



REAP AS YOU SOW

a novel by

DAVID HUTCHISON

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FRANKLIN *f* PUBLISHING
GREENFIELD USA

CHAPTER ONE

WHIPPED BY THE WIND, THE CLOUDS SCUDDER OVERHEAD, pasting her clothes to her skin with their incessant rain. The utter bastard, she breathed, a word she could only think and would never – could never – say out loud; Iain had views on how women must be and what they could say. The very thought made her want to scream *bastard* into the wind.

Sandy loped up, his tongue lolling from his open mouth, and his front paws landed on her waist. Pushing the dog down, she tried to brush the wet sand from her skirt. Trousers would have been better in this weather, but after Iain's scolding she *had* to get out, to walk off the heat which coursed through her. And trousers? Well Iain would never permit *that*: A woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, Agnes.

She watched Sandy bound off, splashing into the water; over the white capped waves, on the far shore of the River Forth, she could see Fife glittering in the sun. This weather would soon snuff that out, and she paused, looking down at

her rain-soaked shoes. Today, like too many other days, there was no sun in her life. And why? Because the toast had been overdone. A small error on her part, and Iain thundering “Woman, can you not get *anything* right?”

Her mistake had been in not bowing her head and remaining silent, for when she’d tried to explain, Iain had reminded her of her place, his eyes bulging in their sockets, his face flushing red, as he did so. No sun, only clouds.

Sandy’s bark brought her back to the present. The dog was leaping through the waves around what looked like a roll of carpet lying half submerged on the margin of sand and sea. Leaning into the wind, she wondered what Iain would say to this rubbish on Portobello beach. She didn’t know the exact words he would use, but could hear his tone. No doubt something from the Good Book; he could quote it well.

Calling on the dog, she drew closer to the sodden bundle, then recoiled, stumbling on the wet sand. The carpet had been tied in two places and at one end a man’s head protruded, its hair floating like tendrils of seaweed on the surface of the water, its face a mass of unrecognisable pulped and bloody flesh, as if scraped by a great claw. Where the lips had been, teeth were bared like some snarling animal; the nose had gone, and the one remaining eye seemed to stare straight at her.

With her heart racing, her legs weakened and, as she tried to catch her breath, she sank slowly to the wet sand.

Later, when she replayed this scene in her head, she couldn’t remember whether there had been silence up to that point. But as she stared at the corpse, unable to drag her eyes away from its gentle rocking in the lapping waves, the explosion from behind hammered her ears and its shock-wave buffeted her body.

Jerking her head from the horror before her and looking inland, she saw a huge cloud of dirty grey smoke billowing from somewhere in Portobello’s streets, and the deafening quiet which followed – God’s beating heart – was broken by screeching seagulls wheeling into the air.

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Bruce Barron stood at the large picture window and gazed out over Edinburgh’s skyline. The castle dominated, but from where he stood, here in the heart of the financial district, it seemed as if he operated on a much higher plane.

He stretched, feeling his muscles object to his missed morning workout. Behind him he could hear the low noise of people at work. It was a quiet hum, like electricity passing through wires; the sound of people making more money for Barron Investments, of Bruce Barron becoming an even bigger player.

He couldn’t help but smile at the thought as he sat down and reached for the slim folder on his desk. Slim because it had to be; far better the details of the completed task were committed to memory. He scanned the two sheets and wondered whether to shred them. They represented several weeks’ work and, by Friday, a profit of at least five, maybe even six, million pounds. Everything had been accomplished in easy steps; all it had taken were a few words to the right people. Those words had cost him, but balancing a few thousand against millions was very good business and now, Dunedin Research was his.

It had been simple – a rumour started here, a few words dropped in the right ears there and, like a heavy object being pushed and reaching an inevitable tipping point, the company’s share price had plummeted. Then, overnight, a rapid buying spree – by proxies, of course – and Barron Investments had emerged from the dust of Dunedin’s collapse as their principal shareholder.

Still smiling to himself, he fed the sheets into the shredder’s maw and sat back. Good business, he thought, there’s nothing quite like it. Maybe a bottle of Krug Grand Cuvée would be in order? . . . push the boat out with the long-legged and, he had to admit, limber, Penelope. Perhaps he should call her and book an early lunch. . .

The phone purred into life, breaking into his pleasurable thoughts. Lifting the receiver, he swivelled his chair to face the panorama of Edinburgh once more; one day, Barron Investments – no, Bruce Barron – would own an even larger portion of it. “Barron.”

