a bit of an.....'

'.....Age thing,' he finished. 'Yes.' He felt no need to justify or make excuses for that. It was what it was.

'David,' she said earnestly. 'Are you using me in some way?'

'No.'

'If I have dinner with you should I tell James?'

'Whatever makes you comfortable.....'

She told James who said little. It was not his business, she was a grown woman and her life was her own.....

He rang D.

'H,' said D, 'I was expecting your call.'

'David, you don't have to explain anything to me, but it may help if you did....'

'There is little to explain. As I told your sister, in that brief moment with her, I felt at home with her. I would like to get to know her more.'

'And that's it?'

'Yes.'

'Nothing else?'

'No.'

'She's thirty odd.....'

‘H, I know you are trying to protect her but perhaps you are reading too much into this....?’

There was a long pause.

‘David. What my sister does is her own business. But she is my sister. She has had a rough life and only now is she finding a degree of happiness. I know you can wipe me out with a click of your fingers but you have to know, if you hurt her, or are using her, I will kill you...’

‘I understand that, James, so let me explain something to you. The reason I want to see your sister is exactly as I said. Now your sister may get hurt, I have no idea. Emotional paths are strewn with rocks. But if you are thinking that in some way, perhaps some physical way, that I will hurt her, you are wrong. I only destroy my enemies....’

It hung there..... What did that mean? Or was it just an obvious statement of fact?

James said nothing.

‘James, you have nothing to fear....’

The Jaguar purred up the road and stopped outside her house. He knocked on the door and watched her face express the surprise he thought it may.

She looked at the good looking, well dressed man, perhaps mid thirties, standing in front of her. ‘I thought.....?’ she said.

‘David had something quite important to attend to that presented itself just before he was about to leave. He sends his apologies and will meet you at the restaurant,’ said the Driver.

‘Ok.’

He led her to the car and opened the door, extending his elbow for her to hold as she got in.

As she settled on the back seat, taking in the subtle smell of new leather she realised that this was not what she had expected.

The criminal underclass usually had cauliflower ears, scars, talked in an east end accent, and said, ‘darlin’....didn’t they?

‘It’s milder today...’ said the driver.

‘Yes.’

‘Perhaps some light precipitation soon...?’

‘You mean rain?’

‘Sorry; yes, rain, but I actually meant more of a drizzle.’

‘You know these things?’

‘I have a degree in Meteorology.’

‘And yet you drive a car for a living?’

‘I regard it more as an apprenticeship.’

‘An apprenticeship? Towards what?’

‘A business career.....’

‘What’s your name?’

‘Driver....’

‘Is that your real name?’

‘No.’

‘Can I have your real name, please?’

‘I’m sorry.’

‘Why?’

‘I work for David. I have quite strict criteria within which I work; as it should be. Giving my name is outside that criteria.’

He said it softly but it made her wonder who, or what, she was actually having dinner with?

A few minutes before they arrived at the expensive restaurant he made a call on the hands free. ‘Five minutes....will do.’

He parked outside the main door and David came down the steps and opened her door for her.

‘I’m sorry I couldn’t collect you but....’

‘It’s not a problem.’

He beckoned to the steps. ‘After you....’

D, or David as Helen knew him, took her home after the meal; or rather Driver did. They sat in the back seat and chatted as though they were old friends; for some reason quite comfortable in each other's presence.

The meal had been exquisite, as should have been expected, as the Browns had a share in the restaurant. Hubert had been quite good at spreading his hard earned illegal cash around budding, or established, entrepreneurs to allow them to start a new business or expand an old one.

And, remarkably, he was a passive investor. True, the interest on the loan was a touch high, though not excessive, but he left you alone. Hubert knew he couldn't cook so why tell anyone how to run a restaurant? Or build a road? Or run a factory? Or sell drugs? Or run girls?

No, Hubert was a passive investor.

Until you didn't pay.....

By coincidence the previous owner of the restaurant they had been to hadn't paid. So he willingly gave up his share to Hubert and said, 'I'm not good enough, why don't you have it all and find someone else?'

Hubert thanked him for his gesture, told him he appreciated the adult way they had sorted it out and told his men to take the restaurateur's hand out of the blender.

When they reached her home he walked her to the door.

'Thank you for a lovely evening,' she said.

'It was my pleasure.'

He leaned forward, softly kissed her cheek, smiled, then turned and left....

Chapter 97

Silence 14

Hello.....it's me, Beatrice

I didn't die....I thought I was going to....but I didn't die.

