

SEX, MURDER AND MONEY

By M. A. Sardinha

Chapter 1

The sun's rays streamed through the open skylight, the heat from the rays coupled with Durban's humid climate made the white walled bedroom feel like a steam room. Michael Wheeler opened his eyes, it was only 7.30 in the morning but already he was perspiring profusely, he rolled over slowly and was confronted by a half naked young woman lying on her back, a sheet covering her from her waist down.

Her naked firm tanned wholesome breasts reaching up from her chest like two peaks of the Drakensburg mountains, he gazed at them, inches from his nose and watched as beads of sweat formed from the pores around the base of her soft pink nipples, growing until they could no longer defy gravity, then, slowly at first, gathered momentum and ran off down the sides or inward towards the cleavage where like tributaries they converged before running down to her flat stomach and off her sides. Michael shifted so that he could lean over and gently lick a bead of perspiration from her left breast, the immediate taste was mildly salty as he ran his tongue slowly up to her nipple, he could feel the arousal between his legs.

His wife Theresa lay motionless, apparently still asleep after consuming copious amounts of dry white wine, which started with the meal she had made for Michael the evening before, culminating in a marathon of passion. They both finally succumbed to blissful contented oblivion and fell asleep.

Michael engulfed her nipple with his lips and caressed it with his tongue feeling it harden in his mouth he gently sucked, his tongue caressing as he released her now hard erect nipple from his mouth and moved across the chasm, which was her cleavage to her right breast where he repeated the same process. She moaned softly

and turned onto her side facing him, opening her eyes drowsily and offering her mouth to him, he put his lips to hers, gently at first and then more hungrily as the passion welled up inside him, she responded lazily but then more eagerly as she shrugged off the drowsiness, The sun's rays streaming into their Esplanade apartment only served to fuel their desire for each other. She rolled onto her back, offering herself in meek submission, Michael moved his left hand slowly down over her flat stomach wet from the perspiration to the small mound with its v shaped dark hairstyle, she parted her legs slowly as he moved his hand gradually towards her inner thigh.

He gently massaged her clitoris, she moaned with pleasure as he moved his thumb gently in a circular motion allowing his middle finger to slip into the opening of her vagina and feeling the wetness of her passion, he gently moved his middle finger in and out as he continued massaging with his thumb.

She was becoming increasingly vocal as she felt the warmth of passion growing in her belly, "put it in please" she begged as she pulled at him to urging him to get on top of her. Michael obliged willingly and she guided his swollen erection through the mouth of her pulsating vagina, the perspiration dripping from both their lithe naked bodies as they rhythmically moved in unison.

"Oh Yes baby, come on let me feel you come inside me" she gasped, her arms and legs wrapped around him pulling him down onto her, "yes, come on, God I love you Michael, more, more come inside me let me feel your love, baby," she was shouting now, their motion accelerated as they drew to a climax and the spasms of desire engulfed their bodies amidst cries as they expressed their pleasure loudly, their bodies now enjoying the moments of pleasure with each wave of ecstasy.

Finally Michael collapsed onto the bed next to Theresa, gasping from the exertion, their bodies glistening with perspiration in the sunlight as they lay side by side their chests heaving with exhaustion unable to speak momentarily, due to the intensity of their passionate encounter.

They lay motionless, only their hands touching, the sun's rays had grown stronger now and Michael stirred first, "shit you are one sexy woman, I think a nice long cold shower is required, it's like a sauna in here," he said, as he rolled over and sat on the edge of the bed, before walking to one of the windows overlooking the marina below. He peered out at the picture postcard scene below, the yachts hardly moving at their moorings in the crowded yacht basin.

He turned away from the window "Right, I must get to work, are you going to lie there all day you lazy wench" he playfully slapped her foot as he made his way past Theresa lying naked on her back, the sheet that had half covered her before now in a crumpled heap on the floor, testimony to their heated erotic frolic.

"I suppose I'd better get up then, I'll make some coffee and toast, I only have to be at work by nine today, do you want some" she called out as she sat up on the end of the bed. "Ja okay, thanks," she heard him say as he vanished into the bathroom.

Twenty minutes later Michael emerged from the bathroom naked except for the towel in his hand, he walked to a switch on the wall and turned a dial, "I've just put the aircon on for a bit, okay, I need to cool down before I get dressed," he said his voice raised above the "whirring" sound as the air-conditioning started up.

Still naked, he placed the towel on a stool before sitting at the breakfast bar opposite Theresa who was standing naked but for the coffee cup in her hand.

"What time will you be home this evening, I don't have a particularly busy day and as it's Friday I am not going to the gym, so what about we meet at the Royal in the bar,"

he asked. "You do know we are having dinner with Andre, Sam and the others tonight, I'll phone them and arrange to meet them at the Royal," she replied. "What time," she asked, dreamily her cup at her lips as she gazed at nothing in particular. Oh, I'll get away by six, so lets say half past six" he put his coffee cup down and picked up a slice of toast. "That's perfect, I'd better get in the shower before I rape you" she responded putting down her cup and walking off in the direction of the bathroom.

Michael watched her firm buttocks disappear down the passage in the direction of the bathroom, his mind drifting to the wonderful sex they had enjoyed earlier, he had met her just over three years previously and they had been married for a year, she was thirty eight now and had been indicating a desire to have a baby soon.

She was no longer really enjoying her job as a personnel consultant and he was earning sufficient as a regional manager for Prosper Life to afford for her to stay home, he was thirty nine and it seemed a good time to start a family.

He took another sip of his coffee to wash down the toast and placed the half empty cup in the sink before making his way to the bedroom to get dressed, he could hear the water of the shower from the en suite but resisted the temptation to enjoy her again in the shower. He put down his cup and walked to the bedroom where he selected a dark blue lightweight Armani suit and a plain white shirt, scouring the tie rack he found a plain red tie, he walked over to the bed and placed the suit on top of the unruly pile of bedclothes. By the time she emerged from the bathroom he was dressed, his tie in his hand, retaining the unrestrained comfort until the last minute before he left. She stood naked in the middle of the room with a towel wrapped around her head, "you are a real temptress, you Jezebel" he said admiring her firm

shapely body, "enough now I must go before I get another erection and lose control" he picked up his jacket off the bed as he strode towards the door.

She clasped his face in her hands as he passed her and kissed him lovingly on the mouth "ooohh go quickly before I lose it" she said dropping her hands.

"Okay see you later at the Royal" he walked towards the door as she replied, "okay, love you" she called, "bye love you too," Michael shouted as he closed the front door behind him and made his way to the lift.

It was not far to the office but Michael had to take his company BMW from his garage in the basement and park in the company's building, in case he had to go somewhere during the day, it was also very humid and he would be sweating like a horse if he walked the seven or so blocks to the office. This time of year it was very much a case of moving from one air-conditioned environment to another to maintain some semblance of comfort.

The drive took only ten minutes in the morning traffic but he was glad of the cars' air conditioning as he would be soaked in perspiration if he did not have it on full blast.

He took the lift to the fifth floor and found that only the receptionist had arrived so far, the others would drift in within the next fifteen minutes or so, "morning Janice, how are we today," he said cheerily, walking up to her desk, where she was standing shuffling envelopes and papers, "morning Mr. Wheeler, fine thanks, here's your mail." She reached for a pile of unopened mail at the corner of her desk, "thank you" he replied as he took the mail and made his way down the corridor to his office.

He reached his office, placed his brief case on his desk and took off his jacket, as he walked towards the wardrobe in the corner, where he hung his jacket and adjusted the air conditioning.

He looked into the mirror and unfolded his collar before fastening his shirt's top button, he dexterously knotted his tie and with a final straightening of the knot, he turned and made his way to his desk.

Looking through his diary he noted that there was nothing particularly exciting happening, he had a lunch at twelve thirty and a few other minor appointments, just the way he liked his Friday to be organised, he thought.

The phone rang, the tone indicated that it was internal, he lifted the receiver, "yes Janice" he said knowing that as his secretary wasn't in yet it must be the receptionist. "It's Mr Hammond, from head office" came the reply, "ok" he responded.

He waited for the click, "hello Brian, how are we this morning?" he asked, "Fine and you?" the voice replied, "yes fine thank you, what can I do for you so early, I didn't know you chaps up there got in at this hour," he said with a chuckle.

"Cheeky bugger, I've been here since seven thirty, you guys at the coast have no idea about work" he responded jovially. "Anyway I see things are going well there, figures are all up for the year so far and up on last year, great stuff, Michael,"

"Thanks Brian, yes we're doing okay" so what's on your mind, you didn't phone to tell me what I already know."

"No Michael, I didn't but it's good to see you are doing so well down there, I want to put a proposition to you, you've been with us for five years now and you've got that region going beautifully, don't give me an answer straight away, I know you would like to discuss it with Theresa. We would like you to take over the sales and marketing at our London office, the position carries the title of deputy general manager which is one step up from your current regional manager status" there was a pause and Michael replied, calmly, "this is a bit sudden isn't it."

“Well an opening has arisen rather suddenly over there and we’d rather promote someone who has a track record with us than someone cold, and they have not been doing as well as we would like, what do you think.” “Well you’re right I’ll have to just digest this and talk to Theresa” Michael said, the news taking him by surprise.

“Okay well the salary and benefits are very attractive, we can discuss that later, there is a company car and we have a furnished flat not far from London in Canary Wharf which you can use until you are settled. We know you can handle the job and we know you are the right person, so the offer is there, you think about it over the weekend and let me know on Monday.” “Sounds like you want to move quickly, when do you want this position filled?” Michael asked taken a bit aback by the pressure to give an answer so quickly.

“Well the present incumbent has unfortunately had a boating accident and died so we need to move quickly on it, I’ll leave it with you for the weekend Michael, give me a call first thing Monday.” “Okay Brian you have a good weekend” “you too,” replied Michael replacing the receiver.

He sat motionless staring out of the window, his brain mulling over this new development as his mind raced through a maze of events that would have to take place before he could take up the position. How would Theresa view it, he wasn’t sure whether he was excited or scared, he resisted the temptation to phone Theresa and tell her and decided to wait until later.

The day progressed without any further events, he had phoned Theresa to tell her he was going to take his car to the flat and leave it there, as he didn’t want to drive after drinking. She normally only had one glass of wine and she had her car anyway so they could go in hers from there to wherever they decided to go and have supper. It

was only a fifteen minute walk to the bar and it was a lot cooler at that time of the day so he reckoned he would be about ten minutes late.

He did not mention his conversation with his boss, Brian, and wondered if he should discuss it tonight or tomorrow morning, they had a very open relationship and shared everything, he decided to take it head on and tell her immediately they met up.

She had said that they would be meeting some of their friends Andre and Michelle who were flying down from Johannesburg, they were very close friends so it may be a good idea to get their input.

Michael threaded his way through the normal Friday evening traffic and made his way down the esplanade to his flats' parking garage, where he parked in his bay and took the lift to the ground floor.

He came out in Field Street, the humid air hit him like an invisible curtain, he quickly removed his jacket and carried it over his arm, he knew he would be perspiring within two blocks.

He made his way over Smith Street and into West Street walking towards the beachfront.

The traffic was heavy across all three lanes and he was glad he was not stuck in this bumper to bumper free for all, it did strike him as odd though normally by now it was running a lot smoother, something must have happened further down the road.

There were a lot of hot heads around at this time of the day and people drove like idiots showing little courtesy and a lot of tailgating and jumping of red traffic lights as they rushed to get to their destinations. He crossed over at the pedestrian crossing and could hear emergency vehicle sirens in the distance, coming from the direction he was heading.

He was lost in his own world wondering how to break the news to Theresa, should he just blurt it out and say he had been offered a position in London or should he approach it more cautiously from the angle of asking what she thought of moving to London.

Michael ducked into a card shop he was passing deciding impulsively to buy Theresa a card, something just to say how much he loved her and to relieve his apprehension. He found what he was looking for and wrote a brief message on the inside before placing it in an envelope with the words "My very special pookie" a nickname he had coined for her.

It was already twenty five past six so he decided to call her on her mobile to say he was about five minutes away, the automatic answering service was on, probably no signal, "these damn things never work when you want them to" he muttered, and left a short message to say he would be with her in five minutes.

He could see a kaleidoscope of colours lighting up the dusky evening light, caused by flashing, blue, red and yellow lights coming from emergency vehicles at the intersection of Smith and Gardiner streets, so this was the cause of the back up of traffic, he thought.

He could see a mechanical horse attached to the trailer of a pantechnicon at right angles across the four lanes of Smith street and assumed the driver must have jumped the traffic lights and hit a car which was coming down Gardiner street, he could see the side of a mangled blue car partly stuck under the rear wheels of the horse and rammed tightly against the traffic light pole, the car appeared to be bent in two. Bloody idiot, they should keep these huge vehicles out of the city especially on Friday evenings, he thought as he reached the intersection.

The number plate of the car was lying in the middle of the road and Michael could see the registration clearly, he stopped and stared at the plastic lying in the road the letters and numbers burning into his eyes, he stood and stared for what seemed an age oblivious to the commotion or the crowd of curious onlookers which had gathered. He suddenly stopped dazed and confused and felt like he had been hit in the stomach, he thought he recognised the details on the number plate but he didn't want to, it wasn't possible that this could be his beautiful Theresa's car.

The flashing red light and sound of the ambulances' siren, as it started off up the road brought Michael back to reality as he watched the white vehicle speed off up Smith Street towards the hospital on the Berea.

He stumbled dazed from the pavement and walked towards the wreckage, two policemen were talking to each other as they surveyed the wreckage of the car, one was holding what appeared to be a ladies handbag. He made his way unsteadily towards them, he could now see the crushed dark blue Ford Escort, "excuse me" he muttered, his own voice like an echo in his head, as he got within a few feet of the policeman, "was a lady driving this vehicle, a lady with dark brown hair about thirty eight" he could hear his voice but it sounded like someone else's.

"Yes sir, do you know her" one of the policemen asked, "my wife has a car like this and I think that might be her number plate" Michael's legs suddenly felt very weak. He sank down onto his haunches dropping the jacket he was carrying, beads of perspiration welling up on his face. "Are you alright sir," one of the policemen put out a hand and placed it on his shoulder, to steady him.

"We have the lady's handbag, and her driving license, would you care to look and see if you can identify her" the policeman reached into the black leather handbag and held out the green identity book, he opened it at the page with the details and photograph.

Theresa had never liked that picture, she said it made her look scrawny, he thought as her face stared out at him, “yes its her, he heard himself say. ”Oh my god, where is she, is she alright,” he sobbed as the dreaded realisation set in, “the ambulance has taken her to Chelmsford Hospital, sir, if you go with this officer he will take you there, its only about five minutes away” the police officer replied as he helped Michael to his feet and the three of them made their way past the wreckage and bystanders to the police car, its blue lights flashing, the colour bouncing off the buildings on either side of the road, like some Hollywood film set.

“Excuse me, Mr Wheeler,” Michael didn’t know how long he had been sitting in the hospital waiting room, nor could he remember how he got there but the man standing in front of him in the white jacket with a stethoscope protruding from his top pocket was trying to tell him something.

“Mr Wheeler, can you hear me, sir, I’m sorry but we couldn’t save your wife, “he heard the words, but his brain didn’t register. His mobile started ringing and he reached robotically into his jacket pocket, “hello”, he answered mechanically, “hello, Michael, where are you guys,” the voice asked.” “Could you take this, I’m not sure what to say,” Michael said handing the phone to the doctor. The doctor took the phone and walked down the corridor, Michael heard him say hello but his mind had gone numb, he placed his head in his hands. How can anything have happened to his Theresa they were so happy she can’t have gone, it’s just not possible, his mind was wrestling with the events, trying to make sense of what was going on.

The doctor had returned, “Mr. Wheeler, the gentleman who was on the phone, Mr Andre De Lange is on his way he will be here in ten minutes can I get you some coffee while you wait.” “What, oh no, no thank you,” he muttered, disinterested, the

doctor made his way across the room to the reception and spoke to the nurse, who looked over and nodded.

Michael had no sense of time as he sat waiting for what, he did not know, there was just no need to go anywhere, his wife was here and there was no point in going if she wasn't going with him, he would just stay here until she came to get him.

"Michael Jesus, I'm so sorry," the tall, blonde athletic man said as he stood in front of Michael, his hand on his shoulder. "oh hello Andre, how's Sam he said matter of factly, not noticing the petite blonde woman who had sat down beside him.

"Michael I'm so sorry" the blonde said tears streaming from her eyes as she put her arm around his waist and hugged him, her wet face on his cheek, Michael sat motionless.

Slowly the truth of the matter was dawning on him and he began to sob uncontrollably. "Shit Andre, she's gone, what am I going to do, I don't know what to do, who do I phone to arrange things," he said between gasps as he sobbed.

He reached into his jacket inside pocket and took out an envelope, "I bought her this today," he said his voice almost inaudible as he held out the envelope to Andre, the words My Pookie written on the front.

Andre took the envelope, "Okay, don't worry we will handle everything, come on lets go" he said quietly as he helped Michael slowly to his feet.

"Don't worry Michael, Sam and I will sort everything out, come on now, there's no point in being here, come on lets go home," Andre continued in a soft soothing voice as he led Michael to the car park with his arm across his shoulders.

The nurse had given Andre an oral sedative to give to Michael, which he made him drink once they had taken him home and got him into bed, they spent the night at his apartment in the spare bed room and made all the arrangements the following day.

Theresa and Michael had stipulated that they should be cremated so as to avoid a long drawn out emotional affair and Andre was grateful for that as he wasn't too sure how Michael would cope with a whole service and coffin travelling to the cemetery, etc.

Saturday passed and Michael spent most of it drugged, by Sunday he seemed more in control and willing to talk. Andre and Samantha had decided to stay until the funeral, which was to be on the Tuesday, and Michael was grateful that they had stayed.

Andre and Michael had been friends since childhood and although Michael was a big man and could take care of himself Andre was a muscular six feet seven inches, he had done his compulsory military service in the marines and had been seconded by arrangement during training to the French foreign legion for six months where he saw action in Chad.

Michael was not sure what Andre did for a living, he knew he had spent some time in the army, but he seemed to be doing well and he had often told Michael that if he ever needed any help to just call as he had contacts.

Samantha had phoned Brian at Michael's head office and told him what had happened; Brian had flown down for the funeral, and told him to delay his decision until things had settled down.

By Thursday Michael was back in the office, he felt that it was worse moping around the flat, there were too many memories and he would rather be busy, so that his mind was occupied.

"Hello Brian, its Michael, yes I've decided to come back, I prefer to be busy, yes I'm fine, look I've thought about London and decided there is nothing here for me so I'll take it, to make a clean break so to speak, I need to get my teeth into a new challenge and this sounds like the ideal thing," he paused waiting for a reply.

“Well, I’m sorry its under such circumstances but your reasons sound sensible, we’ll need you to come up here so that we can talk about the detail and get things sorted out, can you be here by Monday. “ “Yes, no problem I’ll catch the eight o clock out, if you can arrange for a driver to collect me, I should be there by nine.” “Okay that’s not a problem, well I look forward to seeing you and once again, my condolences,””thank you, I’ll see you on Monday then, cheers” Michael replaced the receiver and contemplated his life for the next few weeks.

The next few weeks were frantic as Michael arranged to have his furniture placed in storage and put his flat on the market, the police had contacted him and told him that the driver of the pantechicon had been charged by the state for manslaughter, having jumped a red traffic light and causing grievous bodily harm.

Michael knew that he would never forget Theresa but he was sure that she would want him to get on with his life just as he would want her to do if the roles were reversed.

He had said all his goodbyes, all the paper work was complete, he had organised a Shengen visa in case he wanted to see some of the continent.

Andre would handle the sale of the apartment and he was relieved to have that off his mind, he believed there was no point in hanging on and he was looking forward to this exciting new challenge.

Michael flew up to Johannesburg on the Wednesday afternoon from Durban to catch his connecting flight from Johannesburg to London Heathrow, Brian took him to the airport and they had a drink before Michael went through passport control, it felt like he was crossing a bridge to a whole new life.

He was on his way and although he felt sad, he knew that this was the right thing to do and that Theresa would be with him no matter where his new life took him.

Chapter 2

The flight to Heathrow was uneventful, Michael, although flying economy had managed to get an upgrade to business class as the plane was not full although he had to make do with economy class food but that was a small price to pay for the comfort of bigger reclining seats, he had even managed some peaceful sleep, which he rarely achieved in economy.

He gazed out of the window as they approached the airport, it was eight o'clock in the morning and it was a clear April sky apart from one or two small clouds, he could see a river and rows of terraced houses, the multitude of chimney pots and television aerials like the skeletons of hundreds of fish reaching up, mixed with black dishes, god it was an unattractive place from the air.

He had lived and worked in England before some ten years ago when he was a computer programmer but that was just a six month secondment, he had enjoyed his stay then and although this was a more permanent position he expected that eventually he would end up back at head office in Johannesburg, but for now this was to be his new home and he felt apprehensively excited.

Passport control was the usual tedious affair; he wondered why it was that the officers who did the job were the same all over the world, like they were made from the same mould, unsmiling, cold and made you feel like a criminal.

He collected his luggage of two suitcases and a holdall, even though he had tried to bring the minimum he couldn't manage to reduce it any further, he knew the weather was unpredictable so he had packed appropriately, he knew he could buy extra clothing if he needed it but shopping for clothes was not a past time he enjoyed.

Pushing his now loaded trolley Michael passed through the green customs gate and through the sliding doors into the arrivals hall, with its throngs of people, he searched the sea of faces for a sign as he had been told he would be met by one of the branch managers who lived close to the airport.

He eventually spotted a young man with glasses dressed in a suit, holding a white card with his name written in thick black lettering, about head height and made his way towards him.

“Hi there, Michael Wheeler” he introduced himself, his right hand outstretched, the young man clasped his hand firmly and shook it, “good morning Mr Wheeler, John Bristow, did you have a good flight,” “yes thank you” he responded choosing to keep it formal as he was not familiar with the protocol here yet.

“The car is in the parking garage just across the road through that exit” John said pointing in the direction of glass sliding doors to their left, “Okay you lead on and I’ll follow” Michael pushed his trolley forward and followed John through the melee of people.

It never failed to amaze him, the sheer size of the this airport and the number of people, each time he had flown here compared with Johannesburg International which was South Africa’s main airport, this was huge and so busy.

They crossed the road which was crammed with people and luggage waiting at bus stops, getting in and out of taxis and made their way into the relative calm of the garage although packed with vehicles, and made their way to a white BMW 325 parked on the ground floor, “that was lucky” he said making polite conversation, “yes, someone was leaving when I arrived so I never had to go up to the second or third levels.” John replied.

Michael noticed from his accent that he must be from London that curious way of saying “ferd” instead of “third” he remembered from his last visit how he sometimes had to ask people to repeat themselves especially with some of the accents from further North but he knew his ear would soon tune in to it.

They managed to get one suitcase and the holdall into the boot and the second suitcase onto the back seat.

“So where are we going to first,” Michael asked, “well Mr Marchant suggested that I take you to your apartment and offload your luggage, so that you can see where you will be staying and then from there its not far into the office, so if you’re happy with that,” John replied, leaving the decision up to Michael. “Yes, that’s a good idea, lets get the luggage out of the way, first then,” he replied nodding, “this is your car by the way, so do you want to drive or should I?” John asked “I think it makes more sense for you to drive, don’t you, we can leave the car at the flat and catch a train or tube in as I don’t think I’ll be needing a car today anyway,” Michael replied.

Michael knew Andrew Marchant who was the general manager for the UK operation, he had met him on two previous occasions when he had visited head office and Michael had been in Johannesburg for meetings.

He was a little wary of the man who was rumoured to have been involved in some suspicious deal many years ago when he was working for an American life assurer, but he had been hired by The Crucible which was the UK companies name, and he assumed that they would have checked that all out before installing him as the chief operating officer here.

They made small talk as they drove through the traffic, Michael asking questions so as to form a more in depth picture than the broad canvas Brian had painted for him.

He was also surprised at the amount of traffic congestion and road works, which interrupted the traffic flow bringing it to a stand still on numerous occasions, how frustrating it must be to drive around the city.

He didn't anticipate using the car much, especially in the city and would rely on the public transport until he plucked up the courage to drive out to the country to have a look around, for the time being however he was sure he would be using public transport and cabs to get about.

He was impressed with the apartment, which overlooked a yacht basin, much like his one back home, and it was within a few minutes of the Docklands Light Railway, which was a bonus. They parked the car and made their way to the station where they purchased their tickets from the automated ticket machine the journey to Bank station was about twenty minutes and then the walk to the office was about five minutes, no need to brave the traffic and no underground to contend with, so a total one way journey of less than half an hour that was well organised.

They arrived at the building on the corner of Friday and Queen Victoria streets, which had a quaint little pub at the bottom, called The Seahorse.

John ushered Michael into the foyer where they filled in the visitors book before taking the lift to the seventh floor which was at the top of the building and Michael followed John past numerous work stations where people popped up to catch a glimpse of him, like the curious Meerkats in the veld in South Africa he presumed the grape vine had done its normal job and that everybody new some new foreign bloke was coming

They went to an imposing suite of offices and made their way through a maze of dark wood panelled passages with striking paintings of various scenes of London hanging

from the walls he could feel the plush carpeting underfoot as they came to a large office with a middle aged lady seated behind a light oak coloured desk.

“Morning, John,” she greeted as she stood up, and you must be Mr Wheeler, Daphne Clements,” she continued holding out her hand, which Michael took and clasped firmly before releasing almost immediately.

“Okay well I’d best get back to work then,” John said awkwardly, “yes, thank you for everything,” Michael replied as Daphne motioned him to the double dark doors, which he presumed was Andrew Marchants office.

Daphne knocked on the door and immediately opened one side and walked in with Michael following, “Mr Wheeler, Mr Marchant,” she announced and once Michael had passed her she stood in the entrance and asked, “tea or coffee gentlemen,” “oh I’d love a cup of black coffee, no sugar, please” Michael replied, “tea for me” Marchant followed and with that she left closing the door behind her.

“So Michael, how was the flight,” “fine thank you,” Michael replied as the two men made small talk, Michael felt that he still did not have the measure of this man, there just seemed to be that something which he could not quite fathom that made him wary of Andrew Marchant.

They spent a good two hours and a few cups of coffee and tea discussing what Michael’s brief was from head office and how Marchant interpreted his role, there were problems that needed addressing. They discussed Alan Brown who was a keen and experienced yachtsman, who had died when his yacht had exploded, apparently from gas that had collected in the bilge from a leak in the galley.

A cocktail party had been arranged for Friday evening in the boardroom in Michael’s honour to allow him to meet everyone, so he could at least get a good nights sleep tonight and be fresh to meet the troops.

Michael was shown to his office on the same floor, where he spent the rest of the day, not quite as palatial as Andrew Marchant's, but comfortable with his personal assistant Anne Williams, who spent the rest of the day acquainting Michael with who was who and generally bringing him up to speed with things generally.

Andrew had popped in on his way home and Michael decided to call it a day around six o'clock, Anne had left to catch her bus around five thirty so Michael decided to try the little pub he had seen when they had arrived.

He made his way to the foyer and greeted the security guard on the way out; he needed to get his bearings as he stood on the pavement in front of the entrance.

They had come in the main entrance and he noticed that the street name on the building opposite was Canon Street, he turned to the left and at the corner turned down walking towards the building he had noticed when they had arrived, ah yes that must be Queen Victoria Street he thought as he walked towards the building with its flags fluttering in the cool evening breeze.

The traffic was bumper to bumper, made up of busses, black cabs and cars hardly moving, thank god I don't have to negotiate this lot he thought as he reached the door of the pub and went inside.

It was quite small and not too full, he strode to the bar and hoisted himself onto one of the stools, there was a middle aged man and a blonde attractive middle aged woman behind the bar, the woman was serving a young pretty redhead who was with another blonde slightly older woman, the middle aged man came over to Michael, "yes sir, what can I get you," he said cheerily, Michael immediately detected the South African accent, "I'll have a pint of Carlsberg please," Michael replied, "which part of the old country are you from," Michael continued, "Cape Town" the man replied and you,

“Durbs” Michael responded, using the abbreviated term that all South Africans understood for Durban, “small world”.

They continued exploring each others heritage and having established that the man, Mannie and his wife Lindsey had been running the pub for almost a year, Michael felt more relaxed and at home. Mannie pointed out various people whom he knew worked for The Crucible and who frequented the pub, he even introduced him to the attractive young redhead and her friend who worked in the Accounts department of The Crucible, the day was ending quite favourably Michael thought.

Michael only stayed for one more drink buying the two girls a glass of dry white wine each and then deciding to make his way home after asking which way it was to Bank station.

He managed to negotiate the system for buying a ticket and after taking several wrong turns, he made his way through the warren of tunnels down and escalators until he reached the DLR station.

It was just as well that John had explained that he must get off at East India Quay otherwise he would probably have got off at Canary Wharf and wondered around the whole night as nothing would look familiar.

There was a note in the apartment with details of where the nearest shops were, and how often the apartment was cleaned, thank god for that he thought as he was used to a maid.

He would have to do his own washing but there was an ironing service which he would definitely use, well everything was falling into place so after hanging up and packing away his clothes he had a long shower and then choosing not to watch television and not feeling hungry he fell into bed exhausted from the days journey and activities.

Michael was up early, he showered and dressed quickly as his stomach was rumbling with hunger and as he had no provisions yet he needed to get into London and have some sort of breakfast.

The ticket machine at the station proved to be a bit of a battle but he eventually figured it out and arrived at Bank station at seven thirty, he emerged from the underground in Canon Street and spotted a Prêt à Manger, where he bought a tuna sandwich and a carton of coffee, the sandwich unfortunately had mayonnaise on it but he decided he would overlook that fact for today.

He found the office easily and using the security card which Anne had given him he was relieved to finally be in his office, no one else had arrived yet so he managed to eat his sandwich and get through half his coffee before Anne arrived.

He spent the day interrogating her about his predecessor, Alan Brown and established that his death had been very suspicious given that he was an accomplished sailor; it was hard to believe that he would have made such an elementary mistake as to use a naked flame when the smell of gas must have been obvious.

The coroner had apparently concluded that there were no suspicious circumstances and that death was as a result of misadventure.

Anne had been with the company for three years and Alan had been with the company just over a year, he had been recruited from outside for the position, from another life company.

Michael had been going over past production figures and noticed that a large percentage of their business was derived through an independent brokerage which seemed to specialise in zero rated coupons, back to back with annuities, where the commissions paid were one off first year only and the contracts were for a minimum of five years.

Nothing much wrong with that he thought but he would like to encourage more of their core business which was essentially life and retirement products, while they had these investment products in south Africa they only accounted for about twenty five percent of their total income as opposed to nearly sixty percent here, which was not a healthy mix.

Michael had surreptitiously found out what the staff's opinion of senior management was and also some insight into the various characters in the office, Anne had proved very helpful and he could feel that they were going to get on well.

Andrew Marchant came to Michael's office at six o'clock and led Michael to the cavernous boardroom, which had a sliding partition sidewall, this had been opened for the occasion, to accommodate the two hundred and twenty staff who had assembled. They strode to an area on the opposite side to the doorway where there was a small raised area with a lectern and microphone.

Andrew stepped up to the lectern and spoke calmly into the microphone, "good evening," there was a sort of muffled response, "welcome to this very special occasion, as you know we recently lost John Bristow under most unfortunate circumstances.

While we regret the loss, the show must go on and to this end, Michael Wheeler has taken up the post of Deputy General Manager Sales and Marketing, he has an impeccable and successful record and has been with our South African office for five years, he is highly thought of and comes highly recommended, please join me in a round of applause as we invite him to say a few words.