“Bruce . . . it’s Peter.” Peter McGuigan was his personal banker, and it was unusual to hear from him. The man sounded breathless.

“Peter. To what do I owe. . . ?”

“We have the police at the bank, Bruce. They have a warrant.”

“What?”

The door behind Barron opened. What on earth was Sally thinking? She knew better than to let anyone simply walk in. Spinning round in his chair, he was startled to see two men standing there, Sally in their wake with a worried expression. They seemed to fill the doorway, and neither looked friendly. One man was holding out a card.

“Who the *hell* are you?”

The one flourishing the card gave this the faintest of smiles. "Bruce James Barron, I am DCI Evans, and I'm arresting you for offences under the Terrorism and Conspiracy Act of 1998. I have a warrant to search these premises."

Barron felt a hot, sickening, falling sensation sweep through him; he must have misheard. "Terrorism?"

The second man gave him a wolfish smile. "And conspiracy, sir."

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DS Robin Moss saw an available slot and pulled her car into the kerb; the streets were jammed with vehicles – she would need to walk to the Promenade. Killing the engine she stepped out and stretched; after her weekend visit to Liverpool it felt as if she'd been driving for days on end. Pulling her hood up against the blustering rain she made her way to the tape which cordoned off the *locus* and presented her warrant card to a uniformed policeman, who nodded and noted her name. Looking to the beach she could make out a small group of white clad Crime Scene Examiners on the shoreline. "What's up in Portobello? – I couldn't get anywhere near here for road closures."

"Gas explosion in Kiln Street . . . Porty's on the map today."

Moss gave him a quick smile, "Never rains, but it pours, eh? Has DCI Steel arrived?"

The uniform shook his head, shaking a few drops of rain off the shiny peak of his cap in her direction. "Not from this side."

Moss ducked under the tape and made her way along the railings to the gap where a few steps led to the beach. Halfway to the shore, she could see a WPC standing with a woman, and guessed this would be the walker who'd discovered the body.

Coming up on them, she saw the woman was shivering, staring into the sand, her knuckles white as she held tight to her dog's leash. With a nod for the WPC, she said, "DS Robin Moss, you are. . . ?"

At the sound of Moss's voice, the woman's head jerked up from her reverie. "I'm Mrs. Agnes Guthrie. I discovered the . . . body."

"We'll need to take a statement from you Mrs. Guthrie, though right now it's best you're away from here . . . get warm, get something hot and sweet to drink," and Moss gave the WPC a sharp look. "There's really no need to be standing in the rain is there? Take Mrs. Guthrie to the Command Vehicle."

Looking back to the Promenade, Moss could see press arriving. "And make sure that lot are corralled – we don't want anything here to feature later."

With a nod for Guthrie, she made her way towards the shore where the Crime Scene Examiners had secured a form of tenting against the wind. The rain was making the sand firmer underfoot, but it was still uneven to walk on and, with every step she took on the pathway the Examiners had marked, she found herself slipping.

The pathologist was watching her uncertain arrival. "Ah, *Sergeant* Moss," and with a little smile for her, "or may I call you Robin?" She and Knox had had a run-in earlier in the year, when she'd first joined Lothian and Borders Police. He'd insisted on calling her *my dear* and she had disabused him from doing so.

Robin's my name; best not be churlish with the man. "What do we have, doctor?"

"*Some* might call it a suspicious death, but do have a look for yourself."

Moss stepped towards the body which, with the now unrolled carpet, was lying on plastic sheeting. She knew Knox was testing her, well aware of her adverse reaction to violent death. In January – in her first two weeks with the Force – she'd been confronted with three brutal killings and had reacted badly. Knox had been with her on two of those occasions. Damned if I'll give you the satisfaction . . . "Suspicious?" and then she saw the face – or where the face should have been – and felt her breakfast lift to the back of her throat.

Knox was watching her closely and, with a satisfied grin, "Well I presume this individual didn't wrap *himself* in a carpet and go for a swim." With difficulty he squatted his bulk beside the corpse and rolled the head to one side, "Of course, there's this gunshot wound too."

Moss saw the mess of bone, matted hair and bloody brain matter and cursed Knox silently as she tried to ignore her body's involuntary reaction. "So, murder then."