Mom.....is fine. By fine she is still in a wheelchair, and it's been three years now, but although she won't walk again Rob still loves her.

Overwhelmingly, he loves her.

I think it's wonderful.....

And he loves me.

And I think that's wonderful.....

Of course I can talk now.....so if ever you want to chat.....?

Oh, and by the way, something weird.

Every month, every month since just after the accident, my mom gets a postal order through the post for one hundred pounds. It's a lady's handwriting but we have no idea who she is.....?

As I said, weird, eh..?

I'll miss you

Take care.....

Beatrice xx

Chapter 98

Helen

Helen told H about her evening.

‘You were worried about me?’ she asked.

‘No, not worried. But I would have been a damn sight happier had you been with a solicitor or doctor or something.’

‘Well, it’s certainly a well known fact that they never hurt women.’

‘Touché.’

‘He really was delightful company.’

‘I’m sure he was. He’s intelligent, sophisticated, is obviously older than his years suggest....’

‘But...?’

‘But he’s also deadly.’

‘So are you.’

‘Touché again.’

‘But you are also kind and loving....’

‘What are you saying, Helen? That you want to be with this man? Really...?’

‘Of course not, I’ve only just met him. Just had dinner with him. I haven’t even kissed him...’

‘So why are we having this conversation?’

‘I want your approval.’

‘My approval? For what?’

‘In case he rings again.’

He went to her and held her tightly. ‘You don’t need my approval. As long as you understand, David is a very dangerous man, and I want to repeat that, a very dangerous man. His years

and sophistication belie his abilities and his utter ruthlessness. If you do end up with David I can't protect you. Much as I love you, I would find it difficult to protect you.... Do you understand that?'

'Surely it wouldn't be like that?'

'How do I know what it would be like? All I'm saying is that he is utterly ruthless and I don't know what he's capable of. He may be the sweetest thing you will ever meet..... I just don't know.'

David Brown rang one week later and asked her if she would like to join him on Sunday and go to the lake and feed the ducks....

She paused for a second, started to say something, then stopped.

'Helen....?'

'I can't see you,' she said softly.

'Actually, you can. But maybe you won't. And that's different. So tell me why you can't see me...?'

She plucked up her courage. 'We are from different worlds. I am just a nobody who lives in a quiet neighbourhood, and I like it that way. My life is ordered, peaceful, and I now, after a very bad time, belong to a loving family. I don't want to lose that....'

He said nothing for a few moments.

'Helen.'

'Yes?'

'I think my suggestion was that we feed the ducks.....not get married.'

The incongruity of the conversation and the topics swept through her and she laughed.

'I got a bit carried away.'

'A little.'

‘But you know why I am concerned?’

‘I do. But currently we are feeding ducks. So why don’t we just do that and while we’re there we can talk about anything that bothers you....?’

She nodded happily.

‘Helen?’

‘Yes....Sunday....ducks.....’

Driver drove them to the lake. David had brought two whole loaves he had bought on the way and which smelled delicious. Helen nodded at the brown bag. ‘Could I?’ and held out her hand.

He gave her the bag. She peered in, put in her hand, rummaged around, and then drew it out again with a piece of lovely fresh bread in it.

‘Couldn’t resist,’ she said grinning.

‘Don’t give in to it too much; we have a hamper in the boot.’

‘Really?’

‘Really.’

Driver parked at the vast lake. Helen and David started to walk away then he said, ‘Just a second.’

He walked back to Driver and talked to him, with Driver nodding occasionally. When he came back they started walking side by side.

After a hundred yards or so she said, ‘Driver isn’t just a driver, is he?’

He shook his head. ‘No. Driver is only driver under certain circumstances. Mostly he is there to help me implement the day to day business....’

She thought for a moment. ‘You know, you sound like a robot.’

His eyes locked on to hers.

‘I mean you talk in this businessesque way. Logical, methodical, strategic. Everything has a purpose. If it doesn’t it isn’t needed.....?’

‘I don’t think so,’ he said without total conviction.

‘I can prove it.’

‘How?’

She held both sides of his face and kissed him full on the lips. He didn’t respond and so she pushed her tongue into his mouth, then tilted his head and kissed him more passionately.

Then she suddenly stopped!

‘Wrong time?’ she said. ‘Wrong place? Wrong woman....?’

He moved back a pace and looked at her.

She had provoked him. She remembered what James had said, *‘All I’m saying is that he is utterly ruthless and I don’t know what he’s capable of. He may be the sweetest thing you will ever meet..... I just don’t know.’*

She was about to find out.....