Michael stepped up to the microphone amid enthusiastic hand clapping, he told them how happy he was to be with them and that he looked forward to meeting everyone and enjoying a long and prosperous time with them.

After the speeches he needed a drink and made his way to the drinks table where two young men dressed in black trousers and white shirts with black bow ties were dispensing drinks.

"I'll have a glass of dry white wine please," he asked, another tall dark haired man had moved beside him and he introduced himself, "Phillip Downs," he said as he proffered his right hand in salutation, "company actuary, I'm just down the passage from you on the right" he had a crisp public school, educated accent and annunciated his words carefully, his bottom lip became very animated when he spoke.

They continued talking and Phillip introduced him to someone else who introduced him to someone else all in keeping with the way corporate cocktail parties progressed. Michael was pleased that by now the novelty of his arrival was wearing off and he was no longer regarded with that acquired suspicion one has to deal with when you first arrive at a company, fortunately the alcohol was making them all relax and he had met most of them by now.

One of the girls, Alison, from the pub the previous evening came over to him, "come on Michael, I want to introduce you to my boss," she said as she lead him across the room to a group of three women, one with her back to him, he noticed that she wasn't very tall but she had an exquisite pair of legs, what he could see of them anyway which was where the hem of her skirt ended, six inches above the knee.

She turned around as they reached the group, "this is Christine Mc Ardie, our company secretary," Alison said as she introduced the woman who had just turned around, she was thirty two, five feet tall, slender build with small rounded breasts inside a tight fitting pale pink top with a black skirt which exposed her beautifully shaped legs, her short reddish blonde hair gave her an almost impish look, she wore round glasses behind which she had the most expressive green eyes above full lips

which were now mouthing his name, “Mr Wheeler” was all Michael heard and he realised that she was also South African.

“Michael please lets dispense with the Mr. unless you want me to call you Miss or Mrs, Good evening” he replied, a fellow countryman I see,” “yes I have been here two years now” he was captivated by the radiance of her bespectacled face.” And this is Courtney and Janet,” Alison continued jolting him from his hypnotised state, to introduce him to the other women standing in the group, Michael nodded politely, and looked for something to say, “so you all work together then” he heard himself say rather lamely.

“Yes” they replied in unison, fortunately Christine rescued him from any further weak comments, “I believe you only arrived yesterday and already you have found our watering hole” “the little pub, yes, I popped in for a drink last night, I haven’t been into an English pub for a few years so I thought it was the right thing to do having landed in old Blighty,” Michael replied, still thinking he sounded like a right pratt. “And you have met our South African landlord then” she asked, “Oh yes he was very informative, there seem to be quite a few over here, “ he replied,” yes there are quite a few but you’ll find it’s a very cosmopolitan city, with many diverse nationalities and cultures, makes it interesting, coupled with all the history.” “Where are you staying” she asked, “Canary Wharf“ he replied “Studley Court near East India Quay DLR station.”

“Really, well we are neighbours, what floor are you on, she asked, “second” he replied, “well I’m on the third,” she said surprised.” the other girls in the group let out an “ooo” in unison as Christine continued, “do you cook,” Christine asked, “ yes I’m not too bad” Michael replied.” Oh well that’s you sorted Christine, she can’t cook to save her life” Alison blurted laughingly, “well I’m an accountant, what do you

expect,” responded Christine. “Well I’ll be delighted to cook you a meal one evening, once I’ve stocked up,” countered Michael gallantly, to another “ooo” from the girls. I might take you up on that, Christine threw in cheekily, “but now its getting late so what’s happening, she continued looking at the girls, “well seeing as you don’t cook and I don’t have any food in the house yet, why don’t I take you all out to dinner, there must be somewhere close by” Michael said persuasively.

“Now there’s an offer we can’t refuse, what about Brown’s its not too far and the foods to die for,” Alison suggested, “I hope not but that sounds great, that’ll do me, what about you lot,” Christine motioned to the other girls, who all nodded in approval, “lets meet in the foyer in ten minutes then.” “Michael was left to say goodnight to those who were still enjoying the last of the snacks and the drinks before making his way to the foyer.

They had walked the five minutes to Browns’ in Cheapside, the evening had been enjoyable and Michael felt quite chuffed to be in the company of four attractive women.

They had wanted to know all about him and he had been quite candid, telling them all about his marriage, how Theresa had died, he was still hurting but knew he had to deal with it and being occupied and making a fresh start in a new country left him little time to dwell on the tragedy.

He learned a little about each one and asked questions about his predecessor, to which he was surprised to learn there were few answers and a great deal of suspicion and scepticism surrounding the whole affair, as if it had been swept under the carpet. He slowly turned his attention more and more to Christine, she too had suffered a tragedy when here husband of five years had died in a motor accident back in South Africa,

and she had adjusted well and had also used the opportunity to come to London as a way to move on.

She was thirty, Michael thought oops got that wrong but didn't say anything, enjoyed most sports and enjoyed eating out, mainly because she was a hopeless cook but also because she worked late most days and it was more convenient.

Michael also learnt that a lot of people living and working in London not only did not own a car, but also couldn't drive either, a fact foreign to South Africans.

She used a black or mini cab and if she needed to go anywhere which was inconvenient by train or bus, she would hire a car if she wanted to go anywhere outside the city and it had worked for her for three years without having the expense of road tax, car maintenance and congestion charges if you wanted to drive into London as well as all the other baggage that came with owning a car in the UK. The evening ended and Michael tried to insist on paying but they would not hear of it they all insisted on paying their way and he eventually succumbed, as he was totally outnumbered.

He shared a taxi with Christine to the flat and saw her to her door and was rewarded with a good night peck on the cheek, which was more than he had expected, he used the stairs to reach his flat two floors below and after a few glasses of water undressed and went to bed where he fell into a blissful sleep within minutes.

Michael rose early the next morning with a slight hangover and only had water to drink, as he had still not bought any groceries so he decided that he needed to stock up.

Christine had told him that there was a Tesco's and a Waitrose in Canary Wharf, if he wanted to save there was an Asda in Crossharbour which was just two or three stations away.

Michael elected to go to Canary Wharf by train so that he could get used to travelling by public transport and after a shower he dressed in a t shirt and jeans and caught the DLR the one station to Canary Wharf. He was oblivious to the man who got out of the grey Ford Focus that was parked a few yards from his block and followed him onto the train. The station was part of the shopping centre and Michael found himself literally falling into the shopping centre from the station and being confronted with a plethora of shops and throngs of people going about their Saturday morning business, what a great idea having a shopping centre as part of the station, he thought as he mingled with the crowd.

Shopping was a means to an end for Michael, he never enjoyed it and used to go with Theresa to help carry the bags to the car or when she said he needed underwear or something but he hated trying on clothes and she often had to force him otherwise he probably wouldn't bother.

He had noticed where Tesco's was but Christine had said that Waitrose was a nicer store and their ready meals were very good and even though Michael could cook he envisaged that there would be evenings when it would be easier to just pop one of those TV dinners into the microwave, instead of cooking just for one.

He noted the shops on the way as he made his way to Waitrose, there was a computer and small appliance store, shoe repairs, a newsagent and a host of clothes stores that he might need in the future so it was good to know what was in the centre.

Eventually he reached Waitrose which immediately reminded him of Woolworths in South Africa which Christine had told him was like a Marks and Spencers here, what did she call it, oh yes Marks and Sparks, he recalled.

He filled his trolley with what he thought was enough items to keep himself going for a week including a few bottles of South African wine he had found as well as some

French wine, he thought he had better acquaint himself with the wines he was more likely to come across if he ate out, he had noticed at Brown's the night before that there were some French wines on the menu and his knowledge of French wines was non-existent..

Realising that it would be difficult to carry all the bags back to the flat he asked at the checkout where he could get a taxi, he was surprised when the polite young lady referred him to the customer service desk where they arranged for a taxi to meet him and the lady showed him to the exit where the taxi would pick him up.

Very organised he thought as he waited obviously what the girls had said earlier was true about using taxis and they were certainly set up here to provide the level of service he was not used to in South Africa.

Michael duly arrived back at the flat and paid the driver five pound as he thought that the three pound fifty was too cheap, the driver was happy and Michael only had to take the lift to his flat so it was like having used his own car.

He never noticed that the white Ford was still parked in the same spot with only one occupant, the other making his way back from Canary Wharf where he had followed Michael and watched him take the taxi.

After unpacking his groceries Michael had a drink of orange juice and then decided to go into London and just wander around, to reacquaint himself with the city, he and Theresa had been on holiday two years ago and he remembered parts of it.

He caught the DLR to Bank station and decided to take a different route out from the one he used when he went to work and came out of Mansion House station, at first he was confused until then he noticed the Sea Horse to his left at the bottom of his office block and was amazed that he had come out even closer than when he used the other exit.

The tall man following him also crossed Queen Victoria street in front of the Sea Horse behind Michael was keeping a reasonable distance so as not to lose sight of him as he made his way round the corner to Saint Paul's cathedral with its golden cross atop the famous imposing dome.

He walked around Covent Garden, where he visited the Springbok bar, a dingy underground pub full of South Africans, and enjoyed a nostalgic Castle lager before going to Trafalgar, all the time blissfully unaware that he was being followed.

When he arrived back at his flat, he poured himself a glass of the Australian Cabernet he had bought and reflected on how well he had done getting in and out of London and finding a new route to work, all in all a satisfying day.

He settled down to an evening of television and a curry he had bought from Waitrose. Thoughts of Theresa flooded his mind and he allowed the tears to flow as he sobbed, remembering the places they had visited and the pictures they had taken around the places he had visited today.

Sunday morning saw Michael determined to get back to his normal regime of running five times a week and going to the gym at least four times a week, he pulled on his trainers and made his way down the stairs to the road below where he broke into a slow jog, in the direction of Crossharbour, Christine had told him there was a gym there somewhere.

He found the gym easily as he ran alongside the canal, with its shops and a floating Chinese restaurant, he joined the gym and did a few light exercises before jogging back to his flat, still oblivious to the white car which had followed him to the gym and back.

A light breakfast of coffee and toast followed a shower and Michael was once again on the DLR this time to Lewisham and Greenwich to see what it had to offer, he felt

like a tourist and why not, he had only been in London a short time, and he felt the need to get out rather than brood in his flat.

He wondered what Christine was doing, he knew that she had gone to play golf on Saturday but did not want to seem like he was pursuing her even though he would have been pleased with her company.

Another day of sightseeing and general orientation was giving him much needed exercise and he was amazed at how unfit he had become during the last few weeks of inactivity.

That evening he settled down to read the Sunday papers and fell asleep in front of the television, which apart from one program had bored him so much that he could not keep his eyes open, it must have been two o'clock when he woke up and climbed into bed.

He was up early on Monday he never noticed that the white car had gone when he boarded the DLR and made his way using his newly discovered route to the office, where he arrived at seven thirty.

The offices were deserted and Michael poured himself into the masses of printouts with figures from the various branches and dictated letters for Anne to get stuck into when she arrived.

The weeks passed into months and Michael had been to visit branches in Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester and up in Scotland, he had met everyone and was slowly imposing his ideas and was congratulated by Andrew on the results he was getting. Brian had phoned him several times from South Africa and commended him on the good reports he had received saying he could already see improvements in some of the production figures and an increase in their core business.

He had broached the subject of the business produced by Galliano Insurance Brokers and had visited them to introduce himself. He had met Mr Antonio Ulliano, the managing director, a sullen, squat, serious man in his mid fifties, he had a thick Italian accent and Michael had to listen carefully to understand him. He wore a very large gold ring with a crest on his chubby almost sausage like right ring finger. Michael could detect the irritation when he broached the subject of perhaps increasing their life business to a ratio in line with their investment business.

Andrew had called him in shortly after that visit and suggested that as Galliano gave them virtually one hundred percent of their investment business, which was their core business perhaps it would be more prudent to try and increase the life portfolio from other brokers.

Michael assumed that, that had been a subtle warning not to upset Mr Ulliano and he elected to not pursue the matter so openly and to keep his findings to himself.

He and Christine had met for drinks on several occasions and discussed various matters and Michael had probed carefully to see how much she knew and was willing to divulge about Andrew and Gallino brokers.

She had given him the last financial report and had suggested he read it carefully and intimated that she was willing to discuss any points he cared to raise.

He had poured for days over the figures and reports and was particularly drawn to an item under "notes to the balance sheet, particularly the paragraph referring to outside shareholder interests, where he noticed that Galliano was listed as a substantial shareholder.

He had met with Christine several times but she had been reluctant to discuss anything in the office or even the pub, so Michael suggested that she come over for dinner one Friday evening, under the pretext that she could savour some of his

cooking, and maybe discuss some things he wanted to clarify, she agreed and Michael was delighted.

He stopped off at Waitrose for some extra groceries and a few bottles of a delicious Australian Blanc de Blanc he had found to compliment the roast chicken with vegetables he had decided to cook, keeping it simple and healthy as he knew she tried to stick to a healthy diet.

She arrived on time and Michael immediately offered her some wine, they soon settled into conversation while she sat at the counter on the dining room side and he prepared the meal in the kitchen.

She was impressed with his cooking and they continued to explore each others past while enjoying the food and wine, after dinner she insisted on helping him with the dishes before she settled down on the couch, Michael chivalrously sitting on the chair opposite separated by the coffee table.

She had politely asked if she could remove her shoes and had tucked her feet onto the couch under her bum leaning with her head resting on her right arm, the light cotton dress pulled up exposing her legs to just above her knees and pulling tightly across her pert little breasts, Michael noticed that she was not wearing a bra.

It seemed an appropriate time to subtly change the direction of the conversation and Michael started asking her about Galliano's shares in The Crucible. "That seems rather odd that an insurance brokerage should own so many shares in a life insurer," he asked. "Well we are a public company so it seems above board but yes it is a little strange for them to hold so many," she responded shifting to pick up her glass.

"I must admit I am concerned at the amount of Investment business we take from them in particular the high return five year annuities funding zero rated coupons, the

commissions are one off but two point five percent on the coupon and one point five on the annuity seems a bit high” he continued.

“Well there is also another side to this, I have noticed that none of those investments run for more than one year and that they are surrendered soon after twelve months has elapsed, that way they avoid a claw back of commission and the penalty is calculated equal to the amount of the commission, rather conveniently,” she added.

“Oh I didn’t know that, so effectively we are not making anything on these deals,” Michael screwed his face quizzically.

“No, we are actually losing money if you take the set up costs and the consultant’s over rider,” she replied.

“Why hasn’t anybody brought this up before,” Michael asked, “oh someone has, and he is no longer with us,” she said slowly and menacingly, “Alan Brown” Michael let the words escape from his lips with a slight nod of his head, “Exactly.”

Their discussion continued into the early hours before Christine said she had to go home, Michael walked her to the door and was about to open it when she placed her hand on his on the door handle and lifted his hand placing it on her shoulder and placing her lips on his, they embraced a long lingering kiss, her tongue searching for his, he could feel her pressing her body against his and he could smell the soft fragrance of her perfume.

They stumbled back to the couch still kissing and Michael sat her down gently onto the couch and ran his hand over the straps of her dress one at a time, with their mouths still joined in a smouldering embrace he slowly moved the straps down to her elbows, she moved her arms down so that he could take it off and then lay on the couch naked apart from a pink pair of panties.

She was unbuttoning his shirt and he helped her pulling it back off his shoulders and discarding it on the floor, "take those jeans off" she ordered, "released her lips," lets go to the bedroom", Michael obliged and they both ran to the bedroom, Michael discarding his underpants on the way, releasing his restricted erection.

She reached the bed first and flopped onto her back, her pert small breasts with their pink erect nipples inviting him to take them in his lips, her legs were lovely and she was slim with a wonderfully flat stomach.

He lent over her kissing her breasts moving his head from side to side and allowing his tongue to caress her nipples going from one to the other, she had taken his erection in her hand and he felt her soft gently touch, he reached down and removed her panties as she arched her body so that he could remove them, and he tossed them onto the bed.

"Come on to the bed." She said squirming herself into the centre of the double bed and pulling him with her one hand on his shoulder the other on his hard, erection, he obliged and rolled onto the bed.

She rolled onto him in the sixty nine position and he felt her breasts, her nipples pressing into his stomach as she took him into her mouth, he could feel her tongue caressing him and then she was moving her head up and down her lips firmly holding him, he reached between her legs from behind and she parted them wider squatting on his face as she moved her head gently up and down, he could feel the tingle as the pleasure shot through him.

She felt his hands move between her legs and let him move slowly to her wet vagina, she felt him probing softly, rubbing her clitoris with his finger while his tongue entered her, she had not been touched by a man since coming to London three years ago and it felt good.

She felt his other hand trying to slip between their bodies trying to get to her breast and she lifted her side to allow him to find her erect nipples, his touch was so gently and she could feel the passion welling up inside her belly, the spasms of pleasure consuming her with each movement of his hand, her pleasure visible by her audible moaning.

Michael had not been made love to like this and he was thoroughly enjoying the new experience he decided to be a little more adventurous.

She was becoming more vocal and was pushing down trying to get his tongue deeper into her wet vagina, she felt him and allowed him to push his tongue into her, she felt him withdraw and his mouth which was now on her clitoris, he let out a low humming sound and she felt his lips vibrating, the sensation sending spasms of pleasure through her whole body, nobody had done that to her before.

They were locked in this position each enjoying the new sensations that they were experiencing and they could feel and hear the pleasure they were giving each other. Eventually she released him from her mouth and lifted herself off him rolling onto her back, please take me Michael, "she whispered as she parted her legs impatiently pulling him towards her and guiding his wet throbbing erection into her.

He obliged willingly the feeling so much more sensitive as he entered her he sat on her and pushed down hard on her; she let out a cry of pleasure as she tried to devour every inch of him inside her thrusting her pelvis back up to him with each move that he made down on her..

She felt his strong arms gripped around her waist his tongue flicking over her breasts as he occasionally lent forward kissing her mouth then her breasts, the tremors of delight passing with waves through her body with each movement of his body as they now moved in unison. Finally the pangs of their passion welled up culminating in

spasms which made their bodies momentarily ridged as they both screamed with delight and then collapsed numb and exhausted from the near two and a half hours of continuous pleasure.

They lay next to each other enjoying the feelings passing through them, she leaned over and kissed him, his lips responding and then she sank back onto the pillow, their hands lying touching between them.

"Would you mind, if I stayed the night," she whispered, "if you don't I'll never speak to you again," he replied, she turned onto her side away from him and he turned facing her with his arm around her waist, his hand reaching up and resting between her breasts, she clutched his hand to her chest, "good night," "good night."

Michael was the first to wake, they had disentangled during the night and he easily slipped out of the bed, he pulled on a pair of shorts and made his way to the bathroom down the passage not wanting to wake Christine using the ensuite bathroom.

He boiled the kettle, not knowing whether she preferred coffee or tea, so he made himself a cup of coffee and stood at the lounge window, his mind filled with the previous evening and thoughts of Theresa.

"Very pensive," he heard her say and he turned smiling, "its okay, you know, comparisons and guilt are normal, I thought you were wonderful and I have no regrets, long as we keep it quiet" she continued as she walked across the room dressed in his bathrobe, "hope you don't mind." "No don't be silly, would you like some tea or coffee," he asked as he walked to the kitchen. "Oh coffee please, they haven't converted me to tea yet and I doubt they ever will."

She sat on the couch tucking her feet under her, her tousled short hair sticking out at all angles, Michael placed her cup of steaming coffee in front of her on the coffee table and sat in the chair opposite.

“So what have you got planned for today,” he asked trying to clear his mind of Theresa and attempting to disguise the guilt that must be written all over his face. “Well I don’t have much on at all today, I need to do some shopping for groceries but apart from that, nothing, and you.”

“I have started going for a run to the gym but after that I had nothing planned,” he was relaxing a bit at last.

“Good, I think there may be a few things we should discuss and I don’t only mean what happened but perhaps I can help you to understand a few work related issues better.” She placed her cup on the table and made her way to the bedroom, “I’ll get dressed and then go upstairs and have a shower, get changed and meet to you back here.” Sounds great,” Michael was on his feet and took the cups to the kitchen, he felt much better now, she seemed so relaxed and he had felt so awkward trying to deal with his own conscience and how she was going to react, she was so matter of fact, what an idiot, he thought, you really must get it together boy. She suddenly appeared from the bedroom dressed, her hair still a mess and he smiled, “I know, my hairs a bloody mess, but I only have to go two flights so who cares.” He walked her to the door and they kissed lightly before she bounded athletically up the stairs her lovely legs, fixed in his mind, “see you in half an hour,” he called after her, as he closed the door.

Michael was in the kitchen when he heard the knock at the door and he hurried expectantly opening it with a flourish, he was not disappointed, she was dressed in faded blue jeans with white t shirt which pulled firmly across her small firm breasts, her hair no longer the tasselled mess, he was drawn to her pretty bespectacled face, “wow, you do scrub up well,” he announced “shall we go,” “you don’t do too badly yourself,” she replied smiling, “yes, the shops stay open late so why don’t we go into

London and then on the way back we can stop off at Waitroses, "Okay, sounds good to me," he was halfway down the steps and elated at having her for the day, she bounded down after him the excitement in her face clearly evident.

They spent the day roaming around the West End, had a light salad lunch and were revelling in each others company, chatting like two school kids who had just fallen madly in love, occasionally holding hands but aware that they did not want to appear too intimate in case they were seen by someone from the office, they were blissfully unaware of the tall casually dressed man who had followed them from East India key station.

As planned they stopped off for a few groceries and decided to take the DLR back to the flat as they could easily manage the few parcels between them, Christine felt so comfortable with him a feeling she had not imagined she would feel again.

"Do you want to come over again later or am I monopolising your life now" Michael asked apologetically, as he climbed out of the lift on his floor, "you don't have to if you have other plans." "You silly, silly man, of course I have no plans, shall we just stay in or do you want to go out for something to eat," she said smiling.

"I'll rustle up something" he said, almost bursting with delight, "okay then, what time, " whenever you are ready," he replied turning towards his flat, as he tried to disguise the excitement that was threatening to escape in screams of happiness.

The lift door closed and he skipped to his front door, dancing through and shrieking "yes, yes, yes" as he threw the door closed and pulled his clothes off tossing them aside as he dived in the bathroom for a shower.

He was in the kitchen preparing an arrabiata sauce for his dish of penne, when there was a knock at the door, "come in its open" he called, he turned to see her enter a

bottle of red wine in her hand, she wore a red skirt and a white blouse, her erect nipples indicating that she was not wearing a bra.

“She came into the kitchen and kissed him squarely on the mouth a long lingering smouldering kiss, while she held her body tight against him, he had his hand round her waist and slowly moved it to her firm buttock and noticed that she did not seem to be wearing any underwear at all, he could feel something stir between his legs in the shorts he had pulled on expecting to change into jeans later before she arrived. Still kissing him she pulled him towards the lounge, he quickly reached over and turned off the stove and moved his saucepan off the hot plate, succumbing to her wishes willingly.

“I have no underwear on” she whispered releasing her mouth momentarily and then kissing him again as she led him, she fell backwards onto the couch her skirt falling just so that he could see the darkness of her manicured pubic hair, he stood over her and she reached up and pulled his shorts and underpants off hungrily, “god I can’t get enough of you she said placing her spectacles on the coffee table and undoing her blouse so that it fell open and to the sides.

Michael pulled his shirt off and moved her skirt up as he fell to his knees he ran his tongue up her inner right thigh as he knelt between her legs, she parted them even wider to allow him to do what he wanted. He placed his shoulders behind her knees, gently forcing her to open them even more his hands already on her breasts gently rubbing her nipples between his thumbs and forefingers, his tongue caressing her inner thigh and slowly moving to her clitoris, she was already wet the heat radiating from the pinkness of her vagina, he placed his lips on her clitoris and hummed so that his lips vibrated, she instantly moaned from the pleasure of his touch.

She could feel his hands on her so gently but the pleasure radiated through her chest and suddenly she could feel his mouth on her, he had also gently pushed his fingers into her and the combination of his mouth and fingers arousing her so that the fire in her belly caused her to move her lower body up and down slowly at first and then more rapidly, she felt as if she was in a mist, the haze enveloping her, she was trying to reach for him but she was weak with the sensitivity between her legs, she was trying to hold back but she couldn't contain herself any longer, "oh god, I can't stop, its lovely don't stop please, she pleaded as the waves of delight raced through her all her extremities tingling with delight, she felt intoxicated, not wanting it to end, he had become more intense and she wanted him inside her now.

She pulled at him," please, please come inside me" she said hoarsely out of breath from the sheer pleasure, she felt him inside her and she pulled him hard so that she could feel him deep inside her, "oh yes, its wonderful" she had her legs curled around him stopping him momentarily as the waves of passion passed through her, she could feel him coming inside her.

Michael felt her strong legs stopping him from continuing the rhythm they had built up and could feel her vagina contracting on him, she held him there for just a moment, he could feel himself ejaculating, she released him urging him to continue, he pushed as hard as he could through the sensitivity of his own passion feeling her sweet breath on his cheek as she screamed out in delight, "can't stop, please don't stop", then she was laughing, " yes more, please," she begged.

He felt the passion inside him and he fought to stop himself ejaculating again, enjoying the pleasure she was experiencing as much as his own, he had never known a woman like this and he was enjoying every moment.

Eventually he could hold back no more and his body contorted in spasms as he enjoyed the feeling again, she had him firmly clasped between her legs, she was consumed with satisfaction not only in her own pleasure but she could feel his as well. They stayed fixed in that position for what seemed an eternity, enjoying each other, he kissed her on the lips and she could taste herself on his moist lips and she kissed him harder.

She allowed him to withdraw and he rolled onto the carpet, panting exhausted from the effort, she lay there her one leg resting on the floor, her skirt still around her waist and her blouse open.

After a few moments Michael sat up and kissed her on her clitoris, "oh," she moaned "stop it, you'll get me going again" she sat up and pulled her skirt down tugging at her blouse to find the buttons.

"You know, I think we had better have something to eat, before I start on you again, what an aperitif, you are something else," he replied standing up and pulling on his clothes.

"I'm starving," she said as she walked barefoot to the kitchen, her brown and white slip-on sandals discarded in the lounge, "time for some wine," she found the corkscrew and was feverishly busying herself with the bottle, Michael had gone to the bathroom, "good idea" he called, "I'll get on with dinner in a moment."

They ate their pasta, preferring to sit in the lounge, she on the couch him in the armchair, discussing the company, he found that she was gradually opening up to him. "So you are saying that Alan had stumbled onto what he thought could be a laundering scam, who else knew that," Michael said trying to piece together the events leading up to Alan Brown's death.

“Well he came to me one day and said that he had been investigating Antonio Ulliano and believed that he was part of the mafia back in the states and his theory was that they were using the brokerage to launder large sums of money through the back to back products that they supposedly were selling” she said picking up her glass and sipping some wine.

“Okay, so the money always comes by way of a Galliana cheque with the application, they supposedly having received payment from the client, what about phoning some of the clients, on the pretext of say, querying the commencement date of the investment,” he asked. “All the applications have Galliana’s as a contact address and telephone number, they apparently don’t like companies phoning their clients direct,” she responded, “so they could be bogus names, taken from a telephone directories or whatever” he said a pensively.

“Do you think Andrew is in on this,” Michael was intrigued he never liked Andrew from their first meeting he had felt that something was not quite what it seemed, “yes he must be, Alan said that he had queried the business with Andrew and he had been warned off,” she answered nodding.

“Just like me, but I fortunately only queried the type of business and I was told, to put it mildly, not my business,” Michael was beginning to regret having ever mentioned it to Andrew as he would be on his guard if he should broach the subject again.

“But what effect will this have on the overall profitability of the company,” he continued.

“Well we are offering them ridiculously high yielding five year annuities and we are loosing on the zero rated coupon, so the pensions business is having to fund the high annuity rates, ultimately the way the volumes are increasing we will be increasing our new business which will cloud the issue for a while longer but we are losing money,

eventually it will catch up with us. Our fully vesting retirement annuities are no longer fully vesting so those policy holders are already suffering and our pure endowment fund is going backwards fast,” he listened carefully to her every word. “I wonder if Brian is in on it,” he said aloud, “I think all the directors here and back home are, I think they are bleeding the company in South Africa and getting money out somehow and then feeding it through Galliana’s as well as what they are putting through from here,” she said. “I have looked at the subsidiaries of Galliana’s and they have numerous companies funded by bank loans where they are using these back to backs as collateral. So they have all these legitimate companies, last year they sold a lot of them, repaid the loans with the back to backs and they ended up with clean liquidity that they can show were the proceeds from business they had sold.”

She continued with Michael hanging on every word his mind racing trying to keep up with her. “I also notice that they seem to be reducing the number of subsidiaries and I am sure they have opened offshore accounts which must be packed with the proceeds of these companies and the back to backs they have cashed. We can only keep going at this rate for so long, already the cracks are beginning to show, we have had a few people who have reached retirement age asking why their funds have performed so badly but it’s just the tip of the iceberg.”

“So it looks as if they are intending to get out, if you say they have been selling off subsidiaries, have we any idea how many of these rogue back to backs are still on the books,” he asked. “Oh loads but those can be cashed off in a matter of a month or two, there is a clause which allows them to be cashed before the expiry of a year with an additional penalty but that’s only five percent, so that won’t bother them.” We also put out our annual report, you’ll remember and the figures have been “massaged” to look very good, so the share price went up and a number of directors have been

filtering their shares through, selling off tranches at a time,” so that’s another clue that they are up to something. We are also running an overdraft which as a life office we are not allowed to do,” the information filled Michaels head until it felt as though it was bursting.

“Are we doing the same thing back in South Africa, I know that we are not big in the back to back market but we were starting to sell quite a few,” he asked. “I must be honest I have been away for three years and when I left everything looked fine, they also have exchange control provisions over there but not on capital of course, I don’t know” she replied shrugging her shoulders.

“I’m not sure how to tackle this problem but I will think of something,” and with that he got up and reached over taking her by the hand, “come on its late, are you staying.” “If you don’t mind,” she asked coyly, “my house is your house, “his arm was around her slim waist as he gently coaxed her to the bedroom, switching off the lights as they went.

“I’m playing golf at ten tomorrow, “ she said as she dropped her skirt to the floor, and fiddled with the buttons of her blouse, “plenty of time till then” he had already stripped his shorts and t shirt off, “I don’t know why we bother with clothes, when we are together,” he said as he climbed onto the bed where she lay waiting for him the dim light from the single bedside lamp on her side accentuating the length of her hard expectant nipples.

Their lips touched gently and then their mouths were together, their tongues exploring, searching, she held him in her hand already hard from the expectation, his hand was on her breast his thumb and forefinger gently massaging her right nipple. She pushed him onto his back their mouths parted and she was astride him sitting on his stomach and he could feel the wetness of her, she reached behind her and took him

firmly in her hand, he reached up, her breasts cupped in his hands her nipples between his fingers.

She let go of him and moved down, her nipples pressing into his thighs, her mouth was on him and she was caressing his head with her tongue, sharp feelings shot through him, tingling his lower body momentarily paralysing him with its intensity, she was moving her head up and down and he could feel the pleasure welling up, he tried to reach down to pull her up but she merely increased the motion and he could feel he was losing control, he could hold back no more and allowed her to bring him to culmination with her mouth, his body arched uncontrollable with the pangs of passion shooting through his body.

He lay momentarily ridged, panting with the pleasure of it, as she moved forward and sat on him drawing his erection into her, she took his hands and put them on her breasts and slowly, rhythmically she moved up and down on him and he could feel the strength returning, he pushed back and got into the rhythm with her, as she sat upright trying to get him in deeper.