Knox had seen her instinctive recoil. "Full marks, Sergeant – *I* would say so."

"And the face. . . ?"

He glanced out over the water, "Propellers in all likelihood. I'll know better later."

"When will the body be moved?" Moss was ticking off the questions, wanting to move herself.

"As soon as the Examiners are satisfied. I am."

"Okay, doctor." Moss turned away from him and his bloody work to one of the Examiners. "Any identification?"

The man shook his head, “There’s nothing. I reckon his pockets were emptied. We’ve got a tattoo though.”

“Tattoo?”

“Just this one on the forearm as far as we can see.”

Keeping her eyes averted from the man’s head, Moss crouched beside the body. The tattoo was a red hand with lettering underneath: *quis separabit*. Both were faded. Old. She raised her eyebrows in query.

“No idea, Sarge, my school didn’t do Latin, but the hand – that’s Irish paramilitary I think.”

Paramilitary? Moss got to her feet. “What about fingerprints, doctor?”

Knox wheezed a sigh. “It’ll be a challenge, though one of the last things to disappear when you shuffle off are your fingerprints – they’re remarkably durable. And decomposition – when the body’s *under* water – is half the normal rate. So . . . well, I’ll find out more, later.”

“Right, later. . .” She looked away from him, thankful to take in the ordinariness of the Promenade, with its jumble of different buildings and red sandstone tenements facing the sea, and saw the solitary figure of her boss, and mentor, standing at the railings, waiting.

•

“Morning Moss.”

“Sir . . . you didn’t want to see this, then?”

Steel gave her a knowing wink, “That’s why you’re my bagman. How are things in Liverpool?”

“Mam’s not too great, but the docs reckon it’s just a matter of time and she’ll pull through okay.”

Steel nodded; heart attacks were either a warning, caught in time, or a stark reminder of everyday fragility and everyone’s closeness to death. He looked off to the small group of Examiners then north, over the firth to Fife. “There used to be a long pier here you know – back in Portobello’s heyday – same engineer as the first Tay Rail Bridge. . .”

Moss smiled; very early in her start with Lothian and Borders, she’d heard DCI Mike Steel referred to as the History Man – someone who’d have the answer to any question on Edinburgh, or indeed any crime in Edinburgh.

“Before cheap package holidays,” Steel continued, “Portobello was a place Edinburgh folk would come to in the summertime, just a short bus journey from the city. People keep calling it the seaside, though it’s really the riverside.”

“This in your time, sir?”

Steel eyed his young, attractive Sergeant; at times, especially to a graduate on the fast-track Accelerated Careers Development Programme, he must seem ancient. Then he realised she was trying to tease him. “Just a wee bit before, Moss . . . so, what do we have?”

Moss took him through what she’d seen. “Mrs. Agnes Guthrie – the walker who discovered the body – is in the Command Vehicle, and I’m not sure how we’ll get ID – the body’s pretty messed up, and Knox wasn’t sure whether we’d get fingerprints.”

“Anything else?”

“There’s a tattoo on the man’s forearm – a red hand, with lettering,” and she flicked her notebook open, “*quis separabit* underneath it. One of the Examiners reckoned it might be paramilitary.”

Steel nodded slowly. “Not necessarily but, if it’s a tattoo, likely. It means, Who shall separate us?” and he smiled at her, “*You* should know this, Moss. It’s a contraction of ‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?’ It was on Northern Ireland’s coat of arms once, but it’s used by loyalist paramilitaries now . . . the UDA, I think. What with that, and a gunshot to the back of the head, we might just have an execution on our hands.”

He stared off into the distance and pulled his jacket tighter against the cold steady rain. “Hope not. Anyway, we better get a statement from Guthrie . . . but while we’re here, let’s have a look at this explosion in Kiln Street.”

CHAPTER TWO

KILN STREET LOOKED LIKE A WAR ZONE. Rubble was strewn over the road, the tenements’ windows on both sides of the street were shattered and, at the seat of the explosion, what had been *The Potter’s Arms* pub on the corner with an adjoining street, firemen could be seen tamping down the remains of the fire which had followed.

Even from a distance, the tenement above the pub looked dangerously close to collapse, lurching forward with the

sudden withdrawal of support. Steel and Moss could see an elderly couple, who'd had to exit the building down a ladder from the first floor, being led to safety and a waiting ambulance by a policewoman.

White sheets covered the bodies lying in the street and the count was three.