Helen watched him as he watched her. She had no idea what was going to happen? Please God don’t let him hit me... Please God..... Please God..... No hitting...not again.

The enormity of what she had done enveloped her. She knew very little about him but if he bothered James, if James could not protect her, what chance did she have?

He took his phone from his pocket and pressed a key. ‘I’ll ring you.’

He put the phone back in his pocket, moved closer to her, reached out for her neck and gently pulled her to him. With her face next to his he kissed her. Lovingly, tenderly.....

She clung to him and he enveloped her with his arms.

They stood there for fifteen minutes. Holding each other, kissing, drinking in a mutual need and affection that maybe

neither of them had ever known before.....

Her head rested on his shoulder.

‘I didn’t expect that,’ she said.

‘Nor me.’

‘What now....?’

‘We feed the ducks.....’

‘I meant.’

‘I know what you meant; but a few minutes ago you accused me of formulaic thinking. And now you are doing it. So...we’re going to feed the ducks.....’

He held her hand and they wandered towards the ducks.

They fed the ducks and slowly meandered round the wide lake. Half way round David said, ‘I’ve left the hamper in the car.’

‘And you run a large organisation....?’

He grinned. ‘I’ll sort it out.’

‘Don’t worry....we can have food later.’ Taking his hand she led him into a wooded area, turned and looked at him. ‘Well, my little robot.....?’

He kissed her passionately, almost frenziedly, and his hands found her breasts.....

She took him farther in, to where the bushes were thick and they lay down. Quickly he unbuttoned her blouse and pulled down the front of her bra so that he could suck her nipples. Her hand went down to his zip and found him hard. She went in and held his cock tight.

His hand went down to her pants and he felt her labia under them. He felt the warmth and wetness permeating through..... He started to rub the wet material but she gently moved his hand, raised her bum, and slid her pants down.

Smiling at him, she undid his belt and pulled down his trousers, then his pants.

Both half naked she lay down again and opened her legs, inviting him in. He went between them but struggled to penetrate her so she held him and guided him in.....

After he had come in her, and the passion subsided, they dressed and walked silently, hand in hand, back to the lake and sat at the water's edge.

After a little while, staring over the water, he said, 'I've never done that before.....'

'I know....,' she said gently.

He looked at her. 'I'm sorry if I wasn't very good.....'

She put her arms round his neck and kissed his cheek. 'You were wonderful. It was wonderful....'

'I don't think I.....'

She put a finger over his lips. 'You were wonderful. It was wonderful. With the right person a kiss on the cheek is orgasmic....'

He kissed her gently on the cheek. 'I love you.....' he said softly.

'Just like that,' she said, '.....*what did you say*....?'

He just looked at her.

'Did you say what I thought you said?'

He nodded.

'I didn't expect that..... You hardly know me.....I'm older.....I'm.....' Her voice tailed off.....lost for words.

He shrugged.

She looked out over the lake. 'I like the swans, they're beautiful.....' She said nothing for several minutes.

'Would you take me out....properly? You know, like people do who care, really care, for each other? I don't want to be a chattel. I don't want to belong to someone. I don't want to be

housed and kept. I don't want to be a plaything.....' Her eyes were moist. 'I don't want that.....'

In one of David's cars there was a CD. Meatloaf. *I would do anything for love.....but I won't do that*

'We would, to use your phrase, *go out*. And to use another of your phrases, *properly*. There is one caveat. I run quite a large enterprise and sometimes things happen....unexpectedly. When they do I will apologise and make it up to you, but I have to deal with those things if they occur. Obviously if we find they are impinging too much on our relationship, and if I can't find a solution, then you have to go and find something more comfortable.'

'You thought this through.....already. This isn't the spur of the moment stuff, is it?'

'No. I try and think things through.'

She plucked up all her courage. 'Will you hit me.....?'

He looked into her eyes and saw the plea. *I like you, I really like you, but if you're going to hit me....?*

He kissed her lips softly. 'I give you my word I will never hit you. We may disagree, we may argue, we may row, but I promise you I will never, under any circumstances, hit you.'

A smile enveloped her face. 'So what would you be?'

'In what way *be*?'

'What would you be? My boyfriend? My man? My lover? What would you be? What would I call you?'

'David.'

He said it quite simply but its profundity made her tingle. *This is David*. Not, this is my boyfriend slash partner slash god knows what. Somehow an acceptance that there was no need to refer to him as anything but what he was. *David*.