He moved his knees under her firm buttocks and gently lifted her until just the tip of his erection was still in her, she moaned and struggled to push down, he held her briefly and then dropped his knees and he was fully inside her again, she sat bolt upright letting out a satisfied yelp as he she pushed down as hard she could, she could feel him and it felt like he had entered her belly, she could feel the warmth building inside her, the passion inside her screaming to be released, she was moving vigorously now, riding him, every muscle straining as she pushed down harder and harder with each movement, she felt him ejaculating and suddenly she was enveloped in her own aura of satisfaction, she could hear herself screaming with the pleasure of it as it coursed through every fibre of her body, her eyes closed, she pushed down on

him and then slowly up enjoying the pleasure unashamedly before collapsing forward her head on his shoulder as she tried to regain her breath, she could hear him breathing heavily as well, their hearts beating rapidly in their chests.

They lay like that for a few moments unwilling to move until the sensitivity their extremities were enjoying had subsided, she could feel his erection slowly losing its power inside her and she rolled off, flopping next to him exhausted and satisfied, the occasional spasm of pleasure still shooting up into her stomach.

Michael had set the alarm before falling asleep, over two hours of making love, he felt sure they would not wake in time for her to change and make her golf appointment, the annoying sound wrestled him from a deep sleep and he angrily pushed the stop button as he peered at the clock face staring unseeing at him. "Eight o'clock, my precious, time to rise and shine," he said as he turned and looked down at Christine who was trying to force her eyes open, "what already" she murmured through dry lips, "fraid so, dear, the golf course awaits," he rolled over, kissed her gently on her cheek and climbed out of bed picking up his shorts on his way to the bathroom.

She had managed to sit up when he emerged the sheets around her waist her firm breasts sticking out invitingly, "come on I'll make you some coffee," he stooped and picked up her skirt and blouse and placed them at the foot of the bed, she slowly lifted the sheets and swung her legs and placed her feet on the floor.

When she emerged dressed, Michael was standing in the kitchen; he motioned to a cup of steaming coffee on the breakfast bar, "that should get you going."

"I'll tell you something, you can sure tire a girl out, that was wonderful, I don't know how I am supposed to concentrate on golf, I'm sure I will have flashbacks all round

the course, what will you be doing today,” she sat on one of the stools her elbow on the table her head resting in her cupped hand.

“Well I need a few basic provisions, so I’ll get those then I need to make some notes and see how to tackle that problem we discussed,” he replied.

“Oh yes, do you want me to stop by this evening?”, “ she asked, that’s up to you, I don’t want you to get tired of me too quickly,” he replied, smiling, “fat chance” she responded as she climbed off the stool and walked round to him placing her arms around his neck and kissing him full the mouth. “Lovely coffee” she said as she dropped her arms and turned towards the door, “you have a great game and I’ll see you later, “ he was behind her and he reached over her shoulder to open the door, “I’ll miss you” she turned her head and kissed him lightly on the cheek, “me too” he replied” as he watched her disappear through the door and up the stairs he could just see her naked buttocks under the skirt.

After a long shower Michael pulled on a t shirt, jeans and trainers and made his way down the stairs deciding to walk to Canary Wharf, he turned into the road and for the first time noticed two men sitting in a white Ford Focus as he passed closely by he also noticed cigarette ends scattered on the pavement just outside the passenger window, odd he thought but assumed that they were waiting for someone to arrive by DLR.

The brisk walk took him forty five minutes, he reckoned he could do it in less but he had wondered along the canal and generally looked around, the shops in Canary Wharf, which annoyingly only opened at ten o clock so he was in no rush.

He did his shopping and decided to walk back as he only had two packets and he needed the exercise, his mind was filled with the events of last night, mixed with thoughts of Chriline and what she had told him about the laundering scam.

The tall man who had followed him to Canary Wharf was following him back but Michael was not aware of him, he passed the car again and noticed that the passenger had gone but the driver was still in the car, he carried on up to his apartment, a little suspicious of the situation.

Once in his apartment he walked over to the kitchen window which overlooked the road where the car was parked, just in time to see the passenger get back into the car, he watched them for a while waiting to see them leave but they did not, he unpacked his packets and had another look before picking up a pen and pad while sitting at the coffee table.

For the next three hours he jotted down what she had told him and bullet points of what he thought he could do, he wasn't sure if he should involve Christine, as it could be dangerous, after all Alan seemed to have been removed after stumbling onto something but she was already involved and maybe already knew too much.

He decided to take another look through the window, the car with its two occupants was still there, could they be watching him or even Christine, but they would have seen her go with her clubs in the taxi so they would know where she had gone. So it must be him that they were interested in, he returned to the arm chair and switched on the TV, to watch the Hungarian Grand Prix.

Michael watched as the red cars of Reuben's and Michael flashed past the chequered flag one and two with the blue and white Williams of Ralf third, he walked to the kitchen and peered through the window the car and its occupants were still there, he decided to go for a walk to see what happened.

Once out of the building he decided to catch the DLR and go to Canary Wharf again so as not to arouse any suspicion should they be watching him, he bought his ticket

and waited for the train, one of the men had also bought a ticket and was waiting at the far end of the platform.

Michael made the journey and went into Tesco's which was the closest shop to the station, he picked up a basket and made his way to the fruit counter, the man picked up a basket and loitered close by pretending to look at the vegetables.

Michael bought some bananas and apples and then went to the wines and spirits, the man was not far behind, Michael selected a bottle of chardonnay and made his way to the checkout.

Once on the station Michael watched as the man appeared with no parcels, Michael was convinced he was being watched. The train arrived and he climbed aboard not bothering to sit for the short journey, should he tell Christine, would she panic, he thought as he alighted at his station and made his way down the stairs, he went up to his flat and looked through the window again, yes the other man was back.

Michael sat on one of the stools at the breakfast bar, his mind racing, trying to remember if he had noticed the car there before, he wondered how long they had been watching him.

Oh my god, he thought this was the company apartment was it bugged, he didn't know what to look for or where but decided to try to search nonchalantly, he had seen many spy movies and felt like an idiot as he searched under lamp shades, behind pictures, he even looked under the TV.

He couldn't find anything and even if he saw something he wouldn't know if it was a bug as he didn't know what to look for, he was sure that if there was one there could be more, no he had to find somewhere else to live he should have done that anyway but there had been no pressure put on him by the company but now he knew why they were quite happy for him to remain there.

It was six o'clock when he heard a knock on his door, he almost ran to open it, "hello" she said, "hello" replied Michael, as he placed his finger over his lips in a gesture for her to be quiet, "have you got any rice at your place," he was nodding his head furiously, "yes" she replied, perplexed, "oh good, I need some for the curry I'm making, I'll come up and get it" he continued putting the latch on the door before closing it. He motioned for her to go up the stairs and to be quiet, they reached her door which she opened without saying a word until they were inside, "what's going on," she said perplexed, "I'm not sure but I think my flat is bugged and there are two men outside who seem to be watching my flat," he said as they walked into the lounge where she flopped onto the couch.

Michael relayed the afternoons happenings as she listened, the implications of what he was saying slowly sinking in as he spoke, "so they would have heard everything that has happened between us," she blurted embarrassed, "and maybe seen" he added. Michael thought for a moment then continued, "Okay well we can't let them know we know so would you be up to having something to eat with me and then you can come back up to your apartment, I'll have to try and find somewhere else to stay," Michael rose to his feet and she stood up. He held her and could feel her shaking, he gave her a hug and said, "take a few moments to compose yourself and then come down, just talk about your golf day. we'll have dinner then you can say you need to get up early tomorrow or something and then come back up here, okay, we'll have to be careful maybe tomorrow I can meet you on the embankment for a drink and we can discuss things then after we have had time to think," she nodded, "Okay come down when you are ready, supper will be ready in an hour, and with that he opened the door and made his way down the stairs to his flat.

The evening was strained and they didn't eat much as they made small talk, Michael asking her about the golf game and throwing in comments about the Grand Prix, they were both relieved when she went back to her flat. Michael climbed into bed after checking and seeing that the white car was still outside, the occasional glow from the passengers cigarette confirming his presence.

They both tossed and turned in their separate beds unable to fall asleep wondering what to do next recalling what had happened to Alan.

Michael spent the morning scouring the weekend paper for flats and had arranged to meet a letting agent to view one just round the corner from saint Paul's, although it was an easy ten minute walk Michael decided to take a cab and made sure he was dropped off in Ludgate Hill, he stopped for a cup of coffee. The same man from the previous day come into the shop and ordered coffee, he then went to the bank before taking a long detour through the narrow lanes eventually losing his stalker.

He had no doubt that they would eventually find out where he had moved to but he saw no point in making it easy for them and he was pleased to see that there was no parking around so if they wanted to follow him they would have to do it on foot which made it easier for him to spot them.

He could park his car in the office basement where he had a space allocated and as he only used his car to go out of the city he did not need parking, if he decided to go anywhere over the weekend it was only ten minutes walk to the office, he just had to ensure that he was not followed as keeping his apartment secret from those following him was important.

He elected to take the one bed roomed furnished flat on the third floor in the small block and arranged to sign the documents that afternoon, he phoned Christine on the

internal phone and arranged to meet her In the gardens of saint Paul's near Cheapside at six o'clock, she sounded reluctant to speak but agreed to meet him.

Michael had paid the deposit and an extra weeks rent so that he could move into the flat immediately.

They met at six o'clock and Michael could see that she was uneasy, he reassured her that at least they could not be overheard as they walked through the grounds of Saint Paul's down Ludgate hill and through the maze of lanes Michael had used earlier.

They then made their way past Saint Bart's and round the corner to his new flat as he constantly checked that they were not being followed, "well what do you think?" he asked as they stood in the sparsely furnished lounge. She threw her arms around him and held him tightly, "god what are we going to do," she said, the words falling heavily from her lips." Well I have a plan which we need to discuss but you must agree we can't just let this carry on we have to do something about it" he said kissing her on the top of the head and motioning for her to sit down.

Michael outlined his plan and what he needed her to do, he couldn't succeed without her as she had access to documents he was unable to get, "how are these payment transactions made between us and Galliana," he asked? "electronically using two passwords, I can get hold of one quite easily the other will take a bit of time," she replied, she had overcome her earlier anxiety now they had a course of action, she knew it was dangerous but if they could pull it off, they could put these crooks behind bars.

They made their way to Bank station, having satisfied themselves that they had not been followed. The white car with its two occupants was waiting and they strode past casually, Michael had decided to move his things to the new flat and had packed his foodstuffs into Waitrose bags before taking them upstairs to Christine's flat.

“Okay I’ve packed my clothes apart from what I’ll be wearing tomorrow ,I’m going to go to work and then during the day, these goons will not be here, I’ll sneak back and pick up my two suitcases and take them to the new flat, hopefully they won’t know I’ve moved until I don’t come back here tomorrow.

The next morning Michael went to work as normal and arrived around seven thirty, he had about an hour and a half in the middle of the morning with no appointments and told Anne he was going to the tailors quickly to have a fitting for a suit.

One of his followers was talking to the security guard at reception as he made his way through the front door of the building into Canon street, he turned left and crossed the road towards Saint Paul’s and Ludgate Hill and his favourite maze of lanes but this time doubled back into a legal bookshop.

He picked up a book and stood well back from the window as he watched his pursuer walk past looking furtively up and down the road before he walked past the bookshop and disappeared.

Michael cautiously emerged from the shop looking up and down the road before quickly stepping out and hailing a black cab, “East India key” he said through the window, “sure mate” the cab driver motioned for him to get in, Michael climbed in and sat in the corner trying to obscure himself from outside view.

The journey to his flat took half an hour and he was relieved to see that the white car was not there, he asked the driver to wait as he bounded upstairs and retrieved his suitcases before telling the driver where to go.

He was relieved once inside his flat and noted that he needed to get an additional lock fitted, preferably one of those Chubb security locks, so as to deter any unwanted visitors.

Anne had a message from Andrew Marchant when he arrived, that he wanted to see him in his office as soon as possible, suspicious Michael made his way down the corridor and was greeted cheerily by Daphne, “good afternoon Mr. Wheeler, he’s expecting you, go straight in, she motion towards the door as she continued working at her keyboard, “good afternoon, thank you” he replied as he walked towards the two oak doors noiselessly on the thick pile carpet.

He opened the door pausing momentarily to close it behind him before walking towards the figure of Andrew Marchant seated behind his vast dark desk, “sit down Michael” he said motioning to the chairs in front of him not bothering to get up. “How are things going, I see the figures are up and you seem to have got all the branches to profitability,” he continued leaning back in his high backed chair as Michael pulled one the chairs slightly away to make room and sat down. ”Yes I’m pleased with the response from the staff and brokers, its really mainly up to them I have just tweaked a few things to make them more efficient and motivated a few people so as to derive the maximum from them, nothing special, “he replied coolly crossing his legs.

“You’re too modest Michael everyone seems to think you have done wonders and certainly our current results show that we have achieved and in some cases exceeded our targets for the year to date, that’s quite a turn around in little over four months,” Andrew spoke in a measured tone and Michael knew that he was trying to build up to something so he thought he’d throw in a diversion. “Oh here are the keys to the flat, “ he said as he reached into his pocket, removing the key ring with the two keys , leaning forward he placed them within reach of Andrew, “Oh,” Andrew sounded surprised and Michael enjoyed the moment, “have you found a place of your own, then” Andrew continued,” Michael knew he was fishing and it was obvious that he

thought that Michael may have moved in with Christine, he thought for a moment and then replied, "yes I was quite lucky I found a place a few stations closer," he lied seeing no reason to give Andrew any advantage. "That's good, you'd better give personnel your new address," Andrew said obviously a little put out that he no longer had access to Michaels whereabouts or his conversations, as Michael was still convinced that the flat was bugged.

"So how are you getting on with the head office staff," Andrew added, Michael knew where Andrew was trying to lead him to but he wanted to try and keep Christine out of it, even though they had probably heard their conversation there was no need to draw her in any more than was necessary.

"I have no problems, everyone has been helpful and we appear to have a good working relationship," Michael tossed the conversation back into his court, being as non committal as possible.

Andrew was clearly getting frustrated with trying to tread carefully, "I hear you seem to have struck up quite a close relationship with Christine McArdie," Michael could see that Andrew couldn't hold back any longer and obviously wanted to get to the root of what was bothering him. "We get on very well if that's what you mean and she has been most helpful with branch figures that I have needed, yes" Michael retained his calmness, "have you two got a little closer than that Michael, we don't encourage our senior staff to have relationships outside of the office," that confirmed Michael's suspicion that the flat had been bugged and that Andrew was clearly warning him off interfering in their back to back scam.

"Our relationship is purely platonic and professional," Michael lied, enjoying seeing Andrew trying to find a way of telling him he knew without admitting anything, "I'm glad to hear it, we don't want any more of our executives leaving us prematurely,"

Michael could feel the venom on his voice and knew that the gauntlet was down either he backed off or he would go the same way as Alan.

“Oh I’ve got quite a lot to do here still, so I won’t be going anywhere for a while,” Michael replied, pushing the chair back while getting to his feet, feeling that enough had been said, and it was time to end the discussion, “good, I’m glad to hear it, keep up the good work,” Andrew remained seated as Michael strode to the door closing it quietly behind him, “Thank you Daphne,” he said as he strode quietly but purposefully along the plush carpet, “You’re welcome” he heard her say as he entered the corridor back to his office.

“Ah Mr. Wheeler, Mr Hammond from South Africa phoned and asked if you could return his call immediately you return,” “thanks Anne would you get him for me” Michael walked into his office and sat down heavily, he was still not convinced that Brian and the other directors were in on it but he wasn’t sure, when Brian comes on the line I’ll allow him to lead the conversation, he thought.

“The phone burst into life and Michael lifted the receiver to his ear, “Mr. Hammond” he heard Anne announce and then the click as he was connected, “Brian how are you” he said cheerily, “Fine Michael how are things your end,” “fine you must have received the latest figures, what do you think,” Michael was determined to let Brian do most of the talking, “yes we are all suitably impressed but that’s why we sent you there because we knew you were the right man for the job.” “Well, I’m glad you are not disappointed” Michael replied curtly, there was an awkward silence as he waited for Brian to continue, eventually Brian did,” no, no problems there Michael, I hear you are dating one of the finance people.” “Oh am I that’s news to me, I have had drinks with some of the girls from finance, oh yes and we had dinner, I’m not sure if three girls and one male constitutes a date, “Michael was enjoying the game now and

could almost hear Brian squirming in his chair as he tried to find the words, “oh well I’m impressed, Michael, that’s very nice, “we’re thinking of bringing the South African girl back, we spoke to her earlier and she seemed reluctant to come back but we need her here and it would be a promotion for her. Michael was not expecting that move but that confirmed that Brian at least was in on the deal and he supposed it would be logical to separate them as she obviously knew too much and had access to finance documents they needed. ”That would be a pity but if its to further her career, that’s good for her, I hope there is someone equally as good, to take her place, “ Michael felt he had concealed his disappointment well enough and his mind was racing as they would now have to move their plans forward.

“Oh yes I believe Andrew has someone earmarked from Galliana’s he apparently is the company secretary there and wants to join a life office as opposed to a brokerage, they still have a few details to work out but I’m sure they will sort that out shortly. “Good, well I have an appointment at four o clock and I need to get some information, nice talking to you,” Michael had had enough and needed to rethink his plan, “yes, you to take care of yourself and keep up the good work,” Brian’s voice seemed to boom in Michaels eardrums, ”cheers” he said automatically replacing the receiver. Well it was to be expected, he thought aloud, he needed to get to see Christine but this was getting dangerous and he didn’t want to implicate her more than necessary. He phoned her on the internal phone and asked her to take a cab and meet him at Victoria station in the Weatherspoons pub up the escalator at around seven pm, she agreed and was delighted that she did not ask any questions as he was sure that their phones were bugged, this would be confirmed if he could recognise anyone following her.

Michael arrived at six thirty and wondered around the station positioning himself near the travel bureau so as to get a good view of the escalator, he had bought a newspaper and pretended to read it scouring the thronging station for any sign of the men who had been following him so far. He was not disappointed and soon spotted the man who had been the passenger in the white car outside his flat, he had seen Michael and was buying a cup of coffee from the vendors cart close by, Michael decided to go up the escalator to Weatherspoons and wait for Christine there now that he knew who his tail was.

Christine arrived ten minutes early, she kissed him on the cheek and sat down opposite him her back to the entrance, and Michael bought her a glass of dry white wine and a second for himself, "well things are moving along now aren't they," he said as he placed the glass in front of her and sat down.

"Yes I had a phone call from South Africa," Michael raised his hand, "I know, Brian phoned me earlier and told me" he said, "we need to move things along a bit, there is someone at Gallianas that they are going to move in and once that happens I have no access to any finance department documents," he added, a desperate note in his voice. "Calm down, you'll burst your boiler, she said with a wide smile, "I have copies of all the documents you need including certified copies of Marchant and Ulliana's passports," "You little beauty," Michael said the relief etched on his face, "where are they." "One of the blessings of using a small backpack instead of a handbag" she moved her eyes to the bag on one of the spare chairs at their table. "You are a bloody marvel," the delight beaming from his face.

He told her about the man he had recognised and they decided to go to his flat but they had to get rid of him so they were going to have to do a bit of travelling around the city.

They elected to take a cab to Trafalgar square first to get him out into the open and then work out how to lose him and also to see if there was only one or if he had a partner.

They got out at Saint Paul's and decided to have a meal at Balls Brothers on Cheapside, their tail had not followed them in so they assumed that he would wait outside, there appeared to be just the one so all they needed to do was find a different way out.

Michael asked the bar maid if there was a different way out and she told him that there was at the back but it wasn't for public use, it was used for deliveries, he slipped a twenty pound note into her hand and told her to ask no questions, she told him to let her know when they wanted to leave.

During their meal the man entered the bar but left when he saw them eating, "he obviously wanted to make sure we were here," Christine remarked.

They finished their meal and stood up, the barmaid looked over to them and nodded and they followed her, through a doorway and along a passage past the kitchen and to a set of double doors, she unlocked the door and stepped out into a narrow deserted lane, "thank you very much" he said as they walked past her, "this way," Michael took Christine by the arm as the door was closed, furtively looking up and down the lane.

They hurried along the narrow lane turning occasionally as they walked making sure they were not being followed, after much crisscrossing of lanes and busy roads they eventually reached the entrance to Michaels building, he punched in the security code and wrenched the single door open and pulled her into the foyer then strolled past the couple waiting at the lift and bounded up the stairs Michael dragging her by the hand behind him.

Once inside he hugged her and then they flopped onto the couch as she tossed her backpack onto the spare armchair before she reached over taking his face in her hands and kissing him forcefully on the lips, “thank god, that’s over,” she said releasing his face. “It’s like a bloody James Bond movie”, she screeched.

“Time for some refreshment,” Michael got up and walked to the kitchen where he filled two glasses of white wine from the half full bottle in the fridge and walked over to where she was sitting, he placed the glass in her outstretched hand and raised his glass, “cheers”, “cheers” and they placed their glasses to their lips and allowed the cool liquid of the mild oak flavour of the Chardonnay to course over their tongues.

“Lets see what you’ve got,” he said pointing to her backpack, she reached over and unzipped the top removing two large brown envelopes and placing them on the coffee table, dropping the bag to the floor. “Right here we have Mr Marchant’s documents” she withdrew a sheave of papers and handed them to Michael. She took the second envelope and withdrew a similar sheave of papers, “and here we have Mr Ullianas” she said triumphantly placing them on the table, taking up her glass and sinking back on the couch. “ Michael thumbed through the various documents, so you reckon we will have no trouble opening an offshore bank account in their names with these,” he looked across at her sitting smiling next to him and watched her lips as she mouthed the words, “no trouble at all. I thought the Bahamas would be better than the closer ones as I am sure that they have accounts on the Isle of Man, so I have chosen Euro-Trust in Nassau, you can open an account through the internet and can transfer funds electronically. Now all I have to do is get the two passwords, there is a board meeting tomorrow so I should be able to get the one from finance while the they are running around getting various figures ready, the other I have access to without any problem.”

“Okay and once you have those I think we should find an obscure internet café and set up that account, we don’t want to use any computer that can be traced to us, I know of one near Greenwich, that’s obscure enough” Michael placed the papers on the table and picked up the second pile, looking at the copy of the passport, sullen bastard, isn’t he, he looks like bad news,” Michael peered at the image of Antonio Ulliano, before replacing the sheave of papers on the table.

“Right now we have to find a safe place for these” Christine leaned forward and replaced the piles in their separate envelopes and then into her bag before leaning back and lifting her glass to her lips.

“Well they know where you live, they don’t know about this place yet but if I slip up just once they could find it, no it has to be somewhere neutral, what if I was to rent a security box at my bank that’s pretty secure and I bank at Barclays on Cheapside so that’s pretty near, I’ll do that tomorrow first thing, what do you think,” he leaned forward and pecked her on the cheek. “That sounds fine long as I can get them out of my backpack, I don’t want to be caught with these on me that would blow everything,” she replied relieved that he had a plan.

“Okay that’s settled now when do we open the account, “he asked looking at her, she had removed her glasses, her hair was tousled and he just wanted to take her in his arms but steeled himself waiting for her reply. “I think we must do this as soon as possible so that we are ready, the next tranche is around thirty million, they have so many of these investments now that they do a surrender twice a month and the next is due at the end of the month, so if we do the transfer on a scheduled transfer date that will arouse less suspicion,” she answered turning to meet his gaze.

“They have accelerated the number of surrenders in the past two months so I reckon they are aiming to get out as soon as possible, some of the contracts now are not quite

a year old but the board has authorised their surrender subject to a slightly higher penalty, to make it look legal, a small price to pay considering that they have already laundered around seven hundred million pounds,” she turned and met his gaze.

“That’s a lot of money, so how long do you think it will take before this account can be used,” he asked, “well they have to send a form for a specimen signature and I suspect to verify that the address being used exists,” she replied. “Let’s use the company flats address that way it’s still tied to them and there is no trace to us, the post boxes are just pigeon holes and you can check the mail for the flat each day when you get home,” he moved his hand and squeezed her thigh, she jumped at the unexpected move and let her head fall into his lap.

“Enough now, we can’t do anymore tonight, can we,” she said looking up at him, “no I suppose not, are you staying the night, what about a change of clothes,” he asked as he gazed down into the pools of her blue eyes.

“Oh yes,” she said sitting up like a startled rabbit and reaching for her rucksack, she pulled out a bra and a pair of panties as well as a black skirt and red blouse, unfolding the cotton blouse, damn it’s all creased, do you have an iron?” she asked. “Aha so you are prepared,” Michael said gleefully, “of course, look I’ve even got my toothbrush and toothpaste, she replied showing him the brush and tube, well that’s that settled then,” he leaned over and took her arm, she responded by dropping her blouse ignoring the fact that it would get even more creased and turning to meet his kiss her lips slightly parted, she was relieved that they could forget about their plan if only for the rest of the night.

Michael stood up their mouths still linked in a passionate embrace, and placed one arm around her back and the other under her knees, he lifted her and carried her to the bedroom, where he placed her gently on top of the duvet, he stood up and took off his

clothes, "I'll be back," she said darting like a scolded cat back into the lounge and returned almost instantly clutching her toothpaste in her hand and placing the tube on the side table next to the bed. "Michael was laying naked on the bed a puzzled look on his face, "what are you going to brush your teeth in bed?" he asked as he leant over and kissed her as she took off her clothes, she finally wriggled out of her panties and lay naked next to him, "no, you'll see," she said softly her mouth turning up at the corner in a mischievous grin, "I can't wait," he said as he place his mouth over her breast and slowly pulled upwards until he had her erect nipple in his mouth, "I love it when you do that" she murmured, Michael moved to her other breast and repeated the action his hand gently squeezing the nipple of the other breast.

She reached down and took his erection in her hand, running her fingers through her own wet vagina and then rubbing the liquid over the head of his penis, she pushed him onto his back and he rolled his hand over his hand still cupped over her breast. She reached for the toothpaste and undid the cap, squirting a little onto her hand, she pulled back his foreskin and gently massaged the toothpaste around and below the head, he let out a low moan as he felt the cold paste, "what are you doing?" he asked. "Trust me" she said as she began to move her hand up and down slowly, "oh that's nice," he said softly his free hand now reaching over her flat stomach. She took his hand as she parted her legs and guided his hand to the hot wet lips of her vagina and pushed his fingers in allowing her own fingers to enter with his. She could feel the warm wet fluid inside herself and she moved his hand in and out and over her clitoris, moaning with the pleasure of every movement, as she raised and lowered her other hand she could feel his erection throbbing with the anticipation, "come on, please" she demanded pulling at him to get on top of her, he needed no second invitation.

She felt him penetrate her hard and could feel the mild irritant coarseness of the toothpaste as he pushed harder and harder she drew him in as deep as she could her legs wrapped around him. She could feel the warmth of his breath on her cheek as he moved inside her, the sensation was overwhelming as she felt the first waves of pleasure shooting upwards permeating her whole body, she could hear herself, the shrieks of ecstasy emitting from her lips, as she demanded more, her eyes tightly shut she allowed herself to indulge in the frenzy of the moment.

Her body took over and she could feel herself writhing with the pleasure, she was lost in the exhilaration wanting more and for the sensations coursing through her body to continue forever.

She felt his body stiffen in spasms and the sensation inside of his ejaculation inside her causing her to hold him still momentarily as she enjoyed the feelings flowing through her, then releasing him as he now moved spasmodically with the intoxication of his own ejaculation.

Eventually he lay on top of her supporting his weight with his arms, the exertion causing their chests to heave against each other. "He slowly withdrew his now softening member from her and rolled over to lay next to her, "wow you are something else and every time its different," amazement in his voice.

"It takes two and you give me so much pleasure," she replied softly, stroking his cheek, "nothing I'm sure like what you do to me" he replied.

They lay next to each other for a while enjoying the last sensations as they ebbed away, there was no need for words, before Michael kissed her gently on the cheek and went to the bathroom, she sat up and went to the kitchen where she drank a glass of water, she could feel the cool liquid hitting her stomach after the heat of their passion.

Michael emerged from the bathroom as she reached into her rucksack and removed her toothbrush, and went into the bathroom.

When she came out he was waiting for her under the duvet and she crawled in beside him, they embraced and she turned over pulling his hand onto her breast as he cuddled in behind her his limp member against her buttock, “good night”, “good night” he replied and they allowed themselves to drift off, each with their own thoughts taking them to their dreams.

As usual Michael was the first to rise, the towel around his waist and the wet hair indicating that he had already showered, “what time is it?” she asked as she looked up at him, “seven thirty” he replied as he pecked her on the cheek, “good morning, you do like it in there, don’t you,” he said as he turned and opened the curtains the rays of light dictating that sleep was over.

“Oh yes I do enjoy a good sleep and a safe warm bed,” she said throwing off the duvet and allowing her shapely legs to swing onto the floor, she reached for her glasses on top of the side table and looked at him, “you are lovely,” he said admiring her naked breasts, “I’m sure I look a bloody mess,” she was on her feet and went to the bathroom, “I’ll make you some coffee when you are finished,” he said as he walked through to the lounge, “thanks “ he heard her say as he picked up the television remote and pressed the channel button, the set flashed into life as he sat down on the couch and watched the news.

He removed the documents from her bag and took out the copy of the passports, He took a blank piece of paper and a pen from the shelf under the coffee table and first started to copy Antonio Ulliano’s signature, over and over until he had done it thirty times and then did the same with Andrew Marchants signature.

He never heard her creep up behind him, the sound of the television drowning out any noise she made as he concentrated on what he was doing, he jumped as she clapped her hands over his eyes from behind the couch. He looked up and spun round, “you little sod, you gave me a fright,” he was laughing as he looked at her one towel tied just above her chest another twirled around her head like a turban, he stood up and they kissed as he made his way to the kitchen and she came round flopping onto the couch.” Ah so you have been practising,” she said looking at the page full of signatures and comparing them with the passports, “I think Antonio’s looks more convincing there is also only three years difference between your ages, you also look similar maybe with glasses and a moustache, a little more practise with the signature but a lot closer than Andrew’s,” she nodded.

“Yes I thought so as well, so lets see if we can get an Italian passport, god I hope we can pull this off,” he handed her a cup as he sat next to her.

“Why not stop off at one of those theatrical shops and get a pair of glasses like his they are quite common and a fake moustache, their ones are very realistic” she said.

“So are you going to the bank before you go to the office?” she asked looking straight ahead at the television, “yes I’ll phone Anne and tell her I’m going to be a bit late, I thought I would put both our names down so that we both have access to the box, that means you’ll have to pop into the bank at some time and give them your signature.

Just give me your details and passport number and I’ll let you know who you must see, when you go over, you know where it is, don’t you?” “What Barclays, yes, okay that sounds great, I’ll go this afternoon, they close at five don’t they,” she replied turning round as he made his way from the kitchen with her coffee.” “Hmm, thanks she said immediately placing the mug to her lips and taking a cautious sip of the hot brown liquid.

“Michael, I’ve been thinking,” her tone measured, “this is all misappropriated money, isn’t it,” she continued not waiting for a reply,” so I thought that as we will probably be hounded once they know what we have done and once the authorities, get Andrew and the others, these Mafia people can find us if they want to, we are going to need funds.” He had sat down next to her, his hands cupped around his mug, staring at the television, “yeees” he allowed the word to draw out through his lips. “Well I thought that if we could arrange to pick up two million pounds in cash from the bank in the Bahamas, we could take care of ourselves and stay ahead of the bad guys until they got tired of looking for us. “You’re mad,” he said placing his mug on the table and standing up, “these people never give up and how are we going to get the money without Andrew, neither of us looks like his picture on his passport, “calm down do you think it will all go away and we will be able to get on with our lives once they are in jail, the only thing that will happen is that we will have to be looking over our shoulders anyway and without any money” she leant back on the couch, her mug still clasped in her hand, “think about it, for goodness sake,” she continued.