Steel flashed his warrant card at the uniformed officer guarding the end of the street. "Who's in charge here?"

The man pointed to a tall uniformed policeman. "That would be Yogi . . . Chief Inspector Hughes, sir."

Steel ducked under the tape and with a follow-me nod for Moss, began to pick his way through the debris in the street.

With some difficulty they reached Hughes, but before Steel could speak the man's hand was up. "No further – who are you? And why are you here?"

Moss saw Steel's expression harden. "DCI Steel, and DS Moss."

"Fettes?"

Steel nodded. "We were called to a suspicious death on the beach."

"I was *informed* HQ was here. Well, what we've got here isn't suspicious."

"No?"

"The gas company's just confirmed this wasn't a gas explosion."

"Meaning?"

Hughes took a pace towards Steel and placed his hand flat on his chest. With a glare for him he looked over his shoulder and off into the distance, and in a low voice, said, "Now listen up, Steel. I don't give a *damn* you're from Fettes. What we've got here is this: if it isn't accidental, it's deliberate, and deliberate means a Paddy or a raghead. In other words, this is none of your business."

Steel looked down at the hand on his chest. "You'll take your hand off what *is* my business," and seeing the raised eyebrows and appraising look from Hughes, "or I'll break your bloody fingers."

Watching a situation develop that wasn't helpful to anyone, Moss said, "What Chief Inspector Hughes is saying is, if this was a planned explosion, then it'll be for Special Branch to handle, sir."

Steel glowered at her, "I know that," and to Hughes, "Has Special Branch been informed?"

"For God's sake man, *I've* only just found out it wasn't a gas explosion . . . not that it bloody-well concerns you, or intrudes on your suspicious death," making the body on Portobello's beach sound like a case of shoplifting, "Special Branch *will* be informed. I repeat, this is none of your business."

Moss was watching their interchange with growing frustration; far too many of her male colleagues wasted their energies on these squabbles. Hughes had stepped back, and she could see he wasn't really angry with Steel. Portobello was his ground and the blast had happened on his watch. He was right to be upset, wrong in making it territorial. "Was one of the victims the bomber, Chief Inspector?"

Hughes glanced at the covered bodies lying in the street and shook his head. "If you mean any of *these* unfortunates, no Sergeant. We'll know more later, but I'm thinking the bomb went off in his hands over there. He was as good as mince then – there's very little left, a nice job for Forensics – but the bastard managed to kill an old-age pensioner, and a mother and child . . . a wee eight year-old lassie. We're just lucky it wasn't later in the day, lucky he didn't reach his intended target, but these vermin don't care, do they? Anyhow, I've got my work cut out," and Hughes turned away, dismissing them.

With a shrug, Steel said, "Let's go."

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Steel and Moss had only been in Fettes a matter of minutes when Steel's phone rang. He listened, then clattered the phone into its cradle. "Grieve."

As they entered Chief Superintendent Grieve's office he was ending a call and motioned them to sit with his pen.

". . .right sir, I have DCI Steel with me, I'll get him on it." Hanging up, he regarded them in silence.

"You wanted to see us," Steel offered.

Grieve sat back and clasped his hands together over his ample stomach. "Yes . . . how's this 'body on the beach' going?" and to Steel's half-smile, "Evening News, first edition, Mike. How's it going?"

Steel walked him through what they had so far. "Until Knox has done a PM and, fingers crossed, given us a bit more to go on, we don't know our next steps . . . we've yet to identify him."

"And there's a problem there?"

"Only that his face is missing, there was nothing in his pockets, and we might not get fingerprints."

“There’s a tattoo,” Moss said, “Points to him being a loyalist paramilitary.”

“Maybe just a sympathiser,” Steel cautioned.

Grieve rocked himself forward. “But shot in the head?” and with a sharp nod for him, “Likely more than a sympathiser *I’d* say.”

Steel twitched his shoulders. “We need to find out about tides and so on, but we could trawl Missing Persons, might come up with something there.”

“There’s facial reconstruction,” Moss said and, for a brief moment, a vision of the body’s broken face swam before her, “we could go down that route.”

At this, Grieve made a sound like a deep growl. “Any idea of the costs involved, Sergeant?” and to her blank look, “Costs. *Budgets*. No, whoever this person is, he’s not some long-lost missing child, is he? Facial reconstruction can wait . . . perhaps indefinitely.”