'I'm in,' she said.

'You're in? What is this, a business deal?'

‘You were in a few minutes ago and I didn’t complain....’

He kissed her again then hugged her. ‘I think this will be fun...’

They stayed quietly, just holding hands, by the water’s edge for another hour.

‘Let’s go and eat,’ he suggested.

They stood and he took a mobile out. ‘Kenneth,’ he said, and then hung up.

‘Short and sweet...?’

‘Yes.’

David and Helen reached the car park, set in a wooded clearing. Walking through the parked cars, the doors of a car flew open close to them and four youths jumped out in front of them. One brandished a knife.

‘Money,’ he snarled. ‘Credit cards, watches, jewellery. NOW!’ he screamed.

Helen’s hand went to her face and she started to tremble.

‘It will be fine,’ comforted David as he started to feel in his pockets for his wallet.

‘Fucking NOW!’ screamed the leader.

‘I’m sorry,’ said David softly, ‘I will have to disappoint you.’

The leader screamed an obscenity, pulled back his fist...and then two large black hands reached over, fingers went in both his eyes and he was pulled back, screaming in pain. As his back arched a knee hit him viciously at the base of his skull.

The eight Praetorian Guard systematically beat each of the youths senseless, leaving them with testicles that would be swollen for weeks, eyes that would take days before they opened and fingers that had been forced back and broken. Nothing life threatening. Just a message.

Behind the Praetorian Guard stood Driver.

‘Kenneth,’ said David. ‘Perhaps a touch quicker next time?’

Kenneth nodded. ‘Yes.’

David addressed the Praetorian Guard. ‘Thank you. You know how much I appreciate your loyalty and skills.’

They stamped a foot in unison.

‘Let’s go,’ he said to Kenneth.

In their car, with the cars of the guards in front and bringing up the rear, Helen said, ‘Kenneth? Driver’s name is Kenneth? Wasn’t that a secret?’

David smiled, ‘Not now.’

‘And....and of course I am not prying.... who are the Nubian slaves?’

‘I think that’s not a word they would appreciate, but they work for us, for me. They are employees.’

‘David.....’ she paused, ‘do you think at some point we could sit down and maybe you could tell me what you actually do for a living.....?’

‘Yes....we can do that.’

‘And.....,’ she paused again, ‘your Nubians, they are with you at all times?’

‘Generally.’

‘*All times?*’ she emphasised

‘Mostly.’

She nudged his knee with hers. ‘*All times.....?*’

He was just about to say yes again when he realised what she was alluding to. ‘Not then. That was just us. Just you and me.’

‘*You’re sure?*’

He kissed her. ‘I’m sure.....’ Then, thinking for a moment, he said, ‘Kenneth....am I sure?’

‘Quite sure, David.’

It didn’t occur to her that Kenneth knew what they were talking about....

Chapter 99

Janna Janasis

Janna met David Brown at a hotel part owned by the Brown family. David Brown was in his twenties and Janna assumed he was just some whiz kid architect, son of a family member, or whatever, and they had given it to him to sort out and his 'I believe we are partners' was just a sloppy turn of phrase.

'Janna, I believe you have forty million of our money, plus interest. We would like that back now, please.'

Janna realised it was time to take the initiative.

'By "our" I assume you are talking on behalf of the Brown family? Don't you think it would be better if I talked to them?'

'I'm sorry, Janna, I have confused you. Let me put it another way.... Janna, I believe you have forty million of my money, plus interest. I would like that back now, please.'

He said it quietly, without menace, but he may as well have put a gun to Janna's head.

Janna suddenly felt ill. For the first time he realised that of the five men with David Brown three may have been technical but the other two were.....minders? He looked at their eyes. Oh fuck!

He picked up his tea to give him a moment to think but the cup rattled on the saucer as his hand shook.

David pointed to a large white board on the wall. 'Would you please, in as much detail as possible, explain your situation to us.....'

The solicitor, architect and surveyor, along with David, bombarded him with questions for nearly an hour and a half. At one point Janna nearly fainted from the inquisition so they had a

ten minute break. Janna went to the loo, followed by two of the Praetorian Guard.

At the end of the presentation Janna was taken to a room down the corridor by his two baby sitters. David Brown and his advisers went over everything and drew up possible options.

Another hour and a half later Janna was taken back.

‘Janna,’ said David. ‘Firstly we appreciate you coming here to see us, and also your candour. From everything you have said it seems to us that you have been reckless with our money....’

Janna went to say something but stopped himself.