Michael collapsed in the armchair opposite her and looked at her draped in white towels and couldn’t control the laugh or the smile that swept across his face, “you look so vulnerable sitting there, he said, “you’re right, I suppose but we are getting into the realms of the underworld here now, we are going to need a false passport, or something,” he continued.

“Yes I have no idea how one goes about it but there must be a way, I’m sure if we trawl the seedy parts of Soho and put the word out we are bound to get something,” she replied standing up and walked over to him the towel falling away as she knelt in front of him. She took his face in her hands and kissed him lovingly on the lips and then stood up bending down to pick up the towel, he smacked her playfully on her

naked buttock, “go and get dressed, before I attack you,” he ordered as she swaggered down the passage her firm backside with the red mark where he slapped her, tempting him to go after her.

Michael sat and thought about their plan and realised that she was right, they could either turn a blind eye and let them get away with it or get involved with all its consequences, having to spend your life hiding with no money would be difficult, she was right, he felt a tinge of excited apprehension at the thought of swindling them out of two million pounds.

They kissed at the door of his flat when she left and Michael got dressed, they had arranged to meet up in Trafalgar Square at seven that evening as the need to keep his flats whereabouts a secret became more crucial to the success of their plan.

He arranged the safety deposit box and got the name of the person Christine would have to ask for when she came to give a specimen of her signature, he had placed both brown envelopes in the boxes and made his way to the office.

He had a busy day of preparing reports with no appointments planned he had phoned Christine and had told her only the contact person at the bank, careful not to mention the bank or say any more than was necessary on the phone as he was sure it was bugged.

He arrived first at Trafalgar Square and waited next to Nelsons column appropriately facing South Africa house as they had arranged, his tail alighting from a cab a few seconds after Michael had arrived, he did not have to wait long as Christine arrived a few minutes later. He watched to see if anyone was following her and noticed another cab stopping and a man stepped out, Michael waited until he had paid the driver and turned round. He did not recognise him but noticed that he was walking towards the

other man who had followed Michael who was standing nonchalantly pretending to read a newspaper.

Christine had reached him now and kissed him on the mouth her back to the two men, “don’t turn round I want to see if we have been followed,” he had his arms around her as they continued to embrace, he moved his head slightly to one side so that he could watch the progress of the second man. “Yes they are together,” he said as he released her and took her by the hand leading her in the opposite direction, walking slowly. “They’re standing talking at the moment but if we put the square between us and them, then catch a cab we should get away before they can catch a cab going in the same direction, cabs are not so easy to come by at this time of the evening, so we should get lucky” he steered her to the opposite side of the square and turned pretending to look up at Nelson perched on top of his column, he noticed that they had also made their way down to the square but they were still on the other side of the column. “Okay now look for a cab with its light on and then flag it down,” he could feel his heart thumping in his chest, luck was on their side and a vacant cab responded to her raised arm, “Café Latino Soho” he said through the window to the driver, “yea hop in mate” the driver said and they almost fell into the cab, Michael pulled the door shut with a thud and searched the square for their pursuers, “there they are” he said pointing to the two men as they raced through the square trying to get to the side Michael and Christine were driving away from, fortunately the traffic had eased sufficiently for them not to be held up as they sped away, Michael turned and watched through the back window to see if they had managed to flag down a cab but the cabs following already had their lights off indicating that they were occupied. They made good progress, it was pointless looking back through the rear window as London was a sea of black cabs and buses and it would be impossible to see if they

were being persuaded or not now. They arrived in Frith street, and alighted from the cab Michael paid, “keep the change”, “ta mate” replied the driver and they made their way into the Café Latino, “now what?” she asked, sitting at a table away from the window which Michael had steered her to, “well, lets have a cup of coffee and think of our next move,” Michael ordered two coffees and they sat in silence for a few moments, their minds racing as they tried to piece together a plan of action to get a false passport.

“I feel like a gangster,” she remarked with a smile as she held the cup to her lips, “yes, it is a bit like the movies, you’re right, here we are two complete amateurs taking on a worldwide gang of thugs who will stop at nothing, we must be mad,” he chuckled nervously.

“Okay well I don’t know how our minders are doing but this is the difficult part, I suppose we find the seediest looking place and I’m sure we will be offered drugs, we will have to play it by ear, I have my mobile so if they need to phone us we can use that number. “He was trying to sound pragmatic but was unconvinced by his own words. “Well there isn’t much else we can do so which way do we go from here?,” she asked feeling apprehensively excited. “That’s a bloody good question,” Michael replied, I don’t know this part of London particularly well but I’m sure that if we wonder around and don’t stray into too many dark alleys someone will approach us sooner or later with something to sell,” he tried to convince himself more than her but sensed that she was enjoying the drama of it all.

They finished their coffee amid feverish discussion of what they still had to do and how much time they had to get their plans in place, and stepped out of the café into Frith street, the place was littered with restaurants they made a note of an Italian one called Little Italy. “Sounds like New York, lets try and get our business done and then

we can stop off here for a bite to eat, what do you think beautiful, do you feel hungry,” his sudo New York accent made her laugh, “sure thing baby” she responded in character.

“We need to get deeper into Soho, so lets go down here,” Michael steered her into Compton street, looking furtively around the busy streets to ensure that there pursuers were not around, they turned up Wardour and into Brewer, “this is seedy,” she clutched Michaels arm nervously as they walked slowly past the brightly coloured windows advertising half naked women performing among other things pole dancing. They had been approached numerous times by people trying to tempt them into the various dimly lit establishments with their seedy advertisements. After roaming aimlessly without much success they started to make their way back to Wardour street, when a the were approached by a young man, who discreetly opened his hand, revealing a small plastic packet as they passed, Michael stopped and turned around squeezing Christine’s arm tucked under his and followed the young man who stopped and turned around, “twenty five” he said facing them, “no we don’t want that, can you get us a false passport,” Michael said, shaking his head and feeling utterly foolish, “no man, I don’t do that shit,” the young man turned and hurried away as they stared after him feeling deflated. “I’m no good at this,” he said as he turned and led Christine back in the direction they had turned from, “I saw a pub along here, let’s go and have a drink.”

They reached Wardour street , “ah they do Chinese, he said pointing to the doorway, do you feel like Chinese,” he asked, “not really I still prefer Italian,” “Okay Italian it is then, yes that’s a good idea,” Michael agreed and led her down Old Compton and back into Firth street, they had almost reached the entrance to the restaurant, when Michael heard someone behind them, “excuse me,” he turned to see, a well dressed

middle age man ,”yes can I help you” Michael asked, thinking the man wanted directions.

“I may be able to help you” the man replied as he came closer, “oh yes,” Michael felt awkward and felt his face flush with embarrassment, the man handed him a folded piece of paper and turned back in the direction he had come. Michael unfolded the paper and together they stared at the contents, the paper only had an email address written in larger letters across the middle, they looked up but the man had vanished. “Gosh, this crime business is all pretty high tech, “ he said smiling folding the paper back up and putting it into his jacket pocket, a feeling of excitement putting a new spring in his step as he turned and led Christine to the restaurant.

They chatted away excitedly as they ate their way through Carpaccios followed by pasta eagerly washing their meal down with delicious Italian red wine as they discussed the events feeling more hopeful of success than a few hours before.

It was eleven when they decided to make their way home, Michael insisted on catching a cab to Canary Wharf and then the DLR to West India Quay, where he waited on the station while Christine walked past the White Fiesta to her flat. She had turned on the kitchen light but did not come to the window, as they agreed to signal that the two men were in the car and that she had got in safely, if she switched on the bathroom light it would indicate that they were not there.

Michael took the next train to Bank station, Christine had phoned him on his mobile to confirm that both men were in the car outside her flat, Michael was relieved that the train was empty apart from a about half a dozen people scattered around the compartment, he allowed the sound of her voice to consume him and enjoyed the reassurance it gave him. He walked back to his flat, reflecting on the evenings progress and felt jubilant at the prospect of destroying this gang of thieves trying to

legitimise their operation and incensed at the damage that would result to so many innocent people who had invested in his company who would find their investment eroded by the depletion of the fund.

There was also a deep feeling of apprehension aggravated by constantly having to be vigilant in case he was being followed even now he was constantly aware of people around him looking for anything suspicious that would indicate that he was being followed, even though Christine had confirmed that their two pursuers were outside her flat.

He had hidden the safety deposit box key by taping it with a strip of Duck tape to the underside of the bottom draw in the kitchen, he pulled the draw out and felt relief as he ran his hand over the surface of the key before pushing the draw back.

Michael poured a glass of wine from the remains of the bottle of Chardonnay he and Christine had left behind the night before and sat down on the sofa, he reached for the television remote his mind now busily going over their next moves.

He made a mental note to tell Christine to place some clear tape across the base of her door and the door jamb so that she could see if anyone had entered her flat, he would do the same even though he felt confident that his new abode had not been discovered yet.

There were many things to do the most important was to get the false passport; they had arranged to go to the email shop in Greenwich the next day after work. Michael would collect the documents from the bank and arrive first and make contact with the email address he had received the night before and try to arrange a false passport, she would set up the bank account in the Bahamas from the documents when she arrived. He looked at the page with the signatures he had copied, picking up the pen, he continued to practise eventually using both sides of five sheets of paper, and he

admired his handiwork convinced that it was difficult to tell the fake from the original.

Michael rinsed his glass and made his way to the bathroom thinking how lonely it was without Christine. He heard his mobile ringing in the lounge and dashed back, a quick glance at the screen told him it was her, "hello" he answered apprehensively, "hello, its me I just wanted to say good night and say that I miss you," her voice crackled in his ear and he felt relief. "Thank god, I thought something had happened," he blurted, "god I miss you too, its so quiet here without you," "what do you mean, I'm not that noisy am I," the sound of her voice, as she chuckled filling him with desire, "well only at the appropriate times, but I love it," he replied.

"Okay well I'll see you tomorrow as arranged, good night and I'll dream of you and you dream of me" she said and Michael, reluctant to let her go, replied "good night, "oh I will, you can count on it." He waited for the click as she ended the conversation, he felt elated but empty, how he wished she was there with him.

Sleep didn't come easily for either of them and Michael eventually managed to fall asleep just after two am, she had eventually managed to doze off just before one am. The next morning Michael arrived at his office at seven thirty and attended to a few letters, he had two appointments during the day with brokers so he would be out of the office the whole afternoon and as the brokers were both nearby that would give him time to collect the documents from the bank before they closed.

Christine had made her way to work on the DLR unperturbed by her tail as she had now got used to the idea, she was still not sure who was monitoring her in the office but she felt confident that no one had seen her make copies of the documents which were now safely in the bank.

Her day was busy with reports as the year end was fast approaching and the auditors were asking for various documents. They had not picked up anything untoward previously and she wondered if that meant that they were turning a blind eye or they had just missed it either way she allowed herself a flash of premature relief at the prospect of getting out shortly.

They had arranged to meet at six pm at the email shop and Michael had retrieved the documents and placed them in his brief case, the taxi journey was a nightmare through the rush hour traffic and he was relieved when he eventually arrived, he hadn't bothered to check if he was being followed as he felt sure he was and there was little he could do about it.

The shop was tiny inside with four machines, he felt that this was an advantage as anyone coming in was so close that there was no way of looking unobtrusive and they must know that he was aware that he was being followed so he felt sure they would not come into the shop.

He immediately settled down in front of one of the machines and logged on and immediately started creating an email address on Hotmail using fictitious details, he decided to use the name Midas and was allowed the name Midas 30, obviously a popular name he thought as he composed his brief email message, "passport required, English or Italian," he typed, he thought for a moment wondering if it was necessary to say anymore, eventually deciding that, that was sufficient he pressed send and waited for confirmation that the message had gone, he logged off just as Christine arrived.

"Hi" she said, as she kissed him her cheeks flushed, she nodded to the Asian lady behind the desk, "hello." The Asian lady acknowledged her with a slight nod of the head before returning her attention to some papers on the counter top. "did you run,"

he asked, “no but the taxi went past and stopped a few hundred yards further on, so I walked quickly.”

“Okay well I have sent my email, so you sit here,” he motioned to the chair he had been using, and she sat down heavily placing her bag on the floor.

“I have everything in my case, just tell me when you are ready and I’ll hand them to you,” he spoke softly as he leaned down and spoke into her left ear, “Okay let me find the site and then we can go from there,” she spoke in an equally dulcet tone as her fingers caressed the keyboard in front of her.

They spent almost an hour setting up the account in the Bahamas, finally she printed the relevant forms which required signing and had to be posted, he gave her the email address he had created as their contact and he was pleased to hear her giggle at the name he had chosen.

They paid the Asian lady and emerged onto the pavement both flushed from being in the stuffy little shop for almost an hour.

“I can’t see our chaperons anywhere they must be getting better at this, we’ll have to be careful from now on. “Well where to now,” she asked taking him by the arm, “well its just after seven, why don’t we,” “hold on I have an idea, she interrupted why don’t we go to the floating restaurant near me and then you stay the night,” they faced each other and he looked into the pools of her eyes behind the round glasses as she screwed up her face impishly. “Why don’t I do that,” he replied happily resigned to her taking charge, what do I do for clean undies tomorrow,” “well I have a load to wash, so we can put that on as soon as we get to my place after supper and by the time we go to sleep it should be ready to hang up and I can chuck yours into the tumble drier and iron your shirt in the morning, how’s that?” She slid her arm under his and

steered him along the pavement as they looked for a taxi in the slow moving congested traffic.

“Sounds bloody marvellous to me, I love it when you take charge,” he said as he bent down and pecked her on the cheek, the warmth from her flushed cheeks tingling his lips.

They eventually hailed an empty cab and made the painfully slow journey to Limeharbour, the numerous expletives from the drivers cab permeating the air and bringing a smile to both their faces. “Thank god I don’t drive in this city,” Michael said, “you’d be a nervous wreck, and I thought Johannesburg was bad,” she nodded. The oriental waitress showed them to a table with a lovely view of the canal, the restaurant was busy but not full and the chatter of the patrons mingled with the smells of the various dishes being brought to the tables

“Michael ordered wine and nominated Christine to order the food as long as she ordered him rice to go with the dish instead of noodles.

They had a second bottle of wine as they discussed the day’s events and she told him that he had to sign the forms, so that she could post them off tomorrow, he told her he had been practising last night and that he felt that he had at last got it right.

“So we are on our way how do you feel about it?” he asked as he took a sip of wine, she leaned back and he looked at her, she looked so vulnerable but Michael had come to know the strong willed, intelligent woman that resided behind those round spectacles with the demure look of the innocent child.

“Well to be honest I am a little scared, especially now as we are starting to get things going, but what choice do we have, we could go to the police but I am sure that that will spook them, if the police do decide to do anything, and in any case they won’t be able to protect us, I feel this is the only way. This way the police will have evidence

and we will be able to get away and hopefully have enough to keep ahead of the bad guys,” Michael listened to her intently and nodded his head in agreement.

They paid their bill and decided to walk back to her flat from The Lotus restaurant as it was a lovely clear evening and it would take about an hour but they were in no hurry, they noticed the white Fiesta parked some way from the gangplank to the restaurant but chose to ignore it enjoying the evening and each others company allowing the events of the day to be filed in the back in their brains for tonight to be retrieved tomorrow, tonight was about them and their feelings for each other. They sauntered slowly along, the canal water shimmering at the touch of the light cool breeze causing tiny ripples across the surface. Michael took his jacket off and put it over her shoulders, his arm around her waist, as they chatted about nothing in particular and everything in general.

The white Fiesta had to go round the buildings onto the road as there was no vehicle access that allowed the driver to follow them but the two men waited for them to reappear along MarshWall.

They ambled along appearing to not have a care in the world as they cut across Cabot Square eventually coming out at the entrance to her flat, they noticed the white Fiesta which must have given up trying to follow them by car and assumed where they were going.

Michael smiled a satisfied smile, “wallies” he whispered as they entered the stairwell and made their way up the stairs preferring to walk rather than take the lift.

They entered the flat, she locked the door and kicked off her shoes, “right off with those clothes, I’ll get you a hanger for your suit,” she demanded as she strode purposefully into the bedroom returning almost instantly with a black plastic suit hanger in her hand, and watched as Michael took off his clothes tossing them onto the

couch, “well that’s it then when a woman washes your underwear you know you have lost all control,” he said standing naked in the middle of her lounge.

“Oh you poor thing, be careful I don’t take your virginity, as well, “that’s long gone I’m afraid,” he replied in mock despair as he took the hanger from her and hung his trousers and jacket on it. “Right go and have a shower while I put the machine on,” she ordered, “Jawoel mein fraulein,” Michael responded rushing from the room the suit of clothes held in front of him, he hung the suit on the open door of her wardrobe and went into the bathroom.

The warm water poured over his head cascading over his body, he took the soap and rubbed it onto a sponge allowing the lather to rise like the foam from the waves as they poured onto the sea sand, he then held his face up to the shower rose and allowed the water to wash the soap off holding his breath and feeling the freshness as he was cleansed from the grime of the city.

He felt the rush of cool air as the glass door opened behind him and felt her hand round his waist as she steadied herself careful not to fall in spite of the anti slip tiles on the floor of the shower.

She clasped both her arms around him and held his limp member in her hand, “well that’s a first” she said, you must be getting used to me, “cheeky bugger” he replied I didn’t know you were coming to join me, I can’t have a permanent hardon, can I”, “You better bloody well not,” she said as she tugged, “he let out a squeal of mock pain as he turned round and leant down to kiss her on her wet mouth, he could feel her pushing her breasts into his ribcage and the instant arousal as she slowly massaged him with her hand.

He slipped his hand down her firm belly and felt the soft wet hair as he moved his hand lower she moved her legs apart and he could feel the warmth and wetness of her.

“Wash me” she commanded as she tried to shield her face with her free hand from the water pouring over them, “I’ve never washed a woman before,” he admitted, turning her round so that she was directly under the flow of water and taking the soap from the dish.

He rubbed soap into the sponge until it was white with lather and then started by rubbing her neck and shoulders gradually working his way down to her armpits, she giggled and wriggled, “don’t tickle,” she complained and he rubbed her chest first with the sponge and then with his free hand, feeling her nipples harden to his touch he now could feel that he had a full erection which was still in her hand. He moved the sponge down between her legs and she allowed him to move the sponge in a circular motion, he turned her round and washed her back moving slowly down between her buttocks before dropping the sponge and turning her round to face him his arms around her pulling her to him his mouth on hers searching for her tongue, she had straddled him and he could feel his tip at the entry to her vagina. He dropped his arms to her waist and lifted her against the wall to the side of the shower, so as not to have the taps pushing into her back.

He easily slipped into her and she let out a soft satisfied moan as she clamped her legs around him, he immediately moved his lower body as he developed his movement into a rhythm and she responded by moving her lower body as he supported her. They both panted their breathing becoming heavier as they reached ejaculation together and they momentarily froze as the spasms of pleasure passed through them like waves the water still streaming over their bodies.

Michael could feel the strength ebbing from his waist even his legs felt weak from the exertion as the last feelings of passion ebbed through him, he gently lowered her until her feet touched the floor and then he kissed her gently her arms around his neck.

“That was wonderful,” he said as he looked down at her and brushed his lips across hers and opened the door stepping onto the floor towel and reaching for a towel from the rail. “I’ll be out in a minute,” she pulled the door gently closed and turned to the wall leaning with her arms outstretched against the wall to support her weak legs, allowing the water to wash over her head and down her body, while the last tremors of ecstasy flowed through her.

Michael had poured two glasses of wine and was staring out the lounge window onto the bobbing boats below, a towel wrapped around his waist, she admired his strong legs and shoulders as she walked into the lounge, “well that was different” he said turning round and picking up the other glass of wine from the coffee table and holding it out to her as she walked towards him.

“God you are a vision,” he remarked as he looked at her with a white towel tied just above her breasts, her hair towel dried, her face devoid of her spectacles, “yes, I’ll bet,” she replied taking the glass and sitting on the sofa drawing her legs up under her. He sat opposite her, “no you really are lovely,” he continued enjoying the embarrassed look on her face, “okay enough now,” she muttered turning her face to the side, “what time do you need to get up?” she asked changing the subject, “about six I think” he replied.

“Okay, let me sort these clothes out,” she stood up and went to the kitchen while Michael watched the news on the television.

They watched television together and had another glass of wine before she finally took his clothes out of the tumble dryer and hung them on the clothes horse she had on the balcony, before they climbed into bed.

They had no difficulty drifting off into a peaceful sleep as he laid at her back her hand clutching his cupped over her left breast.

By the time Michael awoke Christine had already ironed his shirt and placed it on a hanger next to his suit his socks and underpants placed neatly on the chair in the bedroom.

After performing his ablutions Michael wrapped the towel he had around his waist and went through to the lounge, Christine as standing in the kitchen dressed in a white cotton dressing gown, a cup of coffee in her hand. "You're full of surprises, you don't normally beat me in the morning" he said as he kissed her on the cheek, "well I knew you needed your shirt ironed so instead of you searching for the iron and ironingboard I thought I'd do it." "Thank you," he replied pulling up one of the stools at the breakfast bar, "I'll make you some coffee," she flicked the switch on top of the kettle, "it is not long boiled," she continued spooning the brown granules into the cup next to the kettle.

"I see inkie and dinkie are still downstairs, god that must be boring, sitting outside in a car the whole night, I almost want to take them a cup of coffee each," she laughed, pouring the steaming water into the cup.

"Have you got the," Michael made a signing motion with his hand across the kitchen top not wishing to say anything that would alert their minders if the flat was bugged. Christine understood immediately and walked to her rucksack still lying on the lounge floor. She unzipped it and removed the forms she had printed off the night before and stood next to Michael a black biro in her hand, she indicated where he had to sign and Michael carefully signed the signature he had been practising. He looked down at his handiwork pleased with the result and put the pen down, Christine took the forms and placed them back in her rucksack, before zipping it closed and returning to the kitchen.

“Have you got any Selotape,” he whispered leaning forward, he leaned back holding his index finger in front of his lips, indicating for her not to say anything.

“She went to a draw in the kitchen and returned with a roll in her hand, Michael beckoned for her to follow him as he climbed off the stool and made his way to the bathroom closing the door behind her. He walked over to the bath and turned the cold tap on as far as it would go and then whispered into her ear, “I don’t know if they have bugged your flat as well but before you go fix a piece of tape to the bottom of the door and attach it to the door jamb. That way, tonight when you come home if it has pulled away you will know someone has been in here, I’ll go and clean the area so that it sticks properly. “Okay now can you meet me this evening, lets say Canary Wharf Gourmet pizza at seven, do you know where it is” he faced her and held his thumb up, she nodded and turned the bath tap off.

They went back to the kitchen and finished their coffee, Michael was first into the shower and was dressed and ready to go as she emerged from the bathroom, her now familiar garb of white towel around her head and body, “Ill see you later, I have to go here, later today,” he said tapping the briefcase in his hand,” she nodded her acknowledgement.

“They walked to the door, Michael opened it and bent down pointing to the area he had cleaned for her to attach the tape, he stood up and they kissed, “bye now see you later,” he said as he made his way to the stairs. She watched him disappear before closing the door, suddenly feeling alone and vulnerable, she locked the door, turning the key and leaving it sideways in the door made her feel safer.

She dressed quickly and with her rucksack over her shoulder she locked her front door bending down and pressing the tape firmly onto the door and jamb, it was barely visible requiring very close scrutiny and could only be spotted if one was aware it was

there. Clever she thought as she made her way down the stairs and to the station, she was tempted to wave to the two men sitting in the white car as she passed but elected to restrain herself as she passed her eyes focused straight in front of her.

Michael had a full day of meetings and appointments and had kept the two brown envelopes containing the Ulliano and Marchants copied documents with him all the time, he managed to get to the bank and place the brown envelopes back in the safety deposit box relieved not to have them with him any longer.

While in the bank he arranged to withdraw ten thousand pounds in cash from his account, which he was told he could have the next day.

One of his meetings had been attended briefly by Andrew Marchant and noticed that Andrew avoided any eye contact with him which made Michael uncomfortable, how much did they know of what he and Christine had planned, he was convinced that they had bugged her flat, they had to be careful but he hoped they could bring it to a conclusion quickly.

Michael managed to get out at five thirty and made his way to the cyber café in cheapside, it was busy so he had a coffee while he waited, fortunately he only had to wait five minutes before a machine became available.

He logged on and was pleased with the speed of the connection, often Hotmail could be slow at this time of day due to the amount of traffic on the website, he entered his username, Midas and password, there were three messages, he was trembling as he looked at the entries, one from hotmail and the other was spam, he deleted them before opening the last one.

It was brief and read "UK£10,000 Italian £ 5,000

deposit 50% cash £10 notes only

advise selection

contact details will follow”

delivery one week

will require photo, surname and Christian names, occupation, place of birth, sex, date of birth, and marital status.

He pressed the reply button and typed “ Italian, will email other details tomorrow,” he looked at it for a moment trying to remember the details on the photocopy of Antonio Ulliana’s passport but decided to wait and get it right, getting it wrong could be costly in more ways than one and he wanted to get it over with as soon as possible. The train was full and he was glad when he arrived at Canary Wharf, he never bothered to check if he was being followed as he was, so he casually made his way through the throngs of people to Mackenzie walk.

There were a few people eating already but there were lots of unoccupied tables he chose one where he could be easily spotted by Christine when she arrived. He sat at one of the two seater sparsely laid tables with its blue bulbous bottle which served as a candle holder and white paper napkin beneath a knife and fork, in the non smoking area. A pretty young waitress came over to him and he asked if it was alright for him to sit where he was, she said it was, so he chose a bottle of Bolognani Nasiola. He savoured the dry, medium bodied golden liquid as it splashed over his tongue while he looked through the menu.

Christine arrived about twenty minutes later, looking windswept as she passed through the doors sweeping the interior of the restaurant with her bespectacled face as she searched through the sea of faces that looked at her, finally spotting him when he stood up and motioned to her.

They embraced her face cool face against his, “a bit breezy out there then,” he asked as he pulled out the vacant chair for her , “ yes and its quite chilly too, how are you,” she said in one breath as she flopped into the chair.

Michael sat in his chair, “I’m fine, been quite busy today, I had my tail with me how did you do?” he asked making light of his days events, “oh yes its been quite hectic, yes I also had a chaperone,” she smiled as she lifted the glass of wine Michael had poured. “I had a reply to my email very brief so I replied to theirs and asked for an Italian one, which happens to be cheaper anyway. I need to give them all the details, name date of birth that sort of thing, then I presume they come back to me and tell me when and where to pay, “he couldn’t believe how casually he was delivering this information but he felt safe for the moment.

“Oh great, yes I went to the cyber cafe you told me about on Cheapside at lunchtime and checked the email, there was a confirmation that they had received the application and that they awaited the signed form. Once they have received that they give us a username and pin number and then we have thirty days to deposit funds, they send us a cheque book and a debit card. So I posted the form that you signed, and now we wait,” Michael was glad of her relaxed tone, she certainly was lot more self assured than you would assume under the circumstances.

“I was called down to Andrew’s office today,” she said,” he told me that my replacement would be arriving in two weeks and that there would be no need for me to remain as he was quite capable, he was abrupt, I must admit I was hurt at the time but I thought fuck him.” “Good girl I reckon I’m next, they can’t afford to keep us here but it bothers me that maybe they will try and get rid of us one at a time, when we are no longer working for them, trying to avoid publicity, although the fact that we

worked for them would come out I'm sure, they must know that we are up to something but they don't know what."

"Yes," she replied pensively, "well I think its even more imperative that they don't find out where you are staying at the moment," she gazed vacantly at her glass, and Michael put his hand on hers resting on the table her index and middle fingers on the broad base of the wine glass. I'll have to give notice on my flat I have to give two weeks but I am a little wary of staying there on my own now," "Have you been back today at all?" he asked, "no I haven't had time to yet but I am curious to see if that Selotape has been disturbed," she contorted her face to display her displeasure at the fact that someone may have been into her home without her permission. "Well if it has, we know they have and I reckon we get you out of there as soon as possible just pay the rent for the two months," he insisted. "What and move in with you," she asked, "now there's a thought," he responded, "I'd love that but I think it would be better to get one of those weekly let places they are all over London, not too near me so that we can keep my place as a safe house." "Yes that makes sense, if I leave most of my stuff at your place and then stay for a week or two at a time at a different place, we should have everything in place within two weeks, anyway then I will be mobile and ready to go at a moments notice," he could hear the apprehension in her voice as the possible danger was starting to dawn on her. "Yes that's a good idea, this tranche is coming up so when we have moved the money, how do we go about making a cash withdrawal, don't these places ask questions," the realisation was dawning on Michael as well and his mind was racing as the words tumbled from his lips.

"I have no idea, lets get the account sorted first then I can email them and ask them, I assume they would want notice but I don't think they ask too many questions, most of the money they hold is suspect I'm sure," she replied.

“Okay well shall we order something to eat, I’m starving” Michael decided to change the subject, there wasn’t much else to do now until the bank replied and he sent off the information for the passport, ”I’m having Penne Arabiata.” ”That’s quite hot and spicy, isn’t it?” she asked, “yes,” “Okay make that two,” she continued and get another bottle of this delicious wine while you are about it,” “yes ma’am” Michael replied jokingly, as he raised his hand to attract the waitress’s attention.

Their pasta duly arrived, “you do realise that once we have pulled this off and we have the money we are going to have to vanish, don’t you,” she said, “yes I know, I have been putting it off mentally but I have to face that fact, what about family, I fortunately do not have that problem I am the sole surviving member of mine, what about you?” he asked, realising that he knew very little of her past.

“Well I only have a sister but she is married so her surname has changed, my parents both died within a few years of each other, my sister has moved to Australia, I might go and visit her actually,” she replied enthusiastically.” Chelsea or Knightsbridge, appeals to me I might be a little extravagant for my last few weeks here, I have about fifty thousand pounds saved so perhaps I should go to Australia and transfer that to another account down there, do you think these people can track down a bank account?” “Michael thought for a moment before replying, “I have no doubt that they can, we’ll probably have about a weeks grace so I would suggest that you find a safe place for that money because if you leave it in an account here or anywhere I am sure they will find it if its in your name.” “That’s it,“ she leant back in her chair as if hit with a stiff uppercut, “in Switzerland they have numbered accounts now surely that cannot be traced?” ”I don’t know,” Michael answered a puzzled look on his face, “we need to find out, if that is the case, that’s the answer” he picked up his glass of wine as if celebrating a great victory and she mimicked him.

They continued their meal in high spirits, eventually deciding it was time to go home, they noticed the two men following them as they made their way to the DLR, the journey to West India Quay took little more than five minutes and only took that long because they sat in at the Canary Wharf station for a while before moving.

They never bothered to look back when they alighted from the train and made their way to her flat as they knew that their followers would not be far behind.

Michael bent down when they arrived at her front door, "it's been opened," he whispered and he could see the disappointment on her face, "damn them Michael, I have to get out of here, please stay the night," she pleaded as the tears welled up in her eyes.

"Okay lets get you out, tomorrow you can stay at my place but remember not to mention your plans in there just in case," he pushed the door ajar and stood aside as she walked in, nothing appeared to have been disturbed at first glance but she did notice that a few things had been moved on closer inspection.