“I could enquire, sir,” Moss persisted.

Grieve leaned forward and placed his large hands flat on the desk. “You could but, as of this moment, you’re both spinning your wheels on this. Correct?”

Neither Steel nor Moss answered, and Grieve shot Steel a dark look. “I gather you met Chief Inspector Hughes in Portobello this morning.”

Steel nodded; bush telegraph, or something else, he’d wait and see.

“Put your best foot forward too, I hear,” Grieve continued, “kept the fine co-operation between Headquarters and sub-stations going, eh?”

Steel pursed his lips and said nothing, thinking, What’s the point?

Grieve shook his head as if he’d just been given his answer. “Well, as I understand it,” and pointing to the phone with a fat finger, “and from what ACC Donaldson has just told me, Special Branch, from here and Strathclyde, are apparently running a joint counter-terrorism operation, and,” with a humourless smile for Steel, “as they’re already stretched, they’d like some help with the donkey work in Portobello. Given you’re both spinning your wheels with this body that’s been washed up, *and* you’ve already . . . introduced yourself, I thought of you, Mike.”

Steel felt a whole slew of comments rising – donkey work? – but remained silent.

“So,” Grieve said, “get in touch with Chief Inspector Hughes and see what you can both do to help, eh?”

Steel moved to get up. “Anything else?”

Grieve’s eyes narrowed; he’d expected some pushback from Steel. “No. Until you’ve got something to go on from a post mortem, just see how you can help Portobello. Apart from the explosion, there were three deaths – one, a young girl – and the ACC sees this as a priority.”

Steel got to his feet feeling drained: the idea of donkey work, as Grieve put it, was trying what little patience remained after his encounter with Hughes. He knew Grieve would expect him to balk at such a mundane task, but what was the point of saying anything? “Right.”

They’d almost left when Grieve said, “Sergeant . . . a word with you,” and when Steel hesitated at the door, “Just stuff to do with Accelerated Careers, she’ll be with you shortly.”

When Steel had gone, Grieve nodded to her, “Sit yourself down.”

As Grieve looked for Moss’s folder, she took in his spartan office: the old Anglepoise had bitten the dust at last – a shiny new lamp sat on his desk – but over on the window ledge the potted plant was still clinging to something resembling life.

Grieve sat forward and placed a single sheet of paper before him. “Accelerated Careers, Moss . . . there’s a formal aspect to go through but, before having to fill in some more damned paperwork, I thought it best to have a little chat with you first.”

“Sir.”

“Now, you transferred from Merseyside to us in January, so we’re what? . . . three months on. How’re things going?”

“Very well, sir.”

Grieve tilted his chin to the door, “And your DCI, all things going well there, too?”

“DCI Steel’s the sort of experienced officer I’d hoped to be with, sir – I couldn’t have asked for a better placement.”

Grieve gave a couple of small nods to this. “Mike certainly has the experience, though,” and with a careful look, “he sometimes gets in his own way, eh? . . . a bit like this morning’s meet with Chief Inspector Hughes.”

“It was just the situation, sir . . . frayed nerves – on both sides – I think.”

“Loyalty,” Grieve said, with a tight-lipped smile, “I like that. I always hope for team players, you know that Moss. But . . . well, after that business with the Johnstone woman, I wonder whether Mike’s quite as focused as he could be.”

Jay Johnstone’s face came into very sharp focus for Moss. Back in January, Steel and JJ, a stunning red-headed reporter from *The Scotsman*, had had a brief relationship which had ended badly, and she had played a significant part in its ending. “I’ve really not seen any loss of focus, sir.”

“You’d tell me if there was?”

“Of course, sir,” knowing at that moment it would probably be the very last thing she would do. She’d often seen Steel lost in thought, a faraway expression on his face, but – while he kept those thoughts to himself anyhow – that was for him to sort. Whatever it was.

Grieve sat back and eyed her. She was the new breed of police officer, straight out of university and into the force. Accelerated Careers? He remembered a time when a career had been a slow, methodical, and steady progression over many years, with plenty of arrests to your credit, just like his own; he hoped the pretty young policewoman opposite – a woman younger than his own daughter who, despite today’s supposed equality, he’d *never* send into harm’s way – appreciated it. “Well, I’ll not keep you; we’ll do the formal bit later. I see you’ve still to pass your Scots Law exam, how’s that going?”