‘.....which we don’t appreciate. However, it also seems that you are nearly at the end of your tunnel and without our money you cannot continue. We also realise that to get our money will mean a bit of a complicated process and so we’ve worked out a way to help you.....’

Janna waited but a degree of relief swept through him.

‘From what you have said the figures are roughly...you put in ten million in cash and a further forty million against your properties. On top of that the Bank put in another fifty million against the land and ongoing development. Plus our forty million. That’s one forty. Is that right?’

‘Yes.’

‘Good....then we will leave our money in but we join you as a fifty percent shareholder.’

Janna’s face registered the shock. ‘How....why.....how....?’ He went quiet, but his mind was doing the maths. Unfortunately he was so scared and confused his mind decided today was not the day for maths....

‘But...’ he tried to say, ‘but....’

‘Janna, it’s quite simple. You sell the finished development for...let’s say one fifty. You give the Bank their fifty; you give us

our forty and that leaves sixty. That's thirty each. You nearly get your money back and everyone is happy.....'

Janna was close to tears. 'But.....I've put in fifty.' His head slumped and then it came back with a rush. 'I'll get the money. I'll pay you off.....?'

'Janna, let's get something straight. You may think what I said was some kind of offer, some kind of suggestion? It wasn't. That is the deal. If you decide you do not like the deal, and forgive me for being so uncouth, you will never see your family again. You will never see anything.....

'Of course you could get off your arse and sell it for more than one fifty and then we, and you, would be even happier.'

Janna started to tremble and then his whole body shook. Sweat formed on his forehead. Janna may have been a tough businessman, a tough negotiator even, but that was in the world he knew. Where he knew the rules....

This was not a world he knew...and they weren't his rules....

David held out his hand. 'I will leave you with these gentlemen to sort out all the details. You will, of course, be our guest until everything is signed, sealed and delivered.'

As he rose two other Praetorian Guard entered to escort him out. Janna's babysitters stayed....

He turned round at the door. 'Janna, I forgot to mention that you will, of course, indemnify us against any other possible hiccups with a further dilution of your share.....'

And then he was gone.....

Chapter 100

SUV men

The young Asian man, with the same older companion, the ones that had beaten up Paul Turner, were leaving the same shop and walking to the same big, black SUV.

As they reached it an elderly man stood in their way. They were just about to push him aside when he said politely, ‘Excuse me, but is this your wallet? I found it on the floor.’

He held it in one hand, near his waist so they couldn’t snatch it off him.

They looked down and saw that it appeared to be stuffed with money. Notes, loads of twenty pound notes. They looked a little closer.

As they did, his other hand came from around his back and pressed the aerosol nozzle that released the stream of high strength paint stripper into their eyes.

Then he walked away.

He could still hear their screams a hundred yards up the road.....

Chapter 101

H

H looked at the monitor and felt tired. He needed a holiday. Not from overwork, or stress but....he needed a holiday. On the spur of the moment he rang Benny and she concurred and so he rang Freddie to see if he had a villa for a return visit to Barbados. Freddie's mobile went to answer phone so he left a message.

If anything life was boring.

The businesses were doing well; indeed quite well. Everything they had acquired had been assimilated, Borg like, into the Group and the anticipated savings and extra profits had fed through to the bottom line.

Home life was good; Ben was growing quickly and getting a good grasp of quantum physics.

Helen had moved in with David and somehow, God knows how, they seemed to almost have a normal life. And, God knows how again, they were happy.

As if by thought transference there was a gentle knock on the door.

'Come in.'

And in walked Helen and David.

'Well, hello,' said H, 'to what do I owe the pleasure?'

She came over, gave him a big hug and a kiss on the cheek.

'It's a secret.'

'Ok.'

'No, it isn't,' she chided, 'that's why we're here.' She looked at David who nodded. 'Guess..., ' she said impishly.

Fuck me, thought H, Helen's pregnant.

'I've no idea....'

'We're having a baby.'

H stood up, kissed his sister and shook David's hand.

'And.....' she looked at David again, 'we're going to get married.'

Fuck me, thought H, one of the biggest gangsters around is going to be my brother in law

'Wonderful. I'm really pleased for you both.'

'Don't tell Benshima,' said Helen, 'I'll ring her later.'

'Ok.'

After another couple of minutes they left.

H went back to sit at his desk but almost immediately the door opened again and it was David.

'James,' he said, 'we must get together soon and talk about the J J Group of companies.....'

He smiled and the door closed behind him.....