It was eleven thirty, Christine performed the same routine of washing his underwear and shirt while they had some more wine and chatted soberly about nothing in particular, as soon as she had removed his shirt from the tumble dryer and hung it on the clothes horse, they decided to go to bed.

Once in bed they were instantly aware that they were probably been listened to, every word, every cough every move, "just hold me close," she asked as she pulled him closely to her back and pressed his hand to her breast, they laid motionless, eventually he could hear her breathing more deeply and he allowed himself to drift off.

It was five thirty when he first opened his eyes and she was already awake they had barely moved during the night, "good morning," he said lifting himself on his right elbow and kissing her on the cheek, "how long have you been laying awake," "since

about five, I think “ she replied throwing off the duvet and swinging her feet to the floor, he watched as her firm buttocks disappeared into the bathroom before he climbed out of the bed.

He wondered naked into the spare bathroom and wrapped the blue towel he found in the neat pile on the shelf around his waist before making his way to the kitchen, where he dispensed coffee into two mugs and filled the kettle before switching it on. He picked up the remote and pressed channel one for the news, she eventually appeared fully clothed, the thought of being listened to made them economical with their conversation and he could see that she couldn't wait to get out.

The flat was fully furnished so apart from a few towels and her clothes which filled two large suitcases the only other thing was her golf clubs, she packed everything and he lifted the cases back onto the top of the wardrobes where they had been, so as not to arouse any suspicion should they search the flat again.

Michael would come back during the day by cab and take her things to his flat, hopefully undetected, they left the flat together applying a new strip of Selotape to the same place on the door and made their way past the white car to the station. They arranged to meet in the Sea Horse at seven pm and then work out how to shake their tail from there, she said that she would be phoning around for a flat.

He had quite a busy day but there was a two hour period which he could use so he left the building, his minder in attendance.

There was a broker who operated from a building a block away and Michael was familiar with the building which had three entrances which were in different streets, he quickly went in and signed his name in the book at the security desk, and greeted the security guard who recognised him.

The minder had stopped outside the entrance he had come in and was lighting a cigarette, Michael climbed into the lift with the three other people and pressed the button for the seventh floor, the floor where the broker conducted his business, he noticed that the second floor button lit and got out of the lift with the young woman. He immediately made his way to the stairs which he knew took him to the rear of the building and would allow him to exit out of sight of the entrance he had used to enter. He emerged from the stairs and carefully looked around as he stepped onto the pavement outside swinging away from the building and looking for a cab as he walked briskly, he saw a cab with its light on and put his hand in the air. The cab drew alongside him and he spoke into the open window, "West India Quay and back," he said, "hop in mate" the cabby replied more than happy to take a forty pound round trip.

"Michael peered through the back window and was relieved that he could not see the familiar figure of his chaperone anywhere, he sat back satisfied.

He struggled with the two suitcases and golf clubs which kept swinging off his shoulder sending clubs flying from the bag on more than one occasion, eventually he made it to the cab and placed the bags and clubs on the floor of the cab before climbing in.

He decided to carry the two heavy suitcases into the lobby and placed them at the lift before collecting the golf clubs and thanking the cab driver.

Once he had all her belongings safely in his flat he locked the door and bounded down the stairs, he made his way to the cyber café on Cheapside, which was thankfully empty and he was able to log on immediately.

He checked his email deleting the five spam messages and opening the one he recognised, he read the contents, "place deposit £2500 photograph and previously

requested details in an envelope and be at same place as previous contact at nine pm tonight, alone,” Michael acknowledged logged off paid and left.

He decided that this was a good time to go to the bank which was only a block away, he strode purposefully in the direction of the bank while dialling Anne on his mobile. “Hello Anne, I’m running a bit late can you phone Townsends for me and arrange my appointment with them for another day, just tell them I got held up, I should be back in the office in half an hour, okay bye,” he pressed the off key and replaced his phone in his jacket pocket.

He had to wait ten minutes before he was attended to and was given the money which they placed into a cloth bag, Michael put seven thousand five hundred into the safe deposit box and kept two thousand five hundred which was in ten pound notes in the bag.

The money was bulky but he managed to squeeze a thousand into each of his inside jacket pockets and placed the remaining five hundred into one of his outside pockets, while he had the box open he had carefully written out the Italians name and the details which had been requested.

He left the bank and went into a camera and quick spool developing shop in Cannon street, “do you do passport photographs” he asked the middle aged podgy man behind the counter, “certainly do mate, what country,” he replied in his cockney accent, “Italy” Michael replied, relieved, the man referred to a sheet of paper in a plastic sleeve.” Yes no problem, step this way sir” he led Michael to an area to the right of the doorway and pulled down a white screen and placed a stool in front of it, “there ya go, if you could sit yourself up there, do you want to comb your hair, “ he asked as he took up a large black camera with what looked like four lenses.” No this is as good as it gets, ”Michael hoisted himself onto the stool and faced the man, who was peering

through the viewfinder, “just look above the camera please and maybe a little smile” Michael obliged, feeling like an idiot as another customer entered the shop just as the man pressed the shutter, “ and once more” he heard the man say, Michael duly obliged.

The man turned and went behind the counter, pulling something out of the camera as he went, “that will take about ten minutes” he said as he placed the paper and camera on a desk behind the counter and attended to the other customer.

Michael waited and eventually paid and took the photographs, god passport photographs always look so awful he thought as he placed the small brown envelope into his shirt pocket and crossed back over Cannon street and made his way back to his office.

Anne was relieved to see him walk through the door, “Mr Wheeler, thank god,” her cheeks were flushed, “what’s the matter?” he asked, Mr Marchant has been looking for you, he even came here personally.” “Oh” Michael could not think of anything else to say but his mind was racing, “you’re to go to his office the minute you arrive,” she picked up the phone dialled and waited, Michael heard her say “he’s on his way” as he left her office, he decided not to hurry and get himself flustered, he also needed time to think.

Could they have found anything out, no he thought but something’s on the go, Marchant had been avoiding him, so for him to want to see him must mean that something had happened.

He reached Daphne’s office and immediately felt the lush carpet beneath his feet, “good afternoon Mr Wheeler, go straight in” she said. Michael didn’t bother to knock instead he threw the door open extravagantly. “Ah Michael, Andrew stood up and motioned for him to sit down. ”Hello Andrew, what seems to be the problem.”

Michael decided that there was little point in being defensive, Andrew sat down placing his hands as if in prayer on the desk as he looked Michael squarely in the eyes. "Michael it has come to my attention that you are spending a lot of time with Christine mc Ardie," "yes," Michael suppressed a desire to ask him if one of his goons had told him but instead he waited for Andrew to continue. "We don't think that its in your interest to be seeing so much of her," he held up his hand, as Michael opened his mouth to reply. "She is going back to South Africa shortly, her past association with John Bristow, who you know was married, can only be detrimental to your progress here and we would prefer that you end this liaison immediately" he leant back in his chair. "Michael was incensed but decided that they were too close for him to jeopardise their plan, "okay," he replied as calmly as he could as he controlled the desire to pull Andrew across the desk and smash his fist into his face.

The reply seemed to take Andrew by surprise and Michael took the opportunity to stand up, "was there anything else," he asked, "no, you won't regret it Michael, it's the right decision," he turned and left the office closing the door behind him and ignoring Daphne as he walked briskly to his office.

"No phone calls, please," he barked at Anne as he closed the door behind him, he fell into his chair, the anger raging in him like a volcano, he walked to the window and looked down at the traffic below.

Okay he thought, that's not so bad they would just have to be careful, she would be staying closer and they could get their parts of the plan completed without too much contact, once the money was transferred and they had arranged to pick up the cash they could disappear.

He would meet Christine and then they would have to appear to go their separate ways, he knew she didn't want to stay at her place and he doubted if she would have been able to arrange a place to stay until next week.

Michael placed the money and the information he had carefully written down on a sheet of paper and attached one of his photographs with a paper clip before sealing the envelope and placed it in the bottom drawer in his desk.

The rest of the day was uneventful and Michael finally left the office at half past six taking the precious envelope with him as he walked through the deserted offices to the lift, immediately he stepped onto the pavement he spotted the man across the road as one of the chaperones. He felt the urge to walk across and beat the man to within an inch of his life but knew that any such behaviour would be stupid. The Seahorse was quite busy and Michael greeted a few people he recognised before settling himself at the end of the bar so that Christine could spot him when she arrived.

Mannie came over and greeted him and poured a Stella for Michael and then entered into some small talk as his wife and the barmaid served.

"Hey Mannie is there another way out of here apart from the front door," he asked thinking of how to get rid of his followers as tonight was important for them to ensure they were not followed, "well not for the public but there is a passage way that goes back into your building from my cellar," Mannie's South African accent sounded like music to Michael's ears, that would be perfect he thought as the security guards would change over at seven and they could walk out of the building as if they had just finished work.

"Do you think that tonight my friend and I could duck out that way, we'd really appreciate it," Mannie held his hand up, "no problem I don't need to know, if you

have a lady friend and you don't want to be seen, that's your business." "That's great, I owe you one," Michael said cheerily as he raised his glass to his lips.

"You're welcome," just let me know when you want to go and I'll show you the way," the bar had got a lot busier and Mannie excused himself to help the girls serving.

"Hello," Christine said as she arrived at ten past seven and pulled herself onto the stool next to him, placing her rucksack on the ledge under the bar in front of her not showing any affection as they both knew that their colleagues were also in the pub, "How's your day been," she asked, "okay," Michael lied seeing no point in relaying his conversation with Andrew earlier. She ordered a glass of dry wine and Michael told her of his plan to leave via the passageway with Mannie's help, she said that she had also been followed and that she saw Michael's chaperone standing across the road on the corner of Friday Street.

"Well don't look now but one of them is going down the stairs on the far side to the toilet no doubt to make sure we are both together, by the way put this into your rucksack for me it's a bit too bulky to fit into my pocket and I'm scared I might leave it behind, which would be disastrous." Michael handed her the brown envelope which was lying on the bar next to his beer glass.

The man Michael had identified came back up the stairs and slowly swept the expanse of the bar allowing his eyes to nonchalantly drift over them but pretending not to see them before he carried on and walked out of the door.

"They drank their drinks and Michael called Mannie over, "okay Mannie, can you show us the way, "follow me" he beckoned to them as he turned and went down a steep staircase from behind the bar, Michael made sure that Christine picked up her

rucksack. No one except Mannie's wife seemed to notice them walk round behind the bar and disappear down the steep staircase behind Mannie.

They walked past large gas cylinders and rows of boxes marked glasses and wine as they made their way past noisy machines emitting hot air, to a heavy steel door which Mannie flung open, the cool air from the cellar was immediately evident as they stepped into a cavernous room filled with silver beer barrels and crates of mixers and the loud sound of fans almost deafening, they waited standing in the centre while Mannie closed the door behind him.

He indicated for them to follow him as he walked toward a set of double doors held closed by a steel rod running through two hoops in the middle, he removed the rod and opened one of the doors and stepped through into the a dark passage and flicked a switch on the wall, the neon lights flickered finally illuminating the long passage.

Mannie walked along the passage and they followed him to another set of double doors, he pushed one of the doors open and walked through holding the door against its spring he waited for them.

They were standing in front of a lift, "now all you have to do is take the lift to whatever floor you want and then use your card to get into the offices and you will be back in your own office," Mannie explained a huge grin on his face. "Thank you very much," Michael said as he pressed the lift button and heard the electric motors whirr into action. "Anytime, hey we South Africans must stick together," and with that Mannie disappeared through the door the spring pulling it closed behind him just as the lift arrived.

They took the lift to the seventh floor Christine went through first using her card and then closing the door and then Michael entered using his card, so that the cards would

allow them to leave the building otherwise the card would remember that they had already left and would not allow them to leave without being overridden.

They knew that if anybody wanted to check they could probably pick up their entry via the computer record which was made every time a card was used to enter or exit the building but they would cross that bridge if and when they had to, for now all they had to do was leave the building and get to Soho, it was eight o'clock so they had plenty of time.

They emerged from the building and stepped onto the pavement in Cannon street, it had started to drizzle as they walked quickly turning right, the traffic had become much lighter. He held her hand and waited for a gap before dashing across the road pulling her with him. They wanted to get as far away from Canon street as possible as the weather would probably make their minds go back into the pub for shelter and they would soon see that they had left.

It was still quite busy as they turned into Bow Lane and hurried past the myriad of coffee shops and sandwich bars, they finally exited the lane into Cheapside and dashed across the road between the slow moving traffic, "now let's try and get a cab," Michael turned looking back knowing it was not the best time to find a cab but their chances were considerably better than an hour ago.

They had almost reached Cornhill when they finally managed to hail a vacant cab, "Firth street, Soho, please," Michael barked through the open passenger window, "hop in mate," the taxi driver replied and they climbed into the back relieved to be out of the drizzle, "we should have brought an umbrella," he said. "Well the weather's been quite good and it's not so bad," she settled into the corner of the cab relieved to be off the street. "We don't seem to have been followed," she continued, "no, we

were long gone before they knew and I'm sure Mannie will not say anything,"

Micahel sank back in the seat feeling safe in the cab.

They arrived in Firth street and Michael asked the cab driver to drop them off outside Little Italy, he paid the driver and they went inside, "its quarter to nine so we might as well order something to eat and then I'll go outside just before nine with the envelope, there's no point standing out there getting wet," he said as they sat down at one of the empty tables.

Michael took the envelope and stood a few yards from the entrance to the restaurant looking nervously up and down the road which was practically deserted, he did not have to wait long. He had noticed two youths in jeans and track suit tops with hoods pulled over their heads, baseball cap peaks protruding. He wasn't sure until they drew level with him and one carried on walking past, the other held out his hand and momentarily stopped in front of him, "give me the envelope, man," he heard him say in a distinctive London accent, as he faced downwards obscuring his face. Michael handed him the envelope and without saying another word the youth quickly caught up with the other youngster and hurried off into the distance, Michael turned and went back into the sanctuary of the restaurant.

"Did he collect it," she asked as he sat down reaching for his glass of wine, "yes, two of them," he replied. "Well lets hope that's not a con and that they are greedy enough for the balance and we get our passport, for now lets enjoy the rest of the evening," he tried to hide his anxiety and changed the subject, asking her how her flat hunting had gone.

"We always seem to be eating and drinking," she said, "well I love eating although I haven't been to the gym much but all this walking is good exercise, we walk a lot in London, more so than we did back in South Africa. "Yes that's true, it's the most

efficient way and although people complain about the public transport it is bloody good,” she had sensed his desire to make small talk and it was good to give their minds a break from their plans.

It was eleven o'clock by the time they left the restaurant after three bottles of wine the streets were not particularly busy as they made their way to Soho Square and down Sutton Row to Charing Cross road as they knew it would be easier to get a cab around there at this time of night.

They had no trouble hailing a cab and Michael asked the driver to drop them off outside Saint Bart's, he paid and they walked the short distance to his flat checking to ensure that they were not being followed, he very much doubted that they were but he felt that caution was prudent.

They took the lift, as she was quite unsteady on her feet, Michael sat her down on the couch where she flopped over in a heap, while he went to the bathroom. When he returned she had curled her legs onto the couch her shoes lay untidily on the carpet, her eyes closed, he could see she was fast asleep so he went to the wardrobe in the bedroom and took a spare blanket and placed it gently over her, she never stirred. He went into the kitchen and poured himself a glass of white wine and sat on one of the stools at the breakfast bar watching her, she had removed her glasses when they had left the restaurant, she looked so peaceful her short reddish blonde hair untidy around her cute impish face.

Michael finished his glass of wine and decided to leave her on the couch as she seemed to have settled into a deep sleep and he saw no point in disturbing her.

Christine took a few moments to realise where she was before she sat up and switched on the lamp on the table next to the couch and looked at her wristwatch, it was half past two in the morning.

She stood up and switched off the light before making her way unsteadily to the bedroom bouncing off the walls twice as she picked her way through the darkness, illuminated slightly by the moonlight streaming through a small opening between the curtains.

She stripped off her clothes and dropped them where she stood before slipping under the duvet almost falling on the floor in the process and cuddled up behind Michael who barely stirred his heavy breathing confirmed that he was fast asleep, it wasn't long before she too dropped off.

Michael was the first to wake, he couldn't remember the evenings proceedings at first but then it slowly dawned on him, so he was surprised to find her in the bed next to him. He looked up at the alarm clock which he had forgotten to set, it was seven thirty, he realised he was running late and threw the duvet off covering Christine with a double layer, she stirred but did not wake up. Michael decided to have a shower and he spent a long time letting the warm water cascade over his head as he tried to clear away the slight hangover, he then dressed before waking her to give her the extra time to sleep off the effects of the wine. He packed some clothes into a Reebok hold all and placed the bag at the doorway to the bedroom.

"Good morning my little wino and welcome back, how do we feel this bright and breezy morning," he kissed her on the cheek, her eyes opened and she pushed the duvet away from her upper body revealing her breasts as she yawned and stretched her arms in the air.

"Well I have felt better, you fed me too much wine, I think you like getting me drunk, look at you already dressed, what time is it," she asked sitting up and holding her head in her hands, "its eight fifteen and I must go but lets sort some things out, give me your keys and I'll go and collect the mail from your flat and the company's, I'll do

that some time during the day, I hope the stuff from the bank is there. Then I want to check the email, I also thought we might fly off to Munich this weekend and see if we are followed. We are going to have to go to Switzerland at some time so we need to work out a way of getting there without being followed and so as not to let on what we are doing.

Munich is relatively close to Switzerland, we could hire a car and see how long it takes us to get to Zurich, what do you think?" "yes sounds like a good idea," she agreed.

"Good okay I will collect the mail, pack a small bag, I have one ready and take it to the office with you, that way we don't need to come back here, I'll try and get us on a flight this evening after six, is that okay," he asked, she nodded, "then I will phone you and just say which airport by a number one for Heathrow and two for Gatwick and a time, for Heathrow meet me at the bus stop outside terminal three, for Gatwick, at the top of the escalator in terminal one. You take a cab and meet me there, that way they won't be able to follow us without tickets so we should be okay, we can hire a car in Munich and drive to Switzerland, what do you think." She looked up at him as she sat her legs now hanging over the bed the duvet completely discarded, her firm body teasing him, Yes okay, ooo I don't feel well" she complained, "okay I'm going before I lose control you little tease, he said turning and picking up the bag near the door. "Coward, I probably wouldn't be able to do anything but it may cure my hangover" she said mockingly as she stood up and followed him naked, "yes" he replied as he continued to the door. "She grabbed him by the arm, he turned and met her lips with his and they kissed hard and passionately, he could feel her pushing herself into him. He pulled himself free, "Switzerland" he said, as he turned and

turned the door knob and then he was gone, she stood for a moment facing the closed door, “hhmmmm Switzerland, “ she murmured and went to the bathroom.

Fridays were never really busy days for Michael it seemed as if the Life Assurance industry ground to a halt by lunchtime, he had managed to book two tickets to Munich with Lufthansa departing Heathrow at twenty ten, he had phoned Christine and all he had said was one six thirty, as his afternoon was free, he told Anne that he would not be back and that if she needed him to phone him on his mobile.

He left the office clutching his holdall and made his way briskly to the internet café, where he had to wait ten minutes before a machine became available. There was an email waiting for him which simply read, package received document ready same place Monday nine pm bring balance, he replied with will be there and signed off.

The walk to Bank station seemed to take forever and he was aware that he was being followed but he expected that as he boarded the DLR which was quite busy considering it was only two thirty in the afternoon, he no longer seemed to have that nervous butterfly stomach he had had when he first realised he was being followed.

He arrived at Westferry station and made his way to the block of flats using Christine’s key he unlocked the door to the foyer and the pigeon hole letter boxes. He emptied hers first discarding any junk mail in the large wastebasket provided, there were only two letters, he then turned his attention to the pigeon hole for the flat he had been staying in. There were a few pieces of junk mail covering a letter addressed to Mr Ulliana , which is what they had been waiting for, he removed it and placed it together with the two letters for Christine into his jacket inside pocket. He pulled the foyer door open just as the man following him reached the door and enjoyed the surprise on his face as Michael virtually knocked him off his feet. Michael was a good three or four inches taller and he towered over the man as he held the door open for

him to enter “so sorry,” Michael said sarcastically as the shorter, thick set man walked through and stood at the lift, Michael allowing the door to close behind him automatically powered by its spring attachment and made his way to the station.

He couldn’t believe how blatant his pursuer was as he reached the top of the stairs at the station and looked back to see the man following him, what a pity the door didn’t require a key from the inside to unlock, he thought.

It was almost a quarter to four when he emerged from Bank station and he made his way to Thomas Cook Cheapside and collected their tickets. As they both had Shengen visas they could travel to Germany and South Africans did not require visas for Switzerland. He felt an air of excitement as he stepped out onto the pavement and hailed a cab, his chaperone was standing across the road and Michael watched bemused as he ran across the road to hail a cab so that he could follow Michael.

He arrived at Heathrow, terminal three, the time was only quarter past five so he decided to phone Christine from his mobile “hello,” he was relieved to hear her voice on the other end of the line. “Hi there I’m here so come whenever you are ready,” he said, “okay you just caught me I am leaving now, see you in a bit,” okay, bye”, “bye” he returned his phone to his jacket pocket and went into the terminal to buy a newspaper.

The airport was the normal hustle and bustle with announcements about left luggage and flights, he bought a Daily Mail and walked the full length of the departures hall just to give his follower something to do. At one stage staring straight at him as they passed within touching distance of each other, the man merely stared straight ahead ignoring him. Michael looked at the monitor and found their flight which departed from terminal two, he decided he would hop into Christine’s cab when she arrived

and make the short journey to the terminal, he then made his way back to the bus stop to wait for her to arrive, his attendant waited at the entry to the terminal.

She arrived at quarter past six and Michael could see the joy on her face to see him there, "hello angel, no stay in we need to go to terminal three," he coaxed her back in closing the door behind him, sorry mate terminal two please," he said as he kissed her. "Okay guv" the driver replied as he steered the cab back into the traffic, Michael looked through the back window and chuckled as he saw the man frantically trying to hail a cab.

They soon arrived at terminal two and Michael paid the driver, before carrying both holdalls through the glass doors into the noisy terminal building and made their way along the ground floor to the Lufthansa desk.

There were only a few people ahead of them and as they only had hand luggage they were dealt with quickly, Michael saw his pursuer who had been joined by another man watching them as they disappeared through passport control.

"I wonder if they will contact someone in Munich to follow us," he said as they joined the queue, "well we will have to wait and see, I suppose, what if they do, well we will have a little more difficulty that end as we won't recognise them but lets worry about that when we get there, we need to find an hotel for the night anyway, maybe we should book two nights in Munich." "Yes that way if we can manage to slip away undetected and they will assume we are still in Munich," she agreed.

"Okay we won't hire a car at the airport, lets try and loose them and if we are successful then we can always hire one later, or maybe even fly, lets play it by ear," he thought aloud, Christine nodded her head.

The two hour flight seemed to go quickly and they disembarked and went through the arrival routine quickly and without any delay they found themselves in the arrivals hall, the airport while busy was nothing like noisy Heathrow.

After a few seconds of orientation Michael found a counter for hotel bookings and eager to show off his limited German he said, "ein hotel vir zwei nagte bitte" "in oder buite Munchen" the blonde girl replied "in bitte" Michael responded. "Wie habst de Best Western vir ein hundere en fimfsig euro vir ein doubl vir zwei nagte," the girl said. "Das is goe" Michael's confidence was growing as he replied. "Passport unt kredietkarte bitte," the girl asked holding out her hand for their passports and his credit card.

After completing the paper work the blonde handed Michael a sheet of paper which reflected the hotel name and the payment of two hundred and ninety nine euros and eighty cents "Danke" he said as he took their documents and the receipt.

"We had better get some Euros, for the taxi and other incidentals, Michael made his way to the Wechsel with Christine following a few paces behind, he placed the Euros into his pocket, "right now all we need is a taxi," he picked up the holdalls and Christine followed, "very impressive," she remarked. "I didn't know you spoke German," "well don't be too impressed that's about the extent of it," he laughed as he led the way following the sign which indicated where the taxis were located.

They emerged through the automatic glass doors and were pleased to find that it was a lovely warm cloudless evening.

The taxi ride took forever, as they drove the thirty plus miles toward the city and Michael was surprised at the taxi charge of one hundred and ten Euros, "shit that's expensive," he said as he led the way into the hotel foyer.

They booked in and took the lift to the third floor where their room was situated, they had been too preoccupied to check whether they were being followed or not so they did not notice the two men with open neck shirts and trousers who blended in with the surroundings and watched them enter the hotel.

“This is not bad, nothing special but it will do,” he placed the holdalls on the foot of the double bed, “oh dear only one bed, that means either we have to sleep together or one of us must sleep on the couch,” she responded by throwing her arms around his neck, “you sleep anywhere but with me and I will hunt you down,” she said before kissing him.

They eventually parted, “what say you we have a shower change into our comfies and then do a quick reconnoitre, where the bus stations, trains, etc. are, have a bite and then come back and sort out our sleeping arrangements,” he chuckled as he threw his jacket onto the chair in the corner of the room, and undid his shirt, “okay, good idea, we also need to work out if we have a tail here or not,” she added.

“You shower first, I see a coffee and a kettle over there,” he made his way to the side table, took the jug of water and poured the contents into the kettle, it switched on automatically.

Christine had stripped naked and disappeared into the bathroom, Michael heard the water from the shower before he switched on the television, which burst into live and a man appeared reading the news in German.

He had made her a cup of coffee by the time she appeared with a towel around her head and nothing else, before going for his shower.

It was just before midnight when they stepped onto the quiet Albert Rosshaupter strasse, the empty street made it easy to see if they were being followed so they decided to walk in a square.

They held hands as they walked two blocks down Mendl strasse before turning left into Retenstrasse, Michael stopped halfway and knelt down pretending to tie his trainers, at the same time looking back in the direction they had come. He noticed a dark haired man in a blue and white open neck shirt and light trousers smoking who was about seventy five yards behind them, the man kept on walking and Michael took Christine's hand, "lets walk slower and see if this chap passes, don't look back," he said.

They ambled along slowly and the man passed them without a word and turned right while they carried on straight ahead before turning left into Drachenseestrasse.

Christine looked back as they turned the corner, "there's a man some way back with dark trousers and a white shirt, he's quite a way back though," she whispered.

"Well maybe they are less obvious than those two in London or maybe its nothing either way lets assume that there are two of them and that this one has taken over, lets head back to the hotel." Michael decided to pick up the pace a little and hurried Christine along, they turned left again into Albert Rosshaupterstrasse and finally reached the hotel.

They waited at the lift and both turned to face out into the deserted lobby holding the doors open to see if either of the men appeared, they were not disappointed, "that's the one I saw," Christine said out of the corner of her mouth as a man wearing dark trousers and a white shirt appeared in the lobby, Michael pressed the button for the third floor.

"Okay so we must try and lose them tomorrow, we won't go to Zurich but we can learn where everything that we need is located, I will have to come back on Tuesday, I think," they had reached the third floor, they made their way to their room and he unlocked the door, standing back to allow her to enter first and closing the door,

securing it with the night lock before tossing the keys onto the glass topped cane table near the window. "Yes I'll need to set up that account quickly if they are transferring the money at the end of next week, so I will have to come back or go straight to Zurich. I'll have to make up a story but I cannot be followed otherwise the plan will be in jeopardy," he threw his shirt over the back of the chair and sat on the bed as he removed his trainers and socks before taking off his jeans and lazily throwing them on top of his shirt.

Christine had left her clothes where they fell and was already in the bed watching and listening to him, "enough now, we'll tackle it tomorrow, come to bed, you handsome beast," she coaxed.

Michael needed no second invitation, it had been a while since he had felt the soft smoothness of her skin and smelt the delicacy of her perfume, he touched her nipples gently with his fingers and felt them harden to his touch, they kissed their tongues probing, she moaned softly.

She felt his hand searching her body moving slowly down from her neck to her breasts, the sensations of desire stabbing her stomach as he gently caressed her nipples, their mouths were locked and she wanted to suck his live member into her body.

She felt his hand snake slowly down over her stomach the feeling of anticipation exciting her as she eagerly awaited his next move, she could feel the dampness between her legs as she parted them so as to make it easier for him to reach her inner thighs, it seemed like an eternity since they had last enjoyed each other.

He felt her flat stomach and let his fingers nestle in the well groomed softness of her pubic hairs, slowly moving his hand down, he felt her part her legs and hesitated momentarily enjoying her expectation and teasing her a little before slowly moving

his hand down allowing his index finger to cover her damp clitoris, he slowly massaged, she groaned at his touch and arched her lower body trying to make him push harder.

She could feel his hand causing the sensations in her belly and enjoyed the sheer self indulgence of the pleasure she was experiencing, she pushed her mount upwards wanting more, she placed her hand on his pushing his middle finger down harder moaning with animal gratification.

She reached over and felt the extent of his manhood and she could wait no more, pulling him towards her, "please Michael, please," she pleaded, he was on top of her in a flash and she felt the sheer power of him and the enjoyment as he entered her, she could hold back no more and allowed the waves to envelope her the sensations of ecstasy invaded her from her head to her toe. She knew she was screaming with passion but it seemed like a distant noise, she felt as though she was in a trance, each pang of pleasure greater than the last ricocheting around her body.

Eventually they lay next to each other saying nothing, their chests heaving, exhausted from the sheer intensity of their love making, trying to catch their breath.

"I missed you," he was the first to speak as he regained some measure of control.

"That, was sensational," "you're not too bloody shabby yourself," she countered between breaths, I need some nice cold water." She threw her legs over the side of the bed and stood gingerly to her feet and then made her way to the bathroom, returning with two glasses of water, she handed him one.

They slept like two satisfied, contented people without a care in the world, him close behind her with her hand clasped over his which cupped her breast.

She was the first to stir and her movement woke him, he turned and reached for his watch to see the time, "bugger its nine o clock, we're sleeping the day away," he

jumped put of the bed and into the bathroom, she heard the shower as she rolled onto her back and stretched.

By the time he emerged from the bathroom she was standing naked looking out of the window at the traffic below a cup of steaming hot coffee in her hand, "yours is over there," she said pointing to the round glass topped table.

"Thank you," he picked it up and went to where she was standing and kissed her on the cheek, "what are you looking at," he asked just staring out enjoying the hustle and bustle of Munich, "I'd better get showered," she said and placed her cup on the table, "back in two ticks," she disappeared into the bathroom while Michael proceeded to get dressed.

They eventually arrived in the foyer at quarter to ten, "breakfast is almost over, no matter we can have brunch somewhere," he said and they headed for the door, Michael electing to keep his key with him.

They stepped out into a sunny morning and they both put on their sun glasses, "well thank god the weather is pleasant," she said hooking her arm in his, "I wonder if we should catch a taxi and let them take us to the station and from there we can decide what we want to do, what do you think fraulein." "Okay that gives us a central starting point." A taxi had just dropped a couple off at the hotel and Michael held up his hand for the driver to wait, they climbed into the back, "train station bitte," Michael ordered, the driver nodded and they moved off, "is that right, station," she questioned, "who cares, we are on our way, you picky moo you" he replied with a giggle.

The streets were a lot busier than the night before and they eventually arrived at the central train station, Michael paid the driver and they stood, looking for the name of the street, "there it is Bayerstrasse," she struggled, "how's that," "bloody good" he replied, "lets see if we can spot our chaperones, "difficult in this" she said gesturing in

the direction of the crowds, "yes I would battle to spot them I must admit," we need to move on to somewhere less crowded.

"Lets go that way," he pointed along Bayer and took her hand, jostling through the myriad of people eventually crossing onto the opposite side of the road, they turned right at a theatre, "Westend, a little bit of England," she pointed to a sign.