This exam was necessary for any police officer joining a Scottish police force from an outside force. She had been studying, but hardly burning the midnight oil. “Fine, sir.”

Grieve nodded; he’d probably find it difficult these days. “Okay, Sergeant, just remember you’ve got a set timeframe on that.” He sat forward, giving her a smile, “Find out what you can do for Portobello, and *try* to remind Steel to keep me up to speed on any progress, eh?”

CHAPTER THREE

THE LAWYER LOOKED AT HIS WATCH. Due to a crash on the M8 he’d arrived late, yet he was sitting alone. The small room was stuffy, as if never aired, and contained only a steel table and four chairs, all of which were bolted to the floor. Overhead, one of the strip lights buzzed and flickered.

Delving into his briefcase, he pulled out a fresh legal pad and noted the date and time. This wasn’t his first visit to Shotts Prison, but it was his first in the maximum security suite. It had been some time since he’d represented anyone facing terrorism charges, his criminal practice not bringing much business from that quarter, but his thirty year experience was broad; this morning’s meeting would, one way or another, be settled quickly.

With another glance at his watch, he sat back and mused on the firm that had contacted him. Price Quigley was one of the world’s largest law firms, with offices in eighteen countries and over five hundred lawyers, yet not one of them practised criminal law. The Edinburgh office – with a mere forty lawyers – had contacted him as a matter of extreme urgency. Bruce Barron, the man he was about to meet, was one of their most valued clients, and he needed first-class help – ‘treatment’ was the word used – in a matter which was, ‘obviously one of mistake on the part of the police.’

He smiled to himself. There was no better criminal lawyer than him in Scotland – his record spoke for itself – but corporate lawyers? Probably the last time any of them had read anything on criminal law, would’ve been in Law School. However, the salient fact Price Quigley missed was this: their client had been arrested by Special Branch, and it would be rare indeed for the Branch to have made a ‘mistake’; they, and behind them, the shadowy figures in MI-5, rarely made mistakes when it came to targeting terrorists. Still, there was always a first time. He would’ve liked to have met with his client before this prelim, to talk to him and get a measure of the man, but he was used to working off the cuff; he’d know more in a little while and plan accordingly.

The handle turning on the heavy door sounded like an old-fashioned vault being opened with a protracted grinding of cogs and gears. Handcuffed, and dressed in bright yellow coveralls with a broad green stripe down the sleeves and trousers, Barron was led in between two prison officers. All colour had drained from his face which, combined with the bright yellow and the flickering neon, made him look unwell.

One of the officers guided Barron to his seat with a hand on his shoulder, then the other secured his handcuffs to a short chain bolted to the table. Satisfied, the two men left, locking the door behind them.

“Good morning, Mr. Barron. My name’s Dennis Carter. Your lawyers, Price Quigley, have asked me to represent you.”

“You’ve got to get me out of here,” Barron said, his voice a hoarse whisper.

“Let’s see what the police have to say first, shall we.”

Barron shook his head. “No. You’ve got to get me out . . . I can’t breathe . . . I know nothing about terrorism.”

So, straight denial, Carter noted. “This is just a preliminary interview, Mr. Barron. Although, I should warn you, as this concerns terrorism charges, it’s very doubtful you’ll be released at any judicial hearing.”

Barron’s shoulders sagged; he looked and sounded close to breaking down. “I tell you, I know nothing about terrorism . . . what judicial hearing?”

“Well, regardless of what the police may have, Scotland’s not some South American country – you’ll not disappear – they have to bring the matter before a judge,” and he gave him a sympathetic smile, “It is a matter of time, but try to bear up.” He thought it best not to mention that he could be held, at least initially, for seven days.

The sound of the door being unlocked once again reverberated around the room. “We’ll know more shortly.”

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Steel was standing at a window of Portobello’s police station, staring down on the High Street, watching pedestrians scuttling past in the wind and rain, many fighting a losing battle with their umbrellas. “This is a bloody waste of time.”

This was the third time he’d said this, so Moss said nothing and flicked over the sheet in front of her.

Chief Inspector Hughes had been visibly surprised when they’d arrived; the task of lending a hand was indeed a mundane one, usually handled by constables, so a DCI and his DS without any role – and from Fettes, no less – seemed pointless.

Of course, Steel knew this was really the ACC making a somewhat futile show of Headquarters playing its part – Fettes politics. Nevertheless, he hated wasting time like this. “Are you getting anything helpful from those, Moss?”

Before her were the typed-up versions of the door-to-door reports from uniformed officers who’d worked Kiln Street following the blast. Almost all the occupants had seen nothing, but there were timings which might just prove helpful. However, very few witnesses had been at home when the bomb had exploded, and now the net had been cast further; CCTV footage from the High Street was being scoured, and anyone who’d been anywhere *near* Kiln Street at the time – car commuters, bus passengers, delivery drivers – were either being interviewed or urged to come forward. Someone, even though they didn’t realise it, may have seen something: insignificant to them, perhaps, but vital in tracking the bomber and his movements. As Steel had said, *much* earlier, “Jigsaw pieces, Moss . . . there might be one which helps to complete the picture.”

“I was thinking, sir. . .”

Steel turned from the window. “What?”

“Well, you know how Hughes reckoned Kiln Street would be down to Irish or Arab terrorists. . . ?”

“Yes, though I wouldn’t lay much store on the bomber being either . . . Edinburgh’s not had much activity that way.”

“Well, I was thinking of a possible connection to the body we were called to – that’s if the tattoo on the arm is a paramilitary connection.”

Steel sat down opposite her. “It’s crossed my mind, but the connection’s way beyond tenuous.” Moss’s eyebrows rose into her fringe in query. “Well, let’s assume the body that was washed up is a terrorist . . . the shot to the head – an execution – could point to that. Then *another* terrorist – at the same time – is on his way to plant a bomb. . . ?” and he tailed off.

“A beyond tenuous connection?”

“It is to me . . . it’s not impossible, but I reckon when we ID our body, and *if* the bomber can be ID’d, we’ll find no connection between them. Where do we stand with ours?”

“Once the post mortem’s complete and we’ve got height and an approximate age, I’ll try Missing Persons and have a trawl through the PNC. Dr. Knox is taking DNA samples, and a cast of the teeth too.”

“So, until then, we’re as good as stuck here,” and with a shake of his head, Steel got to his feet to resume looking out the window, muttering “waste of time”.

We? Moss thought, turning over the next sheet. PC William Hood, A-Division (Portobello), had interviewed Mrs. Isobel McClethie at her home, number 32, first flat right, Kiln Street at eleven forty-five yesterday morning. Hood had noted: *Mrs. McClethie (83) appears very distracted – windows blown in by explosion. She referred several times to seeing Jimmy (apparently deceased husband). Possible call-back required* and then he’d added *Doctor?* and

underlined the word. Moss re-read the report, and hearing yet another sigh from Steel, said, "Have a look at this one, sir."

Steel took the sheet of paper from her to scan. Looking up, he smiled, "Oh hell, why not? That is, unless you think I'm just going 'walkabout'. . .?"

Moss grinned; Grieve had told her she should speak up if her senior officer ever did. "Probably, sir, but let's give Mrs. McClethie a call anyhow."

Within minutes they were making their way down Kiln Street, heading for number 32.

Carter appraised the two detectives who'd entered the maximum security suite; they appeared to be very alike. Both were tall, dressed in navy-blue suits, had the same broad build, similar haircuts, and each had the same focused look on his face. It would be difficult to tell them apart. One placed a portable recording device on the table, and the other carried a large file which he laid down, aligning its edges with those of the table with care. With a nod to Carter, he said, "Good morning, sir. I am DCI Charles Evans, and this is DI Douglas Coyle. We're from Special Branch," and handing Carter his warrant card, "I was your client's Arresting Officer."

Taking the card to jot down its details, Carter thought, They're playing this very formally, and that's a first.

When Coyle had plugged in the equipment, Evans said, "Okay, Doug?" and to the detective's nod, pressed the buttons. At the sound of a long beep, he opened the file before him, then gave the location, date, time, and identified himself and DI Coyle.

When Carter had given his name, Evans said, "The fourth individual present is Bruce James Barron . . . Mr. Barron, do you understand you have been arrested for offences under the Terrorism and Conspiracy Act, namely Financial Assistance for Terrorism, and—"

"I don't have any dealings with terrorism."

Carter raised a cautionary hand to Barron. "My client would prefer to remain silent, unless it is judged prudent to answer, Chief Inspector."

"Understood, sir. This is simply a first interview . . . just to see where we stand. Now Mr. Barron, may I ask whether you travel much?"

Seeing the nod from Carter, Barron said, "I get down to London quite often."