They walked along Westend and turned right heading back to Bayerstrasse, "right now we walk back down Bayerstrasse and lets see what we have." Michael turned round, "aha, yes we have a tail, he could have changed his clothes, it's the dark trousered one. Okay well lets get the information we need, lets find out how long it takes to fly to Zurich, how long to drive and how long by train. I'm not sure how we get rid of these guys, they probably know the city pretty well, we don't actually have to physically go to Zurich I just thought it would be good to know our way around.

There's a little coffee shop or whatever they call it lets go and get something to chomp, I'm starved," he pointed to a shop with aluminium tables and chairs outside. They sat at the last vacant and Michael positioned himself so that he was facing in the direction they had just come so that he could watch the man who was following them. "Now where is he," he mumbled, "ah got him well what's he going to do now, if he goes past you had better keep an eye on him I will tell you when he goes past."

Michael stared at the man through his sunglasses, right that's him, the dark trousers and the white shirt, watch what he does," Michael whispered across the table. "Okay," she responded watching as the man passed their table, "he's still walking, right he has stopped about sixty maybe seventy yards away, he sticks out like a sore thumb when you know what to look for otherwise I would never have spotted him, now what," she asked. "I don't actually know, this is all awkward now, maybe we should catch a train anyway, what does it matter if they follow us, so we went to Zurich, we can walk

around and I can get the name of a bank and phone them on Monday and see what they need, yes lets do that, lets go and find out how long a train takes, we can have a bite to eat on the train, that will be fun.” ”Good idea, lets make these chaps earn their money” she stood up first and waited for Michael, it was only a few hundred yards to the train station.

They entered the modern glass and concrete building and made their way to the ticket counter, Michael decided to refrain from trying to book the tickets in German in case they ended up in the wrong place and was delighted to find that the middle aged woman spoke perfectly acceptable English.

They booked two first class tickets departing at twelve thirteen arriving at sixteen twenty seven a trip of some four and a quarter hours, they would have to stay over but that shouldn't pose a problem and all they needed to buy was some underwear and maybe a clean shirt.

They had twenty minutes in which to find the train so they made their way to the platform, Christine had spotted the black trousers loitering not far from them watching their every move.

They reached their platform and boarded the train, Michael took a good look down the platform and saw their pursuer boarding the train further down in the second class compartments.

They settled into their seats having noted where the dinning car was located, Michael had enquired and booked a table for lunch and was told that the dining car would be open from twelve thirty.

The train pulled out of the station on time and after a visit to the bathroom facilities Michael and Christine arrived in the dining car and were shown immediately to their

table, they noticed the man at the bar at the far end as he turned and looked out of the window.

The countryside sped by as they enjoyed their meal of poached salmon topped with prawns washed down with a delicious dry white Dao Grao Vasco from Portugal, they were almost oblivious to their tail who remained fixed to the bar a glass of beer in front of him.

They returned to their seat half an hour before the estimated time of arrival as the dining car had closed and that gave them enough time to attend to their ablutions.

They stepped from the train and were amazed at the contrast in stations, where Munich was a modern concrete and glass building, Zurich station was a masterpiece of nineteenth century Architecture.

They made their way along the platform like two bewildered children as they admired the beauty of the building, there were signs to shops below but they decided to make their way to the centre by taxi and an hotel.

"I suppose we had better get some Swiss francs, while we are here there is a hole in the wall I'll just draw some from there quickly," he steered Christine by the elbow to the autoteller.

Michael drew some money from his credit card and noticed a sign advertising the Central Zurich Hotel, "lets go there he said pointing to the sign," they went to the exit and climbed into the nearest Mercedes taxi. "Central Plaza Hotel, please," he said and the driver pulled away from the curb, Christine squeezed Michaels knee and pointed over his shoulder at their tail also climbing into a taxi behind them.

They arrived at the hotel in no time at all and Michael paid the driver and looked up at the imposing building, "well here we are, no luggage" what will they think, lets see if

they have a room, shall we,” “why not “she replied and they walked into the grand foyer arm in arm.

“Good evening have you a double room for the night, “Michael asked, the clerk, who looked down at the screen in front of him and punched a few keys on the keyboard. “We have sir,” he replied in perfect English, “good” Michael said handing him his credit card, the clerk placed a form and pen in front of him and Michael completed it and handed the form back with their passports.

The formalities were duly completed and the clerk held up his hand for the porter, “no need” said Michael, “we have no luggage yet, I’ll just take the key and we’ll pick up some things later, are the shops nearby.”

The clerk looked somewhat bemused as he replied, “certainly sir, yes there are many shops a short walk from here and we have our own as well,” “thank you” Michael took the key and together they walked to the lifts, “Fourth floor, please,” he said to the lift attendant, “yes sir,” he responded.

They walked the short distance from the lift to their room, “oh this is nice,” Christine stood in the middle of the large room, look we have a fridge, how about a little glass of wine while we relax for a few minutes,” “good idea,” Michael opened the fridge and took out a half size bottle of French white wine, “where are the glasses, oh there they are,” he answered his own question as he took the two glasses off the tray and uncorked the bottle, handing a glass to Christine who had settled on the couch. “ah, lovely” she said sipping from her glass, “nice and cold.”

“Now we need to get some underwear and maybe a few bits if we are going out to supper,” he said, “no lets take room service, we can go out and find the banks and also get some underwear but we can eat here, there is no need to go out to a restaurant, surely,” she pleaded.” okay that sounds like a good idea because we have to catch the

train at half past seven tomorrow if we are going to make our plane flights, so that's a good idea," he agreed.

They finished their wine and then left the hotel picking up a pen and paper from the room on the way out and set out to locate a bank for Michael to arrange an account on Monday by phone. He would then fly in and do the necessary paper work on the Tuesday, he should be able to fly in and out and be back in London hopefully by the early afternoon so as not to arouse too much suspicion, he would have to lose his London tail on Tuesday but that shouldn't be a problem, they were getting good at this cloak and dagger business.

The lighting from the hotel reflected in the river gave the hotel an almost magical look as they made their way down the busy Banhoff strasse with its myriad of shops, banks and museums.

"I'll write this one down and maybe two others that are close by just in case there is a problem with any one of them," Michael scribbled the name of the banks and their location in relation to the hotel.

"Right now some underwear, I seem to have lost sight of our chaperone but it doesn't matter we know he's there," Christine grabbed Michael by the arm and steered him into a quaint ladies clothes shop, where she bought a fresh pair of panties and a blouse.

"Thank god you are not a faffer," he said as they stepped out of the shop, "there isn't much in there for a man to do unless he has a fetish," Okay I just need some socks, under pants and a shirt that shop should do " they walked into the outfitters and Michael selected the items he needed.

"Lets get back to the hotel, all this activity has made me hungry and thirsty," they walked quickly back towards the hotel, "I wish I had a camera, that is really a lovely

picture,” she stopped momentarily and looked at the lights of the hotel, the reflection in the water seeming to twinkle with the ripples on the surface.

“You’ll have plenty of time to take photos, we’ll need to come back here remember,” Michael steered her by the elbow to the hotel foyer, “lets take the stairs,” he said as they walked past the lifts, they reached their floor out of breath after running once they were out of sight of the foyer.

Christine took a bottle of wine from the fridge and poured two glasses, and handed Michael a glass as he stood looking out of the window, “I think we should fly back tomorrow, lets give our minders something to think about and that way we don’t have to get up at the crack of dawn, what do you think,” I think that’s a great idea, a train journey one way is fine but it is a bit boring,” she replied.

“Okay let me look up Lufthansa’s number and while I talk to them maybe you would like to look up the telephone numbers of the banks, here’s the list, “he handed her the scruffy piece of paper he had taken from his jean pocket.

He managed to get them flights to Munich departing at ten twenty five arriving at eleven thirty, “bugger it lets go and have some dinner downstairs, what do you say?” “bloody good idea let me have a wee first,” she responded as she drained her glass and put it on the coffee table before going to the bathroom.

They waited for the lift which arrived with the attendant, “excuse me, can you take us to the restaurants and tell me will they let us in dressed like this,” Michael held his hands by his side indicating his jeans and trainers, “you are guests, yes, no problem, replied the attendant, his accent made even sweeter by the answer “I will take you to the Kings Cave ask for a table overlooking the river, you will enjoy it,” he continued. They arrived at the lower ground floor and the attendant pointed straight ahead, “thank you very much,” they said together as they walked towards a staircase and

made their way downstairs, a little apprehensively even though they had been reassured by the lift attendant they felt underdressed.

They were greeted by a large gentleman in a tuxedo and as they looked beyond him into the cavernous half filled room its soft light created by dimly lit chandeliers hanging from the roof and the white table cloths with candelabra on the tables, the paintings hanging from the walls, they felt even more awkward, "Michael held up his key in an embarrassed gesture, indicating that they were resident.

"Table pour deux, monsieur" the large well dressed man asked, "oui s'il vous plaît" Michael felt obliged to reply in French and thanked god he had paid attention to the basics all those years ago. Christine had all but climbed into his back pocket as they followed the maitre'd across the room which seemed to take an eternity to cross to a table against the wall, Michael was too embarrassed to ask for a table overlooking the river and was relieved to sit down and look less conspicuous, Christine slid into the chair opposite equally relieved.

"Monsieur de vin" the waiter seemed to appear from thin air as he handed Michael a leather bound folder, Michael opened it and after quickly scanning the list of red wines selected a Chateau Neauve Du Pap, merely because it was the only wine he recognised, the waiter took the folder and disappeared.

"Most of them are dressed in a jacket and tie," he whispered," and the women have dresses on," she replied, "well you know what, the best part is we don't know anybody and nobody knows us, so lets have a few wines and relax, tomorrow we are out of here, " Michael tried to sound nonchalant concealing his true feeling of embarrassment. "Okay, that makes me feel a lot better, not," she giggled, "oh to hell with it, we're here now, but I won't be getting up to go to the loo, the next time I stand up its to leave after dinner." "Yes lets enjoy the wine and food," he responded

as the wine steward presented the bottle, Michael nodded authoritatively. They watched as the cork was deftly removed from the neck of the bottle, the sample had a nutty oak taste, Michael nodded and watched as the waiter half filled Christine's glass and then came back and did the same to his glass, before bowing and leaving.

"Cheers," they said in unison clinking their glasses, "hmm, that's nice," she ran her tongue discreetly over her lips, "yes just what we needed I think, a few more of these and we won't remember what we are wearing" another waiter had miraculously appeared and handed them a menu each and then stood back and rattled off a series of specials none of which they understood but they nodded, as he finished, and waited for him to disappear.

"What was that all about, did you understand any of it?" she whispered bemused as she had another sip from her glass, "well we know they were the specials but apart from something to do with veal I have no idea and I wasn't going to ask him to repeat it in English," Michael replied as he looked down at the menu in front of him.

"I haven't had any meat apart from chicken for ages, I think I will try this Zurcher Eintopf, I'm not having a starter, I haven't had Swiss food apart from Fondue, so I'll try that, its really just a stew but it will do for me, how about you, darling," he raised his glass and savoured the richness of the red liquid, feeling a little more at ease.

"Okay I will try the Zurcher Geschetzeltes," she slithered the second half of the name, "that is unpronounceable, thank god, I can order now, can you imagine trying to say that after a few glasses of wine, yes that one," she laughed and then put her hand in front of her mouth in mock embarrassment.

They ordered their food and a second bottle of wine feeling more relaxed, their clothes no longer bothering them, as they chatted away about the coming week's plans.

"Its almost eleven we had better go, Michael said eventually, we have dined well and drunk well, shall I get the bill," he asked, she nodded, "la facture s'il vous plaît," Michael half raised his hand as a waiter passed.

He signed and wrote his room number on the bill and placed three Swiss francs on top, "shall we try and make a dignified exit, fortunately there are very few people left" he said pushing his chair back and standing up. He held out his hand to her she took it gracefully as she got gingerly to her feet. "I feel a bit woosie," she said as she locked her arm between his elbow and his body, "good wine, my dear, good wine," they walked towards the staircase, "bon soir," Michael said to the maitre 'd as they passed him and proceeded up the staircase.

They waited for the lift, "well thank you for a wonderful evening," she said, "you are slurring madam," he admonished, playfully, "well I am pissed, sir, we got through what two and a half bottles of that red nectar, what do you expect I'm only a small person," "you did very well my dear," he replied as the bell announced the arrival of the lift and the doors slid open to reveal an empty lift apart from the uniformed attendant.

"Did you have pleasant meal," the attendant asked recognising them as they stepped in, "excellent, thank you for the recommendation, excellent," Michael replied, conscious of the fact that he was struggling to round his words and hoping he did not sound too inebriated.

They arrived at their floor, "good night," the attendant said politely as they stepped out, Christine leaning quite substantially on Michael now, "good night" Michael replied not bothering to turn around for fear of falling over.

They stood outside their door while he fumbled in the tight front pockets of his jeans, pulling out the piece of paper with the banks and their telephone numbers and the

Lufthansa flights, eventually retrieving the key and opened the door clumsily before steering Christine into their room.

“What the hell,” Michael said surprised as he looked around the room, the bed clothes had been stripped off the bed, drawers were open but as they had no clothes they were left open, their two packets with their meagre underwear were on the floor the contents spilled onto the carpet.

Christine stumbled into the bathroom, Michael could hear her getting sick while he picked up the underwear they had bought and placed them on the table, he then closed the empty drawers and sorted out the bed clothes, his head starting to clear.

He had remade the bed by the time Christine appeared from the bathroom and sat on the edge of the bed, “I don’t feel too well, I’m afraid,” she said looking very pale, “I just got sick,” I know I heard you, have you had some water,” ”yes I could only manage a glass.”

“Does good red French wine not agree with you then,” he chuckled, anyway lets get some sleep, we need to make sure we are at the airport in time tomorrow. Our friends have obviously been here but there was nothing here for them so they left empty handed but they may have bugged the room, we need to be up early so come on into bed,” he helped her undress and pulled the blanket and sheet up to her neck.

He bent down and kissed her on the cheek, “aren’t you coming to bed,” she asked, “in a minute, I’ll put some water next to your bed, I need to have a piddle then I’ll join you,” he went into the bathroom closing the door behind him.

Michael emerged from the bathroom a few minutes later he stripped off his clothes and set the alarm on the clock radio, provided by the hotel, for seven am, slipping between the sheets he cuddled up behind her but she never stirred and he could tell from her breathing that she had already fallen asleep, he gently moved up close

behind her and slipped his left hand until he had his hand cupped over her left breast, it was not long before he too slipped into a deep sleep.

The buzzing stirred Michael who took a few seconds to work out its location, on realising where it was coming from he reached up and pressed the silver button, relieved that it stopped immediately. Christine stirred and turned over pulling the bed covers up to her chin as Michael rolled his legs out of the bed and sat for a moment, his head in his hands.

After a few seconds he made his way to the bathroom, where after using the toothpaste and toothbrush supplied by the hotel, he climbed into the shower letting out a rush of air through his mouth as he allowed the first jet of cold water to sting him awake as he adjusted the mixer to a more acceptable temperature.

Christine was already in the bathroom brushing her teeth when he emerged wet and dripping from the shower, “hmmmm that’s a lovely sight, how are you this morning?” he asked drying himself and admiring her naked backside pointed in his direction as she stooped over the sink, “a bit delicate but not too bad surprisingly, I’m sorry about last night,” she replied through a mouth of white foam.

“Did someone break in last night?” she asked as she rinsed her mouth, “yes, I can only presume it was our chaperones who must have got inquisitive, lets not talk too much in the bedroom, you have your shower and we’ll go and have some breakfast and then take a cab to the airport, they must be expecting us to catch a train so it will give them something to think about,” he stepped aside as she opened the glass shower door.

Michael was dressed, his previous day’s underpants, socks and shirt in the packet he had bought the new clothes in, she appeared from the bathroom with a towel rubbing

her hair, she dressed quickly and half dried her hair with the hairdryer provided by the hotel.

She tossed him her panties and the blouse she had worn the day before, "please put those in your little bag," she said as he caught the flying apparel, "Okay we are out of here," he stuffed the clothes into the packet and made his way to the door.

There was a different attendant operating the lift and they alighted on the first floor where they made their way to the dining room allocated for breakfast.

After a light breakfast they paid and attended to the paper work, the concierge arranged a taxi for them, Christine was the first to notice the man sitting in the foyer who quickly looked away when she looked in his direction, clasping Michaels arm they walked through the glass doors to their waiting taxi.

"The airport please," Michael said as he slid into the back seat of the Mercedes next to Christine. "We'd better arrange an apartment in London for the next two weeks, as its getting increasingly difficult to avoid our minders, so lets take all the reasonable precautions we can from tomorrow, remember tomorrow night we have to pick up that document." Michael was trying not to mention the word passport even though he felt that the taxi driver was not involved he did not want to take any chances. "Yes Okay I'll sort that out tomorrow," she replied giggling at him trying to draw her attention to the driver by moving his eyes and raising his eyebrows.

They covered the ten odd kilometres to the airport in fifteen minutes, Michael paid and they entered the building not bothering to check if they were being followed, the man who had been sitting in the hotel lobby stepped out of the taxi and followed them into the airport building.

“Ten to nine, there’s Lufthansa departures,” she pulled Michael in the direction of the counter, and joined the back of the small queue of people waiting to get their boarding passes.

Twenty minutes later they went through passport control and into the duty free area, where they wondered around looking at the various shops. “These duty free shops are all the same, clothes, watches, foods and electronics,” she said as they went through the motions of looking to use up the time before boarding.

The man watched them disappear through the doors to passport control and dialled a number on his mobile, as he walked towards the exit.

The flight to Munich was on time, as one would expect from a country that made watches, and they took the long taxi drive to their hotel, arriving at just before twelve fifteen, Michael still had the key and he extracted it from his jeans pocket as they made their way to the lifts.

He wasn’t expecting the mess when he opened the door and he contorted his face in a grimace his mind quickly racing as he tried to remember if there was anything important that he had left behind.

“Oh no not again,” she walked into the room and surveyed the mess of clothes strewn around, the draws and wardrobes open, the mattress of the bed was hanging half off the bed, the bedclothes on the floor.

“The plain tickets to London are still in the passports in my pocket,” he said tapping his shirt pocket, “they started to gather up their clothes and packed them into their hold alls. They then turned their attention to the bed and between them put everything back in its place, “okay,” he held his forefinger up to his lips indicating that they needed to be careful of what they said, in case the room had been bugged.

"Our flight is at fourteen thirty," he said looking at the tickets he had removed from his pocket, so we might as well go now, he picked up the two holdalls and surveyed the room, we haven't left anything have we?" he asked, "no I've put our toothbrushes and things from the bathroom into my bag, that's it, lets go," she hurried to the door eager to get out feeling violated.

"Christine arranged a taxi with the concierge while Michael sorted out the hotel bill, "right that's everything then," they followed the concierge through the open doors and climbed into the back of the taxi as he opened the door for them, Michael slipped two Swiss francs into his hand, "thank you sir," the concierge acknowledged politely.

"This taxi journey is becoming all too familiar now," she said, "yes oh well, never mind, we'll soon be back in England, I wonder what the weather is like over there?" Michael asked rhetorically.

Their flight arrived at Heathrow ten minutes late and they elected to take a taxi to the office rather than the flat so that they could see if they were being followed, which they were sure they were.

They arrived outside their office building and waited while the black cab drove away down a deserted Canon street, they did not have to wait long as another black cab pulled up further down Cannon street stopping just before the bend in the road at Bow Lane, and two men stepped onto the pavement. Now what?" she asked, "I'm not sure really to be honest, lets stand here and see what they do, I assume they will stand there and wait for us to make a move, If they do how are we going to get to my flat without them?" Michael puzzled aloud.

"We don't want to let on where my flat is yet, we need a safe base but we have to lose them somehow and with the streets so deserted its not going to be easy, we could go

up to Covent garden, it will be busy there but we need to be able to keep an eye on them as well.” he continued.

“Okay I think I have a plan, lets take the DLR to your Wesrferry flat, they are on foot, what we will do is arrange for a minicab to collect us from there, there are no black cabs cruising around there so they will have to phone for a minicab and that will take time, by then we should be long gone,” Michael said as he bent down and picked up the two bags, “lets go.”

They walked down to Queen Victoria street and turned right at the Sea Horse pub which was closed, they made their way through the subway noting that the two men had immediately crossed over Cannon the minute they had started to move.

They emerged in Bow Lane chuckled to themselves that they had made their pursuers go round in a circle emerging almost at the point they had started, Michael phoned the number of a minicab company he had in his wallet, which Mannie from the pub had given him some time ago and arranged for a minicab to pick them up in forty five minutes at Westferry.

They bought tickets at bank station and made their way down the maze of passageways to the DLR station, a train was already waiting but wasn't leaving for a further fifteen minutes according to the monitor.

They settled into a seat next to each other so that they were able to see who else boarded and watched bemused as the two men boarded the train and sat at the far end of the coach.

The train journey lasted twenty minutes and they were relieved to see the blue Puegeot minicab waiting for them, “thank god, he's a little early,” Michael muttered as they walked down the steel staircase from the platform to ground level.

“Hello,” Michael said as he pulled open the rear door and Christine climbed in, Michael slid in next to her their bags on their laps, “St. Paul’s, please,” Michael ordered as he watched the two men coming rapidly down the stairs a look of surprise on their faces.

The minicab pulled away from the curb and made a u turn; Christine smiled as she looked back and saw the two men standing in the middle of the road staring after them.

“Actually if you can take us to Bart’s Hospital that would be better,” Michael asked the driver, “yes sir, no problem,” he replied, the Pakistani accent unmistakable. Opening his front door Michael was relieved to find that nobody had been into his flat while they were away, “thank god for that,” Christine uttered as she tossed her bag next to the couch and flopped onto the inviting soft seat cushions.

“Well lets have a glass of wine and work out what we have to do and where we are with this caper,” Michael dropped his bag next to hers and made his way to the kitchen and removed a bottle of white wine from the fridge.

He sat next to her and removed the piece of paper from his pocket containing the banks names and telephone numbers, “right, so we have an account set up in the Bahamas in the name of Ulliana, where we used the copy of his passport, and that can all be done by an electronic transfer. You will make sure that when they do transfer this latest tranche that two million goes into that account.” “Yes it will take them about a week to query the amount and then we can stall them for about another week, that’s more or less what’s happened when there has been a discrepancy in the past,” she replied.

“Okay then we must pick up this fake passport tomorrow and I will shoot off to Zurich, I think I’ll go Monday night that way I should be back easily by lunchtime, so

I'll set up the account there with the documents so there should be no delays, then we transfer say one point nine million to the Swiss account. When I am there on Tuesday I'll arrange to withdraw one point eight million in cash so that leaves one hundred thousand in each of the accounts to keep the accounts open and not arouse too much suspicion," Michael mused, "they must be used to this happening, daily so I don't see a problem but yes lets leave the accounts with something in them," Christine agreed. "Then what, so then we have the money," Michael waited for her reply, "well we need to put it somewhere and we need to inform the police and the Financial Services Association by sending them all the evidence of the past years withdrawals, I have already made copies of over a thousand applications and copies of the withdrawals after the first year" Christine clarified.

"So where do I put all this money, do I come back to England and put it in the safety deposit box, I don't think so because they know I bank there, that would be too obvious. What if I opened a second account with another bank in Zurich," he asked? "No that would be the first thing they would think you would do once they have tracked down the first account in Ulliana's, name" she countered.

"Why don't you open an account back in South Africa, this is your last week isn't it so they would expect you to go back, I doubt if anyone will be tailing you once you have gone," Michael smiled, "yes that's the thing to do, we have about two weeks from the transaction before they will smell a rat, that leaves you enough time to arrange a safety deposit box at one of the banks and I'll come over in a week, I'll go via a few cities in Europe and maybe get a flight from Lisbon," Michael took another sip of his wine while he contemplated what he had said.

"Will they look for us there though, I suppose they will, maybe we need to go somewhere else until things cool down a bit," Christine added wrinkling her forehead,

“we could travel around Asia for a while, I would imagine that one could disappear in Malasia or Nepal or one of those places and it wouldn’t cost a lot, plus I wouldn’t mind touring around there anyway,” Michael said pleased with his suggestion.

“Yes that sounds good, so where do we put the cash,” asked Christine,” what about somewhere like Belize, that’s obscure enough surely, god I didn’t think it was going to be such a problem,” he said frustrated.

“I tell you what I’ll open an account and arrange a safety deposit box in Belize in my name, I will fly from Zurich to Munich then to Belgium and finally to France, from there I will fly to America and then to Belize, god knows how long that is going to take,” Michael was impressed with his suggestion.

“Right I will fly to Singapore on Saturday and then take the ferry to Malaysia, that way there is no ticket to trace me and meet you in Bali,” Christine leaned forward and looked him at him.

“Then from Belize I will fly to America, then to Singapore and do the same thing, meeting you in Bali, bugger I’ll have been around the bloody world, but I suppose we must try and cover our tracks,” Michael added in mock exhaustion.

“So from tomorrow you need to have another flat so that we don’t blow this place,” he stood up and picked up the yellow pages and flicked through until he found accommodation, “oh here we go there are loads,” she walked over and looked where he was pointing, “well hold on why don’t I just stay in an hotel for the next week,” she suggested, “yes that’s an even better idea and makes more sense” he handed her the book and returned to the couch while she lifted the receiver and made a reservation.

She sat down heavily “okay so I’ve made a reservation at the Crowne Plaza London The City, they say its about a quarter of a mile to Saint Pauls so its not too far and not

too close.” “Have we missed anything,” he asked? “No I don’t think so, what have you got to eat,” she replied, “you love eating don’t you, well you have to keep your energy up for emergencies I’m afraid and having lost our tails I don’t want to risk going out again. So why don’t we order something, there is a list of takeaways, mainly around the corner in the Barbican area, stuck on the fridge but we can always phone until we find one. I have about four bottles of wine but I would imagine that we won’t drink more than one after last night,” he laughed out loud.

They phoned the numbers on the list and eventually found an Italian that was prepared to deliver so they ordered an Hawaiian and a Mexican pizza.

The pizzas arrived after forty five minutes and they ate them hungrily washing them down with only one bottle of wine and copious amounts of water while they discussed the next weeks plans again, ensuring that they had not overlooked anything.

After their meal Christine curled her feet under her and sat propped up against Michael as they watched the news and enjoyed the moment of serenity knowing that the next week would change their lives forever.

After the news at ten they decided to go to bed and after performing their ablutions they curled up together, the duvet pulled up to their chins, “it’s a bit chilly tonight, I’m glad I’ve got this great big hairy bear in bed to keep me warm,” she said as she rolled on top of Michael and kissed him. He responded and for a moment she had no thoughts for anything but here and now, she could feel him responding and his arousal became hers, she manoeuvred herself deftly allowing him to slip into her while they kissed.

She gently moved her lower body forward and backward and moaned softly, their lips still fixed inseparably, she could feel his right hand searching for her breast and she

lifted her chest off his sufficiently for him to reach and immediately felt his gentle touch caress her nipple, the feeling sending a tingling sensation through her body. She increased her rhythm as the passion inside her ached to release itself, she sat up allowing him to reach up with both hands and caress her breasts as she threw her head back like a bronco rider her hands on his chest for support.

Their passion continued to build and the duvet was practically on the floor as they reached their climax together and like statues they remained ridged for a brief second before she collapsed her mouth eagerly enjoying his as they kissed between breaths caused by the exertion. She finally rolled slowly onto her back next to him, he sat up and reached down pulling the duvet back over them.

"I love making love to you, every time is a new experience, that was lovely yet so different from the other times, I think I'm falling in love with you," he supported his upper body and looked down at her face, she slowly turned to him. "I am in love with you," she replied, and received his lips like an ecumenical chalice overjoyed that they had finally confided their true feelings for each other.

"No, no," she called out, "wakey, wakey, "Michael bent down and shook her gently his hand on her shoulder covered by the duvet pulled up to her ears, "what," she looked up started, "oh I was dreaming, what's the matter, why are you dressed," she asked as the curtains of sleep lifted from her dazed mind. "Well its Monday morning and we have to go to work, I thought I'd leave you as late as possible but it is seven fifteen now, so I thought I'd better wake you," he stood up and picked up his mug filled with coffee from the bedside table.

"Oh shit," she sat up and flung the duvet cover to the base of the bed, she clasped her head in her hands, trying to wake herself up and then swung her feet to the floor before standing up and walking to the bathroom.

Michael went to the kitchen and made some notes on a piece of paper, while he drank his coffee and waited for her to finish her shower.

It was a full twenty minutes before she emerged naked except for her customary towel around her head, "it's a bit chilly today, are you going to wait for me," she asked slipping into a pair of panties she had taken from a drawer," yes, of course," he replied, what about some of your stuff, you must get into a hotel tonight, remember I have to pick up that passport tonight. There is no flight late enough for me tonight so that's a bummer, what we'll do is leave all your luggage here, you only need to take a weeks clothes anyway, then tonight we'll lose those two, probably the last time, we'll be able to, I have a plan, don't worry then I will have to stay with you at the hotel until you go.

"I'll book the earliest flight I can, they won't know tonight where we are staying so that should be alright but after that I'm not sure how we will dodge them when we have to but we'll think of something when the time comes," Michael outlined his plan as she finished dressing.

"Are you expecting anything else from the bank," he asked, "yes I expect them to send a cheque book and debit card some time," she replied, "you'd better give me your flat key then, I'll check the emails and if there is anything I'll pick it up," "Okay can you also bring any other mail except junk mail?" she asked.

They left the flat at a quarter to eight and briskly walked past Saint Bart's hospital and left down towards Cheapside. "I'll go down Cheapside and you carry on down to Canon, I don't want to make it easier for them by knowing that we are staying in the same place, if they think we are still staying in separate places then they will need to use two of these clowns to keep an eye on us independently, if they know we are

staying together they don't have to watch us separately," he explained. "I know what you mean," you're ashamed to be seen with me," she joked.

"I'll meet you at say six pm, at the internet café, then we will put my plan into action to lose our chaperones, we can pick up some clothes and get to the hotel.

He kissed her briefly on the lips and scurried off to the left down Cheapside while she continued down the road with the majestic dome of Saint Paul's cathedral on her right she would be glad when this was all over she thought.

"Good morning Anne," Michael greeted his PA who was busily typing away at her keyboard, "I trust you had a good weekend," yes thank you and you?" she replied, "yes very good, thank you, what have I got on the agenda today?" he asked.

She went through his appointments for the day and he was glad to see that he would be out of the office most of the day visiting brokers, his last appointment was at three thirty so that would leave him enough time to get to the bank before meeting Christine at the internet café.

"Thank you, any chance of a cup of black coffee," Michael said as he stepped into his office, closing the door behind him.

"I'll be in a bit later tomorrow around twelve I suspect, I have a few things I need to attend to so if anyone wants me tell them I'm out but expected around twelve," "yes Mr Wheeler," Anne acknowledged and went back to her office. The day progressed as planned and Michael noted that his usual minder was in attendance as he went to his various appointments around the city.

He particularly enjoyed the moment when he went into a call box and used the card phone to call Zurich and arrange an appointment the following day with the bank manager. When he replaced the receiver, he lifted it again and dialled the number of a

card stuck on the side of the phone advertising ladies of the night to ensure that the number he had dialled could not be traced.

His final appointment ended at four thirty just enough time to get to the bank before closing and retrieve two and a half thousand pounds to pay the balance for the fake passport, which he placed in an A4 envelope he had brought with him from the office. He emerged from the bank and made his way along Cheapside to the internet café followed by his pursuer.

There were a few people in the café but all of the machines were empty, Michael ordered a coffee and sat at one of the monitors facing the doorway so that he could see if his chaperone entered.