"And abroad?"

"Greece . . . Naxos – a holiday. Two years ago."

"What about Egypt?" DI Coyle said.

"No, I've never been."

Evans pulled a sheet from the file and slid it across the table. "Then could you explain this for me, sir."

Carter reached for the paper. It was a photocopy of a British Airways ticket stub: London Heathrow to Cairo, first class, the name Bruce J. Barron. "That doesn't necessarily point to it being my client, Chief Inspector."

Evans gave him a quick smile. "Perhaps a coincidence, sir . . . *another* Bruce J. Barron," and he slid out another sheet. Scanning it, he said, "Does the name Abdel Kareem Zaghloul mean anything to you, Mr. Barron?"

Barron shook his head, and to Evans's raised eyebrows, "No, it doesn't."

"Thank you, sir. Now, could you confirm your telephone number – your home telephone number."

Barron gave it, and Evans slipped another sheet across the table. "Then perhaps you could explain these entries for me. This is a record of the calls made from that number. Looking at the international calls, do you recognise the number I've marked?"

Barron shook his head. "No, I don't."

"That number has been confirmed as being held by Abdel Zaghloul. Could you explain why you phoned a man you *say* you don't know, sir?"

Carter saw that Barron was being overrun by soft, ensnaring, questions, and failing to take his time to answer, so in an effort to interrupt Evans's smooth flow, he said, "Who is this Abdel whoever?"

Placing the paper back in his file, Evans said, "Abdel Zaghloul is a known Egyptian terrorist who lives . . . well, somewhere in Cairo, and heads an organisation called, Al'ikhawan al-Nassr," and with a flicker of a smile, "That's something like Brothers of Victory."

"Well I don't know him," Barron said.

"Yet we have a air ticket showing a Bruce J. Barron travelling to Cairo, and a record of several telephone calls being

made from your home phone to Abdel Zaghloul . . . doesn't quite add up now, does it, sir?"

"Look, I don't know him," Barron repeated, looking and sounding distinctly rattled. Carter was beginning to think it would have been far better had his client remained silent throughout.

"Very well . . . Doug?"

The other detective pulled the file towards him and extracted another two sheets to peruse. After a pause, he looked up, "You bank with the Royal Bank of Scotland, sir?"

"Well . . . I have a personal account there," adding in a low voice, "A high yield one."

"A high yield one . . . I have here a copy of your bank statements," and with a nod to the lawyer, "The account number has been verified as matching the number of an account held at the Royal Bank by your client, Mr. Carter. Now, Mr. Barron, there are several outgoing transactions marked. Would you care to explain these for me?"

Barron rarely checked transactions on this account, and his eyes widened when he saw the amounts. "I can't . . . I'd need to . . . look into them."

"Each is for ten thousand pounds, and there are three of them. Do you mean to tell me you don't know? I think *I'd* know everything about transactions like these."

Carter thought the interview was going badly for his client, and he was more than annoyed with himself; this wasn't a preliminary interview, and he really should have told Barron not to utter a word. "Is the recipient of these transactions known, Inspector?"

"Yes, sir . . . the account into which these transactions were deposited belongs to an Egyptian charity, The Humanitarian Children's Fund of Egypt. It's a money laundering front which was set up by Abdel Zaghloul to fund his group's terror activities."

"I . . . I know nothing of this," Barron said in a small voice.

Switching tack, Evans sat forward, "Do you know a Mr. Gerald Hunter?"

"No, I don't."

"Who is Gerald Hunter, Chief Inspector?" Carter said, concerned by the arrival of a fresh unknown.

"Mr. Hunter, a hedge fund manager, was arrested earlier. He has made similar deposits into the account of the same Egyptian charity, and his home computer contained a considerable amount of child pornography which was being offered for sale on the internet."

Barron was staring hard at the table, and didn't hear Evans's next question. "Sorry?"

"I asked whether you hold a membership with the Royal Burgess Golfing Society in Edinburgh."

"I do . . . why?"

"Gerald Hunter is on the membership committee with that club. Are you *sure* you don't know him?"

Barron was feeling queasy and an odd light pattern which seemed to be keeping time with the flicker from the neon light was dancing before his eyes. "Gerald?" and with a slow shake of his head, "Do you mean, *Gerry*?"

To Carter, the name resounded like the final blow of a large nail being driven hard into his client's coffin.