He punched in his email details and waited for the response, there was an email from the bank confirming that they had sent a cheque book and debit card, they would have to get to the flat and retrieve those, he looked at his watch there was enough time for him to do that and still get back in time, he signed off, paid and left the shop his brown envelope firmly clutched in his hand.

Getting a cab at this time of the day in London is difficult and Michael waited fifteen minutes before he finally spotted one with its light on and put his hand out.

"Westferry and back," he said through the passenger window, knowing that although the one way fair was good the cabbie might not be too happy coming back empty but having a guaranteed fair both ways made it more attractive. "Yea, hop in mate," the cockney driver replied and Michael opened the door and slid into the back seat.

He looked for his chaperone but could not see him but he knew he was out there somewhere, he wondered if he would be able to get a cab so that he could follow but it didn't matter to Michael as it was later that they had to lose them rather than now.

The journey took twenty five minutes and Michael walked briskly to the entrance, he unlocked the door and quickly sifted through the pile of envelopes in Christine's pigeon hole tossing the obvious junk mail into the waste bin provided on the floor. He found two envelopes with the banks logo and some obvious accounts, he then sifted through the pigeon hole of the flat he had used and threw everything into the bin as it all appeared to be junk mail, before retreating back to the cab which was waiting its diesel engine idling.

Michael opened the back door and climbed in just in time to see another cab arrive but no one got out, "same place as you picked me up, please," he said in the direction of the driver, Michaels cab turned and passed the second one and he recognised the man in the back seat as the man who had been following him.

"Just in time," Michael muttered as he smiled to himself and carefully opened the letters from the bank, one had a cheque book and debit card the other had a code and a list of bank atms around the world from which cash could be accessed.

He read the covering letters and made a note of the username, account number and password on a piece of paper and slipped it into his wallet.

He put the debit card, chequebook and letters into one envelope and folded the other envelope up and put it into the first envelope and sat back as they drove back to the city, he glanced at his watch and estimated that they should arrive at just before six thirty provided the traffic didn't hold them up too much.

The traffic had increased but they still managed to get back in under half an hour and Michael stepped onto the pavement just before six thirty and quickly made his way back to the café, Christine was already inside sitting at one of the tables sipping a coffee.

“You’re a bit early,” he said as he kissed her tenderly on the cheek, “ yes I managed to get away early, we are doing the transfer tomorrow, they have brought it forward for some reason, I’ve identified the ones that I will transfer to our account and they total two million pounds exactly,” she explained.

“I wonder why they are doing the transaction earlier, no matter everything should be in place, oh yes, I went to fetch these,” he handed her a pile of envelopes with the one from the bank on top, shall I put the cheque book and card into the safety deposit box,?” he asked.

“Yes put the envelope in as well, we don’t want them to stumble onto anything, especially at this time,” she agreed.

“I also have a flight to Zurich at seven thirty am, that was the earliest I could get, it arrives at eight thirty so by the time I leave the airport plus the drive I should be at the bank at around ten am our time.” ”I phoned the bank so they know I am coming and all I need is my passport, I will arrange the withdrawal while I am there so that there is no delay,” he sat back and looked at her. “Did you phone from the office,” she asked a scowl look on her face, “no I have been out the whole day so I phoned from a card phone,” he replied and watched the scowl disappear.

“What about, them, mine followed me here?” she cocked her head in the direction of the door indicating their chaperones whom she assumed were outside, “oh yes I have had mine following me like a puppy all day, I enjoyed the phone bit as he must have been dying to know who I was talking to, I dialled a number from one of those porn cards afterwards,” he chuckled proud that he had had the presence of mind to think of it.

She finished her coffee and they stepped out onto the busy pavement as people rushed to catch busses, taxis and trains, "I shall probably miss all this," he said cheerily, "not for long, I can assure you," she said, gripping his arm, "so where are we going."

"Well I thought we'd go back to the office, then just stick with me, this should work, I don't want to elaborate too much in case it goes wrong," he laughed as he outlined his plan.

The security guard greeted them as they signed in at the reception as they were required to do if entering the building outside office hours and then made their way through the barrier using their security cards.

They took the lift to Michaels floor and went to his office, he motioned for her to sit down while he pulled out his wallet and extracted a card before dialing on his mobile, "Hello The Seahorse," he recognised the barmaids voice, "hi is Mannie there?" he asked, "yes, just a moment, who is calling," she asked, "Michael Wheeler," he replied, "just a moment," he could hear the voices of the people in the background.

"Hello, yes," the phone burst abruptly into life, "hi Mannie its Michael Wheeler, you took us through the back entrance the other day, do you remember." "How can I forget a fellow South African, of course what can I do for you," the tone became more friendly. "Well this may sound odd but can we come in that way tonight, we need to go somewhere urgently and we need your help, I" Mannie interjected stopping Michael from continuing, "hey no problem you can explain another time, when do you want to come?" "Now, if that's all right," "Okay I'll meet you at the back door in two minutes." "Thanks Mannie, cheers," Michael pushed the end button and replaced the phone in his pocket, Christine was already on her feet, "very clever," she said as they hurried to the door at the back of the building. "So no card needed to get out of here, only in, we'll only be able to do this once, they are bound to check and will see

that we never used our cards to leave and I am sure they will put two and two together,” he explained. They had reached the lift and pressed the button for the basement, they could see the passage lights as they stepped out of the lift, Michael reached the door first and held it open for her to pass through, Mannie was already at the other end of the passage waiting at the cellar door.

“Hello my friends of mystery” he said, bursting into a mock laugh, “thank you very much Mannie, we owe you, we can’t stay tonight but we’ll be in during the week, I’ll explain sometime.

“Hey don’t worry about it, you do what you gotta do,” he locked the door as they waited for him feeling the chill from the cellar coolers and he led the way to the door which led out of the cellar, he walked up the stairs ahead of them.

They stepped out from behind the bar, a few heads turned and looked at them and then returned to their respective conversations, “thanks pal,” Michael said as they walked swiftly to the exit, they did not wait to see Mannie’s wife gave him a curious look before serving another customer.

The coolness of the evening hit their faces as they crossed over Queen Victoria Street and quickly walked down towards the Millenium Bridge trying to get as far away from the two men who would be waiting at the front of their office building in Cannon Street.

They hailed a cab as they approached Black Friars, safe in the knowledge that they were now heading in the opposite direction. The driver made his way to Saint Barts, “how are we doing with time,” he looked at his watch, and answered his own question, “just after seven, plenty of time, so we’ll pick up what you want to take with you, we’ll book you in, after that we’ll go to Soho, and then back to The Crowne,” she nodded.

“Wait for us here, we’ll be five minutes,” Michael asked the driver as he directed him to wait outside the flats next to the hospital, they bounded up the stairs and she quickly grabbed the case she had packed.

“Okay that’s it,” she walked out the door and Michael pulled it closed pushing it to ensure that it was locked, he took the suitcase and followed her down the stairs,

“Crowne Plaza The London St James please,” she said to the driver as she climbed up into the cab.

The drive took just over five minutes, Michael stood patiently while she attended to the checking in procedure, a porter took the case and they went up to the fifth floor, they followed the porter who opened the door and went through the procedure of demonstrating the television and where the hair dryer, etc. was located.

Michael squeezed a five pound note into his hand as he left, “nice room,” he commented as she walked over to him and hugged him, she looked up at him and he could see her eyes were teary, “hey come on we’re not parting company or anything,” he said trying to reassure her.

“I know don’t worry about me, I’m okay really,” she whispered, rubbing her eyes and made a show of straightening her clothes, “right lets go, I’ll unpack later,” she was already at the door holding it open.

“Café Latino Firth street, Soho, please,” he said as they climbed into the back of a black cab Michael had hailed and settled into the back seat, she snuggled up close holding his hand. Time seemed to fly by and they were soon at their destination, “Ta mate,” the cab driver acknowledged the three pound tip Michael left. “We have just over an hour to kill, are you hungry,” he asked as they walked slowly towards the Café Latino,” not really, maybe a cup of coffee and a sandwich,” she replied subdued.

They entered the café which was deserted apart from two other couples at a table, the waiter recognised them and showed them to the same table they had sat at before.

“Two café lattes, please, and we’ll order some sandwiches in a minute,” he said as he picked up the menu on the table,” are you alright my baby,” Michael leaned across and took Christine’s hand as she looked down at the menu.

“Yes, I suppose it is the realisation that shortly we are going to be parted for a while and we have been together almost inseparably, also apprehension of what is to come,” her voice sounded a little fragile, “well we don’t have to do it,” he countered.

“We have to bring them down, no one else will, by taking some of their ill gotten money, we are also implicating Ulliano as it will look as if he has tried to take some of the money directly, so we must do it and we will, we will be hunted down no matter which way we do it, so we may as well do it with some financial muscle,” she said as the words flooded from her lips.

“Okay, yes no matter which way we do this we are going to be hunted, I agree I like the idea of using their money to evade them, like a double whammy,” he agreed.

They ordered sandwiches and drank their coffee, talking about their plan and what they would be doing in a year’s time, relieved to be able to relax without their spies watching them.

At quarter to nine Michael paid the bill and they made their way slowly to their meeting place, the brown envelope firmly clasped in his hand, they slowed their pace not wanting to arrive too early.

They arrived a few minutes early and carried on for about thirty paces before turning round and making their way back to the allotted spot, the street was almost deserted and they were unaware of the figure with the track suit hood over his head, a slim brown envelope tucked under his arm, who had stepped out of an alley behind them.

“Hey man,” they heard the voice call out softly behind them, and they turned around, the young man held his head down trying to conceal his face as he held out the envelope, Michael took it and could feel the book inside, he placed the envelope with the money in the outstretched hand and they watched as he hurried away down the street.

“Well let’s get back to your hotel,” Michael, pushed the envelope into the inside pocket of his jacket and took her by the elbow, suddenly he felt the need to get away and have a drink.

They found a cab easily and continued the journey to the hotel in silence feeling the need to respect each others desire to be alone with their thoughts, once in the hotel room Michael pulled her to him and they kissed a long delicate kiss.

Eventually they parted and she sat on the bed feeling momentarily drained, “I’ll get us a drink,” he said as he turned to the bar fridge extracting a bottle of Chablis.

He found two glasses and filled them three quarters full, before handing her a glass and sitting down heavily next to her, “cheers,” he raised his glass and they drank the cool liquid, relishing the invigorating feeling as it slipped easily down their throats.

“Now let’s look at this document,” he retrieved it from his pocket and ripped open the envelope ceremoniously, the red cover emblazoned with the words Italia, he opened it and burst out laughing, before handing it to her.

She looked down at his blank face staring back at her,” what,” she asked, what’s so funny.” ”well I don’t take a good photograph and especially these passport jobs but it just looks so funny with my face and that Italian name, that’s all.”

“Well you better get used to it Antonio,” she said laughing and taking another sip of her drink, she had another look and then handed it to him, “well this is going into the safety deposit box the minute I get back tomorrow.

Michael looked at his watch, “its eleven thirty, I’d better go if I am going to get up in time, I’ll ring you when I get back and we’ll arrange to meet somewhere,” he said as they walked to the door, “I’ll miss you, I wish you could stay,” she whispered as he bent down to kiss her.

“I’ll miss you but if I don’t go and get some sleep now I won’t get up, I should manage about four and a half hours sleep, “ he kissed her again and then made his way to the lifts looking back only once as she stood in the doorway watching him disappear round the corner of the corridor.

Michael hailed a black cab and immediately phoned to order a mini cab to collect him at five thirty am, he wasn’t sure how easy it would be to get a black cab that time of the morning and he didn’t want to miss his flight.

Chapter 3

The flight to Zurich was a bumpy affair and Michael was relieved when he landed and quickly made his way out of the terminal. He climbed into the taxi and within twenty five minutes he was walking into the foyer of the bank.

There were two leather couches to the left of the doors and a reception desk at the far end of the large marble floored and wood panelled banking hall, to the right were three cashiers behind an oak panelled counter and behind them various clerks busy at their desks.

“I have an appointment to open an account,” Michael said to the dark haired middle aged woman sitting behind the reception desk, “certainly sir, what is the name?” she asked in perfect English with a slight German accent. Michael almost said Wheeler, “ah Ulliano” he replied after a moments hesitation, she looked down at a book to her right, “yes sir one moment, would you like to take a seat?” she stood up and held her

right hand out in the direction of the leather couches before walking towards a door in the wood panelling.

Michael sat down on one of the leather couches, not very comfortable he thought but then it is a bank

The woman returned in a matter of minutes and motioned to Michael to follow her; he stood up and walked across the marble floor towards a door which she held open for him. He entered a large wood panelled office and noticed a portly man with grey hair who was getting up from behind a very large oak desk with various sheets of paper scattered over the surface. "Mr. Ulliano, Grotz, I am the manager, how can I help you?" the man held out his hand and in one movement gestured for Michael to sit in one of the black leather chairs on the opposite side of his desk.

"I would like to open an account with you," Michael said as he sat down, "What sort of account?" Grotz asked. "I have a large sum of money coming in and I want to withdraw some on Friday" Michael was surprised at how calm he felt. "Right so interest is not what you are concerned about" Grotz said matter of factly. "Not at the moment no and I do not want any internet access to this account" responded Michael. "Right well in the first instance we need to open an account, when do you expect these funds to arrive, and how much are you expecting?" Grotz asked. "Within the next twenty four hours, two million pounds" Michael replied looking for any hint of surprise, he noted no reaction. "And how much do you wish to withdraw" Grotz asked not bothering to look up, "one point eight million in cash" Michael replied casually. Grotz made notes and then pulled a form from his top drawer. He pushed the form across the desk to Michael and offered his pen, "if you could just sign this form here and here" he said indicating where Michael needed to sign. Michael signed the document using the well practised Ulliano signature, he was then asked to provide a

password. Grotz left the office for five minutes and returned handing Michael a sheet of paper with an account number on it.

The entire transaction took just over half an hour and he was relieved that it was done and that he had not had to use the false passport, well maybe there would be a use for it later.

He was back in the airport by ten thirty and bought a cup of coffee while he waited to board the plane back to London. The flight back gave Michael more time to think and double check in his mind that he had arranged everything so far.

"Hello Anne, any messages," he asked as he sat in the back of the taxi making his way from Heathrow back to the office, "yes two brokers want you to return their calls regarding our poor annuity rates and investment performance, I told them you would phone when you got back," she replied, "okay thanks Anne, he switched his phone off and sat back in the seat.

He arrived at the office at quarter to one and made his way to his office, "hello Mr Wheeler, this broker has phoned again," she handed him a sheave of messages, "okay can you get him on the line for me please," he said as he walked into his office.

"Hi there Paul, sorry I couldn't get back to you sooner, how can I help you," he paused as the broker relayed his clients unhappiness at the values quoted for his retirement package which he had intended to take at the end of the year when he turned sixty.

"Yes I know our performance has been poor but there has been a downturn in the market and as you know these equity based plans have suffered, yes ours seems to have suffered more than most, I agree," Michael listened and agreed to see what he could do, knowing that there was nothing but at least it bought him some time.

“Damn these crooks,” he cursed as he replaced the receiver; they are going to destroy us as well as the whole industry.

He returned the rest of his messages which were all more or less in the same vain some from irate clients whose brokers had given his name and been told to phone him direct, something he did not appreciate.

Deciding he needed some fresh air he walked to the bank and put the various documents into the safety deposit box, as he was so close he thought he might as well have a cup of coffee and check for email messages.

The café was quite busy but there was no need to wait as a machine was available immediately, he punched in the address and waited for the emails to download, there was the usual amount of spam and a message from the bank in the Bahamas.

He opened the file and was surprised to read a confirmation from the bank that one hundred million pounds had been deposited into the account, he stared at the words digesting the message before printing a copy. He then deleted the message and logged off and read the message on the printed copy again,

“Are you finished here mate,” he looked up at the tall figure towering over him, “yes sure, sorry,” he stood up dazed and bewildered as he made his way to a vacant table and finished his coffee folding the paper and placing it in his pocket.

“Hi there how are you,” he said into his mobile as he walked back to the office, “fine how was your trip,” Christine asked, “yes good everything done,” he replied, “great well I’ll transfer the two mill tomorrow and then you can go and collect, you need to give me the account number, what time shall I see you?” she asked.

“Lets say seven at The Seahorse, we owe Mannie for helping us out the other day” Michael suggested. “Okay look forward to it, love ya,” she replied. “Love you to,” he

switched off the phone, trying to work out why she hadn't said anything about the transfer.

He returned to his office but was unable to concentrate on anything other than the email which he reread over and over again, suddenly he stood up and took his jacket, "I'm going to the bank," he said not even looking at Anne as he strode purposefully towards the lifts. The ever present pursuer was waiting and followed him as he made his way towards the bank

"I have a shared safety deposit box here and I would like to arrange another one in my name only," he said to the customer adviser who called up his details, "I don't want these linked in any way, they must be totally separate," he explained.

The box was duly arranged and Michael transferred the fake passport and the new Zurich bank account number into the new box after writing the number on the same piece of paper he had in his wallet with the Bahamas account details, leaving the Bahamas bank documents in the original box.

He made his way back to the internet café and called up the website address of the Bahamas account and punched in the username and password, he looked at the balance, it confirmed that one hundred million pounds had been transferred the previous day.

His mind was racing, why hadn't she told him about the one hundred million last night, he decided to transfer the funds to the Zurich account and see if she mentioned anything later, he pressed the transfer key and entered the account number and the amount of one hundred million pounds before pressing enter. There was a request to confirm the details which he did and waited, the transaction confirmed appeared as well as the balance of zero pounds and he logged off, he left the café even more puzzled.

He had seen his chaperone and resisted the urge to go up to him and tell him that he knew he was there instead he phoned Anne and told her he wasn't coming back that afternoon and made his way to The Seahorse.

It was only four fifteen and it was deserted apart from two traders from the Australian bank across the road noisily playing on the golf machine in the corner.

"Hello there, this is early for you, isn't it," Mannie said looking at his watch, "yes bad day I think," Michael replied, "can I have a Stella please Mannie, I think it is a bad day when you don't even know if it is or isn't," Mannie remarked placing the beer on the bar in front of him and taking the ten pound note.

"Thanks for the other night, Mannie I really appreciate it," "anytime," Mannie replied placing the change in front of Michael, "where's your young lady tonight." "She will be along shortly," Michael responded looking at his watch.

He was lost in his own thoughts when he heard her voice and felt her lips on his cheek, "hiya, how are you doing," she asked rhetorically, "fine, what can I get you?" Michael asked looking at her and feeling as though he had just been woken from a deep trance.

"A glass of dry white, please," she said politely as she made herself comfortable on the stool next to him, he ordered and looked at her feeling awkward, trying to find something to say, "how was your day then," he asked lamely.

"Oh the usual, I'm just trying to get everything done as Friday is my last day," she replied relaxed and apparently unaware of his awkwardness, "is there going to be a party," he asked.

"No I just want to get out of there so I will slip away like any other Friday," she replied, have you organised a flight yet," yes I thought I'd fly home for the weekend then we can meet up in Bali around Wednesday as you were going to be travelling

quite a bit, “ she replied very matter of fact. “By the way have you got that account number before I forget,” she asked, “yes, here it is” he reached into his back trouser pocket and retrieved the piece of paper from his wallet, have you got a pen and paper?” he asked. “Sure” she scratched around in her handbag and retrieved a diary with a pencil, Michael placed the paper in front of her and she copied the number headed Swiss. Michael placed the paper back into his wallet.

“Yes that sounds great, I’ve never been to Bali before but I’m sure we can meet at the airport or a train station or something,” he continued the conversation as he agonised about whether or not to ask her about the money in the account deciding not to for the moment and hoping that she would explain of her own accord.

“God I’m tired,” he said suddenly, noting that she was almost finished her drink and not wishing to continue the charade any longer,” all that flying and being up so early has really knocked the stuffing out of me.” “Poor baby, shall we go to the hotel,” she enquired.

“No I have no clean clothes there and you can’t do your normal washing trick for me, I’ll take you to the hotel and then I’ll lose my shadow before going home, is that okay, you don’t mind,” he stretched feigning fatigue.

“That’s fine, lets go then,” she replied as she hopped off the stool,” cheers Mannie,” he said holding up his hand, “thank you guys,” Mannie called from behind the bar as they made their way to the exit. A black cab stopped at the pedestrian crossing allowing them to cross, Michael noticed that its light was on, “lets take this cab,” he called after Christine as she stepped off the pavement to cross.

“That’s lucky,” she said as she turned and made her way to where Michael was talking to the driver, he opened the rear door and let her get in before following and sliding onto the seat next to her.

She took his hand in hers, “are you all right, you seem a little off?” she asked, “just tired,” he answered eager to get her to the hotel now convinced that there was something going on that he did not know about.

He dropped her at the hotel and took the same cab to Ludgate Hill near Saint Paul’s, where he had had success in losing his chaperone before.

His cab pulled away and Michael saw another cab stop about fifty meters behind him, he sprinted across the busy road and disappeared down one of the alleys he recognised turning left and then right until he came out at Newgate street.

Almost running he crossed the street and looked around to see if he was being followed he turned left into King Edward and then right into Angel and then right again into Saint Martins, the street was deserted as he quickly made his way along Cheapside turning immediately left into Foster and almost sprinting to the safety of his flat.

He leaned against the inside of the door trying to catch his breath from running the length of Foster lane and then up the stairs.

Still out of breath, confused and angry, Michael poured himself a glass of wine before tossing his jacket over the back of the couch, he pressed a button on the remote and the television burst into life but he wasn’t watching, he just felt the need for the noise of voices as he sat on the couch and sipped his wine.

“What is going on” he muttered, “am I being used as some ignorant love sick pawn,” he tried to make sense of the situation, is she in on it with them or in it just for herself with hindsight there was no need to get a fake passport and he was glad of that as the bank would now have photograph of him.

He contemplated his next move, how could he move nearly one hundred million pounds from the bank account in Zurich that was a heavy bulky amount, he decided to sleep on it as he suddenly felt drained and depressed.

It was a long time before he finally dropped off to sleep thoughts and theories bouncing around in his mind like tennis balls being fired from a practise server.

He awoke early and had a long shower, which did him the world of good and seemed to clear his mind so that the realisation that he was being used could finally sink in and he could deal with it in the cold light of day.

He stepped into the cool morning air and hailed a taxi which he took to his office, he walked the short distance to Cheapside where the internet café was open and ordered a cup of coffee and a croissant before sitting down at one of the computers.

He called up the Bahamas account again to confirm that the money had been transferred, satisfied, he finished his coffee and croissant and strode purposefully back to his office. Anne had not arrived yet and he busied himself with some files which needed his attention.

He estimated that about fifteen to twenty million would leave enough to disburse to the policyholders but he would need Christine to give him a more accurate figure.

One hundred million pounds that's an awful lot of money for one person to spend what is she thinking about, he still could not believe that she would be so greedy and it was just by chance that he had discovered it, she must have set up an account of her own somewhere.

If she tried to transfer the funds now she would be in for a surprise, she didn't know that he did not have to use the fake passport to open the account perhaps she had hoped to implicate him so that the police would think he was part of the racket that way she would get away with the lot.

God he was stupid at times he thought, how could he let the little head control the big head, could it be that she had seduced Alan Brown but that he had been found out and that's why they killed him.

When he came along she must have sized him up and thought right here's a right dumbo, a bit of nooky and I'll have him where I want him, Michael could feel the anger well up inside him but decided to play her at her own game.

Anne had arrived and poked her head through the door "Morning" "Hello" Michael replied, I'll give you the branch figures in a moment, I am almost finished" she said as she walked over to her desk.

The morning progressed uneventfully and Micheal waded his way through the mountain of paperwork that had piled up, oblivious to the time. He was startled by his phone ringing, "hello" he said into the receiver, her smooth soft voice drifted into his eardrum sending a shiver up his spine.

"Well hello, nice to hear from you, you never normally phone me," he whispered into the mouth piece, "well I thought I'd see how you were today," he thought she was being too silky, she must have done the transfer of the two million and seen the depleted balance.

"Have you had a busy day?" she asked, "yes, I also had to go to the dentist earlier, I had a bit of toothache but I'm fine now," he lied but as he was not sure if she had spoken to Anne earlier he thought he had better keep the lie alive.

"So shall we get something to eat and then go to your place?" he asked as nonchalantly as he could looking at his watch, hoping that he didn't sound too casual, "yes, whatever, you say," he noted the terse tone which confirmed that she was annoyed.

“Okay my angel, I’ll see you at the hotel at seven, they have a lovely restaurant downstairs then we can go back to your room afterwards, I’ve missed you,” he decided to lay on the charm himself.

“Yes, I’ve missed you too, seven then, gotta go someone’s come into the office,” the phone went dead, Michael replaced the receiver, “oh yes, baby now we are rocking,” he stood up and wiggled his hips, his hands in the air.

He heard the knock on the door and just managed to flop back into his chair before Anne entered with a pile of papers in her hands, “I’m going home now, here you are, these are all the additional production figures to date as you requested,” “Gosh is that the time already, thank you Anne, have a lovely evening,” he took the pile from her and placed them in the middle of his desk.

“I’ll look at them tomorrow,” he said aloud as he fingered through some of the pages. After a while he decided that he was not concentrating so he may as well go home. He stood up, he took his coat from the back of his chair and made his way to the lift, “goodnight,” he acknowledged the security guard as he walked past the desk in the foyer.

He looked at his watch, six o’clock, well I can go home and get changed, he thought as he walked up Bow lane to Cheapside, he noticed his shadow fall in behind him about thirty yards away as he dodged the throngs of people scurrying to and fro to their various destinations.

He decided to have a bit of fun and dodged down an alley between a restaurant and an old church on rounding the church he doubled back along Cheapside and back down Bow lane then right into the alley again, he stopped at the corner of the church and saw the man standing looking up and down Cheapside.

Michael watched as the man went off to the left along Cheapside and waited until he had disappeared before doubling back down Bow lane and then left along Cannon and up Queen street over Cheapside along King and headed towards Foster, that was too easy he thought.

Once at his flat he had a shower and changed into a casual pair of beige trousers and a dark blue blazer, it was six fifty by the time he left and made his way towards Saint Martins and the Newgate Viaduct where he could get a cab.

It took a further fifteen minutes before he finally hailed a vacant cab but he was unperturbed, he had been pretty punctual up to now, so she could wonder if he was coming, he was going to enjoy the evening and was eager to see how it would progress.

The cab finally pulled up at the hotel at just before seven thirty and Michael casually sauntered across the lobby to the lift, he knocked on her door and was bemused by the look on her face, as she tried to control her anger, when she opened the door.

"Sorry I'm late, trouble getting a cab, you know what its like at this time of the evening," he apologised, "oh don't worry, shall we go," she pulled the door closed and they walked briskly to the lift.

"We haven't got a reservation have we," he asked as he quickened his pace to keep up with her as she strode purposely, "yes I made a reservation," she countered curtly, "oh well they know you are in the hotel so it won't be a problem," he said casually, knowing that the comment would infuriate her more.

"Yes I'm sure they will," her control impressed him as she replied apparently having regained her composure.

They were shown to their table and Michael ordered a bottle of cabernet sauvignon.

"Look Michael I know what you have done, I tried to transfer the hundred million

from the Bahamas account but it had already been moved, I am only trying to protect you, I had to do it, they forced me to transfer the additional funds, you don't understand who you are dealing with here" she reached out and cupped his hand in hers.

"Why didn't you just tell me what was going on?" he looked her in the eyes wanting to believe her, "I thought that it was safer the less you knew and the money would have been out of the account by today so there was no need for you to know.

"Jesus Christine, I trust you and I expect the same in return, if these people are as ruthless as you make them out to be then we need to have a trust between us, what did you expect me to think, when I saw that amount of money sitting in that account?" he said, "I know, I'm sorry my darling but it all happened so fast, how did you find out anyway?" she asked.

"Quite by accident actually, I decided to check the emails and there was a confirmation from the bank of a transfer, so I checked the account and there it was," the waiter had arrived with the wine and Michael lent back to give him room to pour the taster for him.

"Oh I never thought of that," she admitted, "well it doesn't matter they want me to transfer it to another account and if I don't do it by tomorrow then I'm in trouble," she leaned forward and stared into his eyes imploring him to cooperate.

"I don't understand why there's such a large amount that is not going to the brokerage where did this money come from?" he asked leaning back and taking a sip of his wine.

"Well the other transfer is going ahead as planned but I was called into Andrew's office and he ordered me to transfer a further amount into a holding account which I was supposed to have set up but as I am leaving I never did it and there was no time,

so I thought I would transfer it into this account and then from here it has to go to another account but none of this has anything to do with us, we can carry on with our plan,” she explained.

Michael thought for a moment, “why does it have to go into a holding account, why couldn’t it be transferred straight into this other account?” he asked suspiciously.

“Because I have not set up that account yet and they wanted the money out today, I set the account up but it takes twenty four hours to activate, I faxed off the documents today to expedite and sent the originals by courier,” she explained.

His mind was racing but her contradiction that she had tried to transfer the funds and that the new account took twenty four hours had not escaped him, he decided to save her telling him any more lies and to pretend that he had accepted her story.

“Oh okay shall we order,” he said, opening the menu in front of him, “so will you put the money back tomorrow, please,” she pleaded, placing her hand on his again, he looked at her and decided to play along.

“Yes I’ll do it tomorrow but shall I take the two million from it, that way it will take them ages to notice that its gone instead of our original plan, where they will pick up the shortfall immediately and then you can just surrender another two million and place that into this new account you will have to make up the difference,” he replied, pleased with his suggestion.

“No, this transaction must be a single one for the full amount,” she replied, her voice filled with emotion, “but why, surely the total amount is all that matters?” he added, “no please Michael do as I ask for me, please,” she leaned forward to add weight to her plea.

“Okay, do it your way then,” he replied and she leaned back, relieved, the waiter had arrived, they both ordered a cold salmon and lemon starter, she ordered grilled tuna

steak with minted potatoes and vegetables and he ordered a grilled sea bass with salad.

Their conversation centred around how they would meet in Bali and then travel around not staying anywhere for too long until they felt that things had cooled down but all the while Michael's mind was racing through their earlier conversation trying to find if there was anything he had missed that vindicated her.

Her words bounced around his head as he thought about Alan Brown, had she done the same thing with him but he had maybe got too greedy so they had had to kill him, what was to be his fate once they did not need him anymore.

He knew he was being used but by whom, was she in this alone or were there others involved, if so, who, "are you listening to me?" he heard her ask. "Yes, yes of course, "he lied as he tried to recall their conversation, "so what do you think?" she leaned forward looking into his eyes.

"About what? "Michael had to admit he could not remember their conversation, "oh Michael, I said that after a year or so we could maybe buy a house in Australia or New Zealand, what do you think?" he avoided her gaze and lent back taking a sip of wine to collect his thoughts, "yes that would be lovely, nice climate, you can play golf, hey I could learn to play, great idea," he tried to sound convincing.

"Lets go upstairs," she smiled as he looked into her warm beautiful face her full lips inviting him, as she signed the bill, "good idea," he said as he stood up and walked round to pull her chair out.

She curled her arm under his and they walked to the lift, Michael thought about her lovely body and the thought that this may be the last time they made love left an empty feeling in his heart.

Once in the room, he poured two glasses of wine from the bar fridge and handed her a glass which she placed on the coffee table, she took his glass and placed it next to hers and led him by both hands to the bed where she flopped backwards pulling him down on top of her.

Her kiss was filled with passion and fire, Michael's thoughts raced through his head, perhaps she too sensed that this was the last time and like the tarantula spider she would make wild passionate love before he met his demise, like Alan before him.

He allowed himself to enjoy the moment as he responded and felt an intensity from her that he had not felt before; his own passion took over as he ran his hand over her blouse and felt the hardness of her nipples.

Their lips parted and he stood up removing his clothes as she stared up at him her legs parted as she sat up, he reached down and undid the buttons of her blouse revealing her small firm breasts her nipples erect, she shook herself free of the garment and laid back while he unzipped her skirt, she lifted her hips and he deftly removed it revealing the soft dark hair of her mount, she was not wearing any panties, he flung the skirt across the room and knelt down.

He slowly ran his tongue down her inner thigh gently spreading her legs wider until the backs of her knees rested on his shoulders, he moved his hands up and gently caressed her breasts his thumb and forefinger fondling her erect nipples while his tongue flicked over her wet clitoris, she moaned and arched her body in delight.

She felt his hands on her breasts and enjoyed the sensations that his fingers caressing her nipples caused to shoot through her making her skin tingle, every molecule longing for his touch.

Her eyes were closed in ecstasy as she felt his tongue gently touch her clitoris the feeling causing her to contract with exhilaration, she felt intoxicated as each touch

sent waves through her body she could feel herself writhing uncontrollable as she tried to guide his mouth and tongue.

She could feel his mouth on her and the vibration from his lips as he hummed caused such pleasure that she could feel the contractions flow through her body as she ejaculated she reached her hand down and pushed his head harder against her trying to get more of him, "don't stop please, its wonderful," she could hear his voice as she slumped back arching her back with each rush of pleasure.

Her body ached for more as she enjoyed the eroticism as it ebbed and flowed through her with the force of a fast flowing river and she never wanted it to stop, she wanted more. She reached down and pulled him by the hair, "please put yourself inside me," she could hear her voice pleading, she felt as though she was floating and was somehow detached from her voice. Michael undid his belt and slipped his trousers and underpants off leaving his shirt on, she felt him slide out from between her legs which she allowed to fall onto the bed, she could still feel the waves passing through her as he slid himself between her hot wet lips, she rolled both of them over and pulled her legs up so that she rested on her knees and looked down at him as she pushed down hard trying to get every inch of him inside her, she sat still for a moment unable to move enjoying the feeling.

He reached up and cupped her breasts in his hands as she sat on top of him she sat still and he could feel the force of her contractions on his penis and the warm liquid from her on his upper thighs, he gently pushed upwards with his hips and she moved slowly with him.

She fell forward supported by her straight arms, she bent her arms to allow him to reach her breasts with his mouth while their lower bodies moved rhythmically up and down.

His wet tongue flicked from one nipple to the other his fingers gently massaging them with the moisture from his mouth, her whole body felt as though it had been gently massaged and then every inch had been pricked with a pin as the feelings of sheer unadulterated passion ebbed and flowed through her.

Michael could feel the sensitivity in his penis increasing and he pushed harder moving quicker and quicker and she responded by pushing down hard on him and keeping pace until they both felt the pleasure and they froze rigid each pushing hard onto the other trying to squeeze every last ounce of enjoyment from the moment.

Like two statues cast in bronze they stayed momentarily in this position and then moving in spasms they allowed the muscles of their bodies to dictate their pose as the contractions of pleasure moved them like an animated movie, each stab of ecstasy caused them both to moan with pleasure.

Finally she allowed herself to flop forward onto his chest, his shirt open and half off his shoulders then she gently rolled off him, they lay side by side allowing the final feelings to pass, as they slowly recovered their breath from the exertion.

Christine was the first to regain her composure, she stood up and without saying a word went to the bathroom, when she emerged she wore one of the hotels white bathrobes, "time for some wine" she said, picking up the full glass from the table.

"Good idea," he replied, as he bent down and picked up his glass which she had placed on the table earlier and took a sip, before placing it back down on the table. He retrieved his underpants and trousers from the foot of the bed before going into the bathroom and closing the door.

When he returned she was sitting in the one easy chair in the room sipping her wine another glass was on the table, Michael sat on the bed and put on his shoes, the silence in the room was deafening.

Eventually he picked up the glass, “cheers,” he said and sat on the couch opposite her, “what’s the matter?” he asked, she looked at him, “nothing,” her reply was curt but he sensed she wanted to say more.

“This is silly, I thought we were in love, what happened, was this all about money?” he decided to try and resolve the situation, I thought it had gone beyond bringing these criminals to justice,” he wanted to believe in her again; he didn’t want to lose her.

“It was about the company but its become more than that and I can’t tell you anymore I just have to transfer that money tomorrow or we will both find ourselves in serious trouble, these people will stop at nothing,” she stared at him and he could see the seriousness in her eyes.

“But we would have been anyway even with just two million of their money, what’s the difference now?” he asked. There are thousands of innocent people nearing pensionable age who are going to suffer financially as a result of these bastards laundering their ill-gotten money, are we just going to let them get away with it,” he could feel the anger welling up inside him again.

“What happened to change our plan, did you suddenly get greedy or are you in it with them, why don’t you tell me so that I can at least understand where you are coming from.” he pleaded.

“I can’t, the more I tell you the more danger you will be in, you probably know too much already, please just transfer that money as you agreed earlier“ her words tumbled from trembling lips as she fought back the tears. “Okay answer this for me, did you do the same thing with Alan Brown, is that why he was killed did he go too far?” ”Get out, go on get out,” she stood up and threw the half empty wine glass at

him, he managed to move to his left just in time and heard the glass smash, the fragments tingling to the ground like a wind chime behind him.

“Okay, I’m going, he grabbed his jacket and moved towards the door as she glared at him, he opened the door and left it open as he hurried down the corridor choosing to take the stairs instead of waiting for the lift.

Once outside he looked up and then walked quickly away from the hotel, he never noticed the two men who emerged from the shadows twenty yards behind him. He saw a black cab with its available light on and hailed it, Cheapside Saint Bart’s, please,” his mouth delivered the words as his brain raced over the evenings events, he settled into the back seat oblivious to the black cab that had stopped a short distance behind to pick up the two men.

“Keep the change,” Michael heard himself say as he became aware of his surroundings, like a boxer recovering from a knockout blow, he walked the extra fifty yards to his flat and bounded up the stairs, he inserted his key into the lock and flung the door open before stepping in and closing the door loudly behind him.

The devastation that greeted him took a few moments to register, the couch had been cut to pieces, the pots and pans were all over the kitchen floor, broken crockery also littered the floor, the contents of the fridge, while frugal had been pulled out onto the floor, one half full bottle of Chardonnay stood in the door, even the curtains were cut into ribbons.

“Oh Jesus what the hell, he stood transfixed at the door wondering what to do allowing reason to replace the panic he felt. This was becoming tiresome and was obviously the work of Marchant’s men they obviously did not know what he was up to or maybe they thought he would be stupid enough to keep the documents he had with him. Either way he was getting very tired of this following and constant invasion

of his privacy. He had obviously been careless somewhere along the line otherwise how could they have found out about this place, unless, no she wouldn't have, would she? His mind was racing as he walked slowly through to the bedroom, the same carnage greeted him there. The bed had been cut so that the springs were visible. Christine's remaining clothes were also scattered everywhere, her golf clubs had been tipped out and the pockets containing balls, tees and a glove were emptied on the floor.

His clothes were thrown all over the floor even the bathroom had not escaped, the shower door was a gaping hole, glass strewn all over the tiled floor, he returned to the lounge and searched for the telephone among the wreckage, eventually finding it in pieces under the torn remains of the couch.

He took his mobile from his pocket and decided to phone the help line to find out the number to dial for the police, might as well report it otherwise his landlord would hold him accountable.

After dialling two further numbers he eventually got through and reported the matter to the police who assured him that someone would be round, he found one of the kitchen stools and picked it up. A glass tumbler that had not broken lay on the floor and he retrieved it and poured the golden liquid into the tumbler.

It was almost seven o'clock in the morning when he woke to the sound of someone knocking on the door, he found himself sitting on the stool his head resting on his arms on the counter top next to the empty bottle and glass.

Half asleep he staggered through the carnage and opened the door, the two uniformed police looked at him disapprovingly, "Mr. Wheeler?" "the taller of the two asked, "yes, come in, Michael stood to one side revealing the chaos as they walked past him.

“Quite a mess,” the taller officer commented unnecessarily, “yes it is,” Michael replied lamely, “are you insured, sir?” the shorter officer enquired, “no, its rented accommodation, fully furnished, I only have my clothes and personal bits and pieces. They walked through the flat stepping over the items as they went through to the bedroom, “Your wife’s?” the taller officer asked pointing to some of Christine’s underwear and clothes, “no my girlfriend,” Michael stammered, feeling stupid and embarrassed.

They walked back into the lounge, “Anything missing?” the same officer asked, “not that I can see, there’s nothing of much value,” Michael replied.

The shorter officer made some notes and took down Michael’s contact details, “okay you can phone this number in ten days and ask for a case number which you can give to your landlord for his insurance company,” the officer advised, “can I clean up or will you want to take finger prints?” Michael asked.

“To be honest, sir, the chances of catching anyone are so remote we won’t be pursuing it unless some obvious information comes to hand, so yes you may as well clean it up,” thank you Michael said as they walked to the door.

Michael decided to hang up his clothes and pack Christine’s back into the case she had left, he replaced the golf items.

He looked at the shower and decided that it would take too long to get the glass out so he rinsed the bath and made sure no glass had found its way there before putting the plug in and running the water.

It was almost nine am when he finally arrived at his office, “morning Mr Wheeler, are you alright, you look terrible.” “Good morning, thank you for that Anne, I was burgled last night while I was out and the police only arrived this morning early so I have not had much sleep,” he replied.

“What have I got on today?” he asked, “well its quite a busy day you have four brokers to see,” Anne replied, “pity but okay I’ll just have to drink loads of coffee, “oh and Mrs. McArdie,” phoned internally and asked if you could contact her.

Michael went into his office and closed the door, he lifted the receiver and dialled her extension, “hello,” he heard her say, “hi there, its me, the guy you use for target practise,” he said sarcastically. “Have you transferred the money back yet,” she asked “no I just got in as I was burgled last night, which begs the question how did they find out where I live?” “I don’t know maybe they followed you and you never spotted them,” she countered.

“No last night was the only time they could have followed me but this happened earlier in the day,” he replied suspiciously. “Look Michael I don’t have time to worry about your domestic problems transfer that money back, I have to do the transaction today,” she added angrily.

“Listen I don’t know what’s got into you but I have had second thoughts, so I doubt that I am going to allow you to give these crooks their ill-gotten money.” “Don’t be stupid you will get us all killed, you don’t understand these people,” her tone was less aggressive. “And you do, how come you know so much about them, are you actually one of them?” there was a silence on the other end and Michel wondered if he had hit the nail on the head.

“Perhaps its time to call the FSA and the fraud squad and let them take it from here,” he decided to throw notifying the authorities into the hat but he knew he did not have enough evidence, yet.

“Do you really think that I could be in cahoots with these people?” her tone seemed to harden again and he could almost see her snarling at him. “Honestly, I don’t know

what to believe anymore but right now I am not transferring that money back,” he had barely finished when he heard the click as the receiver went dead.

Michael knew he could not transfer the money back, even if he wanted to he would have to go back to Zurich and request it face to face, the bank did not take instruction any other way and he had specifically stated that he did not want internet access. He could transfer funds in as long as the account he was transferring from had internet access.

His first appointment was twenty minutes away so he quickly downed his coffee and phoned his landlord to tell him of the break in and that he would be moving to an hotel while they sorted the flat out. He had just replaced the receiver and reached for his jacket when the telephone burst into life, “yes Anne,” he barked into the receiver, I’m going to be late, “its Mr Hammond, from South Africa,” she replied, “oh okay, phone Dartmore Brokers and tell them I’m running late can we reschedule for next week.” “Yes Mr Wheeler, I’ll put Mr Hammond through,” he heard the click as she transferred the call.

“Hello Brian, how are you,” he said cheerily, “hello Michael, fine thanks, how are you,” came the equally cheery response, “well I suppose you have been told what’s happened so you know that this is no social call.”

“Told what?” Michael responded, “That we have been placed into receivership,” Brian said,

“What, receivership, how come, we are a perfectly healthy company, what’s going on, when you say we, is that the South African and the UK operation?” Michael could not contain his surprise.

“No it’s just the South African operation but naturally our UK operation will be sold off by the administrators to recoup assets but we are now closed to new business and

we are retrenching all the sales and marketing staff and all related administration staff.”

“But what the hell happened, things were looking great six months ago, “ Michael was flabbergasted, “well it appears that the chairman and the managing director have been fleecing the company for years, I don’t know the whole story but they sold large amounts of shares between them.”

“It appears that they massaged the end of year figures, sold off shares at their peak, which naturally sparked an investigation after accusations and the result is we have been placed into receivership, it’s a bloody mess,” Brian’s voice trailed off and Michael realised that he only knew part of the story and was obviously not involved.

“Shit, so as a matter of interest what happens to me and all my bloody shares,“ Michael felt the anger building inside him once more, “ well you are still employed by us and as such you will be given a redundancy package of six months basic salary. You can also take your pension contributions less tax but for some reason they have not performed very well, I thought that our investments were performing well, so there is virtually no interest, Brian explained.

Michael realised that even he had become a victim of the laundering operation and this explained why they suddenly wanted to surrender such a large sum of the annuity backed product.

“Hello, are you there,” Brian’s voice crackled in his ear, “yes, yes, just digesting this shit,” he snapped, “so I presume they know here?” he asked knowing that they did, “yes I told them last week I’m surprised they never told you” Brian replied, his voice belying his astonishment.

“Well I’m not surprised, listen Brian there’s a whole lot of shit going on here but I thought you were in it, I’d like to come home, will you be talking to Marchant today?

He asked seeing this as a great opportunity to appear to be leaving as a result of the news.

“Yes I was going to ask you to put me through as we are going to close the new business operation there as well,” Brian replied, “good tell him I will be going back to South Africa but please tell him that you are pulling me back to help clean up there, things like close down the branches and help the staff to find alternative employment with other insurers, that sort of thing, I’ll explain when I see you,” he said.

“Okay, when will you be leaving then,” Brian enquired, “well there’s little point in hanging around, Ill be making my own arrangements but lets say I’ll be there in two weeks or so,” he explained.

“Right, whatever, I’ll tell him, can you put me through,” he sounded puzzled, “yes, right away cheers, see you soon,” he never waited for a reply and dialled Marchant’s number, replacing the receiver as soon as he heard Dawns voice.

He grabbed his jacket from the back of the chair and hurried through to Anne’s office, “Annie, listen carefully, cancel all my appointments, I won’t be back today, you have a great weekend,” he rushed out before she could ask any questions, a lift arrived just as he reached them.

His tail eased in behind him as he walked quickly up Bow lane and made his way to the bank, there was a queue of three people ahead of him, waiting to use the autobank machine, he waited his turn, inserted his card and asked for a balance.

He then made his way to the teller queue where there was only one person ahead of him, he waited his turn, “I’d like to withdraw all of the cash in my account except for forty pounds please,” Michael spoke through the protective glass.

The teller swiped his card and punched on her keyboard, “that’s eighteen thousand four hundred and six pounds, sir, we normally need some notice for anything over ten

thousand” she said. “Well it’s a bit of an emergency,” he replied, “have you got any ID please,” she responded.

Michael reached into his inside pocket and pulled out his passport sliding it into the tray which she slid to her side, she opened it and looked at his photograph and then at him, “just one moment please,” she said getting off her chair and walking to another woman whom he presumed was a supervisor.

The teller said something to the supervisor who looked across at him, he smiled, they both went to a cabinet and after searching pulled out what looked like a card, they must be comparing the signature on the passport to his specimen he thought.

The teller returned with a form which she filled in reflecting his name and the amount number, she slid the form and a pen towards him in the tray, “please sign that sir,” she said, Michael signed the form and returned it, she checked the signature against the passport and then satisfied, said, “how would you like it sir, “twenties please and can you give me an envelope,” he asked.

She nodded and put the money into a canvas bag, “I don’t have an envelope large enough I’m afraid,” she said as she slid the full canvas bag in her tray back towards Michael. “Thank you very much, by the way do you have two quite thick elastic bands please” he replied taking the bag, she dropped two elastic bands into the tray. “Thank you,” Michael said taking the bands and turning making his way to the customer service desk, “hi” he said to the clerk behind the desk.

“I’d like to put something into my safety deposit box please,” he said, she pushed a slip towards him which he completed and signed, she then escorted him to a booth where he waited while she fetched his box

He took two thousand pounds and put it into his inside jacket pocket placing the rest into the metal box together with the fake passport and details of the Zurich account.

A quick look at his watch told him it was twelve noon as he emerged on the pavement and quickly made his way to Cheapside, he remembered a luggage store nearby. He decided to buy a small bag suitable for hand luggage similar to the ones the airline staff use.

Once outside he hailed a cab and went to his flat where he quickly packed his casual clothes socks and underwear into the new bag and the rest into the remaining bags. He put Christine's things in a corner and left with his two bags, his new one and the other one stuffed with his shoes and shaving bag, he ordered a minicab and took his luggage down to the foyer.

Needing somewhere to put his things while he decided what to do with himself over the weekend he ordered the driver to take him to Heathrow airport where he knew he could leave his luggage.

The traffic was a nightmare and the taxi journey to Heathrow took an hour and a half, he made his way to the left luggage department and handed in his luggage for storage, he noted his chaperone twenty yards away trying to look inconspicuous.

Michael made his way to the Cafe Nero coffee shop and ordered a cup of black coffee and chose a quiet table in the corner. He decided to phone his landlord to find out what was happening with his flat, to be told that the flat had been cleaned up and the new furniture would only be arriving late next week, he then phoned directory enquiries for the number of the Financial Services Authority.

Enquiries gave him a number which he dialled, a female voice answered and he asked to be put through to someone senior who dealt with irregularities in the life assurance industry, in particular pensions.

It was some time before a male voice finally crackled in his ear, Michael explained about the laundering and gave Marchant's and Gallion's names as well as their direct

numbers. The voice however seemed reluctant to pursue the matter without more concrete evidence and wanted his name, the man also was not prepared to acknowledge that they had been notified of problems with the South African parent or the UK company.

The man suggested that as money laundering was involved it was more a matter for the police than the FSA, frustrated Michael ended the conversation and phoned directory enquiries again for the number of the fraud squad.

A woman at the fraud squad also wanted to know his name but Michael refused to give it, he repeated his story and again gave Marchant and Galliano's names and numbers he also referred to the death of Alan Brown. She asked numerous questions all of which he could not answer, finally he ended the conversation saying that there was nothing more he could add and that he hoped they would take action.

Even more frustrated at the lack of any cooperation he finally finished the conversation; he knew that the FSA must have been notified of the decision to curtail new business as the company would have to notify them that they were not taking in any more new business.

Hailing a cab he made his way to Piccadilly Circus, where he knew he would find a travel agent and to try and see if he could get rid of his pursuer.

The travel agency was busy so he took a number and then looked through the rows of brochures trying to decide the best course of action, one thing was certain for the moment he was not going near Zurich and the money.

His number was finally called and he decided on going to Brisbane Australia as he thought that perhaps the mafia's influence there may be less than anywhere else, the only available flight was Monday which was the earliest available, he decided that was no good.

The South African embassy was just across the road so Michael decided to have a look at the local papers to see if there was anything about The Crucible, he was not disappointed.

The Star, a Johannesburg newspaper had an article in the financial section which had a comment by one of the directors which ended, "ask why there are apartments in Knightsbridge and Chelsea not registered in our name but bought with our money." "That must have been Brian," he murmured with a chuckle, he left the building and stood for a moment outside looking for his tail, it took him a while looking through the crowds but then he spotted him sitting on one of the many bollards with a newspaper pretending to be reading.

As he had no accommodation in the UK he decided to go to Paris for the weekend, he had been there a long time ago on holiday and thought it was a good place to escape to and reflect. He took a cab back to Heathrow terminal two, pleased with making his followers work to keep up with his movements but convinced that his movements were being relayed back to Andrew Marchant.

The drive back to the airport allowed him time to reflect and he thought about Christine, he could not help thinking about her and he could not resist the feeling of betrayal which welled up inside him, he was still not sure if she was in it for herself or if she was part of the whole scam or not in it at all.

Once at the airport he made his way through the busy terminal to the Air France counter and was delighted that he could get a flight at five pm, only a two and a half hour wait, he quickly made his way to the left luggage and retrieved his new bag and the holdall.

The check in counter was open so he checked in allowing his luggage to be loaded as he did not want to be carrying it around duty free and he was in no hurry so he did not mind collecting it at the other end.

His chaperone was not far behind him as he went towards the restricted area and he could not resist a cheeky wave as he turned before going in towards passport control and duty free. He would like to have gone and punched him in the face for all the damage he had done to the flat but decided to bide his time.

While wondering around his mobile rang, he glanced at the screen, Christine's name appeared, "hello Christine," he answered, "Michael, where are you," she asked.

"Why, I thought that you and your mates would know that at any given time what with this constant tail that I have," he replied sarcastically.

"What are you doing, Michael, that money has not been returned to the account, its not yours, you know" she said agitated, "no I know and its not yours either, and it won't be returned not to you lot of thieves, anyway" he replied calmly as he made his way to the quietest spot he could find.

"You are playing a very dangerous game, Michael, don't be so stupid, give it back while you still have a chance," her voice sounded almost convincingly concerned about him, "sorry, no deal," he replied and pressed the end button.

After a few more minutes of wondering around aimlessly and agitated, he decided to change some pounds into euros while at the exchange counter he was relieved to hear his flight being called and checked the monitor to see the gate number, he placed his euros in his wallet and hurried towards gate nineteen and joined the other passengers assembled in the departure lounge.

At last he was sitting comfortably in his first class seat as the plane taxied down the runway eventually soaring into the air Michael felt relief that at least for a while he had left the mounting problems of the past week behind him.

He spent most of the hour and ten minutes flight reading the newspapers presented to him by the attractive French cabin attendant.

In particular he enjoyed an article in the International Herald Tribune which featured up to the minute topics as well as some very interesting articles.

One which caught his eye concerned a mafia boss who had testified about their involvement in laundering money through the New York stock exchange, perhaps that is the way to expose this matter, he thought.

They landed at Roissy Charles De Gaulle airport and he quickly made his way to collect his luggage, waiting at the carousel Michael decided to take his time and to hang around as long as he could before going through passport control and customs. He was sure that they would have someone waiting to follow him and he had no intention of making it easy.

Everyone had collected their luggage and the carousel was switched off as Michael joined the end of the queue at passport control, once through he spotted a large advertisement on the wall for the Meridien Hotels group and made his way to one of the telephones.

A pleasant female voice who spoke excellent English booked him into the Meridien Montparnasse which she assured him was just minutes away from some of the most famous sights in Paris.

After loitering for a further hour Michael decided to make his way to customs choosing the green gate, he passed through and was suddenly in the arrivals hall, he

searched through the sea of faces and was jostled by passengers being hugged and greeted by relatives and friends.

He continued walking making his way to the exit, the electric glass doors parted and he looked around, saw the taxi queue and joined it for his turn to take a taxi.

The queue thankfully moved quickly and before long he was inside a Peugeot, “Le Meridien Montparansse, sil vous plait” he commanded in his best French, “Oui monsieur,” came the reply as the driver switched on his meter and they pulled out into the traffic, neither exchanged another word and Michael looked at the countryside flashing by.

After about twenty minutes they entered what Michael assumed must be the outskirts of Paris, there was far more activity and there were more buildings, most of the buildings were old which meant virtually no tall buildings to spoil the skyline.

Eventually they pulled up outside a fairly modern building which announced itself by a large black and white sign above the entrance ‘Meridien,’ “quarante deux euros s’il vous plait.” He heard the driver and took a little while to work out what he had said, he gave the driver forty five euros, “garder le changement,” he said and opened the door, “merci” he heard the driver say as he stepped out and closed the car door.

Michael stood for a few moments and looked around to see if he could identify anyone suspicious who might be following him, satisfied that he could not, he made his way through the revolving glass doors into the lobby.

He was greeted by a modern sumptuous and light interior, he walked across the marble floor down the three small steps onto the blue and grey carpet and towards the well lit desk, “bon jour monsieur,” the attractive female receptionist greeted him.

Michael decided to stick to English as he might make a fool of himself, “bon jour parlez vous Anglaise?” he asked.

“Yes of course,” she replied in impeccable English with a lovely French accent, “I have a room reserved, Wheeler,” he advised “the young woman tapped on a keyboard while she looked at a screen. “Yes two nights, please sign here and if I could have your passport, how you will be paying sir,” she responded efficiently, Michael noted the small grammatical error but it sounded cute with that accent. Michael obliged and handed her his passport and credit card and signed the paper she had placed on the counter top.

The checking in complete, the receptionist raised her hand and a young man dressed in a uniform appeared as if by magic and picked up Michael’s case and bag and lead the way to the lifts.

They arrived at the sixth floor and Michael followed the young man to room six two three, they entered the room and the man busied himself with the television and babbled away in French, Michael nodded and placed five francs in his hand and the young man left.

He looked around the room relieved to be alone for a moment; it was comfortable with a nice big double bed, very blue, he thought, of the dark blue carpet and furniture offset by a light wood chest of drawers which included a fridge well stocked with miniatures.

He felt neither hungry nor tired as he looked at his watch it was half an hour after midnight. He decided to go to the bar and have a drink before showering and going to bed.

The lift doors opened at the lobby and Michael could hear jazz music, he made his way across to reception, “where is the bar?” he asked the middle aged man behind the counter, “the bar is closed sir but you may sit over there and listen to the jazz and order from the waiter,” the affable man replied in his Parisian accent. “Splendid,

thank you very much,” Michael smiled, nodded and made his way across the plush carpet to where a group of people were sitting listening to a quartet of musicians. There was a comfortable chair which was empty at the end of a row of chairs that had been pulled together to face the musicians, “is this taken?” he asked the attractive middle aged brunette sitting next to a man greying at the temples. “No please make yourself comfortable,” the woman replied with a smile, he placed her accent as American,” thank you,” Michael said sitting down, a waiter appeared from nowhere, “Stella Artois please,” the man nodded and disappeared.

“Wonderful music,” the woman said to Michael, “yes, I do enjoy contemporary jazz,” he responded, “are you American,” he asked cautiously as he had made the mistake before of mixing up Americans and Canadians.

“Canadian, we’re from Ontario,” she smiled, “I’m sorry, Michael apologised, “I always seem to get it wrong, “no matter, it’s a common error,” she said magnanimously, “and where are you from,” she continued.

“Originally, South Africa,” but I am working in London at the moment,” he replied feeling like an idiot at having got her nationality wrong, “oh yes we have been to Cape Town a lovely city,” the man with the grey temples leaned across, “Ron Hatherway, by the way,” he held out his hand, Michael took it and shook it, “Michael Wheeler,” he replied.

“Oh how dreadful of me,” the woman interjected, “Angela Hatherway,” she added, “no problem,” Michael said as they continued polite conversation and listened to the music, Michael had two more Stellas and stayed until three am, the Hatherways excused themselves at two thirty.

Michael had been so relaxed that he had not noticed the two men who had joined the small group of people, listening to the band, nor did he notice when one of the men left shortly after the Hatherways.

Too tired to be bothered to shower, Michael fell into a deep sleep immediately his head hit the pillow; he was so sound asleep that he failed to hear the telephone ring for at least a minute.

Eventually he stirred when he heard banging on the door, he looked at his watch on the bedside table, it was nine am, he got out of bed and pulled on his suit trousers before walking barefoot to the door, "alright I'm coming," he shouted and the banging stopped.

He ripped the door open, "what the hell do you want," he said as he was confronted by a man dressed in one of the hotels uniforms, a man in a suit and two gendarmes.

"Good morning Mr Wheeler," the man in the suit said in a thick French accent holding his hand out, inspector Momple," Michael shook the hand, "what can I do for you," he said, dressed in nothing but his trousers.

"We would like to ask you a few questions, if we may," the man said as he walked past Michael into the room followed by the two gendarmes, the man from the hotel was making a hasty retreat in the direction of the lifts.

Bewildered Michael closed the door and faced the men, "do you know Mr and Mrs Hathaway?" the inspector asked, "know them, no I only met them last night while I was listening to the jazz, why?" he stammered wondering what was going on.

"They appear to have been brutally beaten up and then murdered, Mr Wheeler and you may be one of the last people to have seen them or spoken to them, alive," inspector Momple announced slowly, "murdered but why, by whom," Michael said flabbergasted.

“That’s what we were hoping you could tell us,” the inspector looked around the room, “what, why me, I said good night to them and then came to bed, I don’t know an hour or so after they left me.

“Yes that seems to confirm the waiters story but did you come straight to bed, Mr Wheeler?” the inspector narrowed his eyes as he looked at Michael. “Now just a minute, are you accusing me, I only met these people last night and we listened to the musicians then I came to bed,” Michael struggled to hide his indignation.

“Routine Mr Wheeler, routine, I am not accusing you of anything, please give your details in England to this officer and if we need you any further we will contact you, good day sir, sorry to have bothered you.” The inspector handed him a card and indicated to one of the officers who took a pen and notebook from his shirt pocket while the inspector and the other officer left.

Michael gave his address and telephone number at the office and was told that he could return to London when he wanted, he was not a suspect and was not being detained, relieved Michael closed the door behind the officer and put the night lock on before taking a shower.

He allowed the water to run like a waterfall over his body while he pieced together the events of the night before, could this be Andrew Marchant and his thugs, why would they have killed these people, did they have anything to do with it.

Eventually emerging from the shower he had an idea of what might have happened and assuming that scenario he was in greater danger than he had believed and he needed to act fast.

If he had been followed and whoever was watching him had assumed that when he had spoken to the Hathaways he was passing on information about the money, they

might have tried to find out from them and of course they knew nothing so to avoid being identified they killed them.

They had no compunction with Alan Brown and they had blown him up, god knows how many others have died and could die and he could be one of them, god he wished he had not got involved in this debacle but this stiffened his resolve to ensure that they would never get a penny of the money.

It was Saturday and he thought he had better stay as he had intended otherwise the police might think it suspicious, he dressed in a casual pair of dark trousers and a blue shirt.

Deciding to be ultra cautious he threaded one of the elastic bands he had got from the bank teller through the eye of the safety deposit box key and looped that through the second band, he then pulled it over his foot so that it nestled just below his ankle underneath his sock.

Not sure what to do with his passport and ticket he folded the ticket in half and tucked it into his passport before putting it into his shirt pocket, his wallet he put into his back pocket and fastened the button, it was all a bit bulky but he had to keep these items with him.

The time for breakfast had passed so he decided to ring room service for some fruit, toast and coffee then he would go out and see if he was followed, there would not be anything of importance in the room apart from a few clothes.

He heard the knock at the door, he opened it and was greeted by a waiter and the general noise of chamber maids talking, vacuuming and cleaning, Michael stood aside holding the door open and the waiter wheeled the trolley into the centre of the room, Michael placed five euros in his hand and closed the door.

The fruit was fresh and as he poured a cup of coffee from the pot the aroma of the coffee seemed to invigorate him, he picked up the cup in its saucer and was about to walk to the window to take in the view when he noticed a small white envelope which had been beneath the saucer.

'Mr Wheeler' had been scribbled on the front, he walked over to the window and placed the cup on the bedside table, he tore open the envelope tearing part of the note paper inside and opened the folded note.

'The handwritten note was easily legible. 'You should seriously consider going back to England today, you have something of ours, contact will be made with you when you arrive, consider this a final warning, failure to do as we suggest could result in the same fate of some of your friends.'

He stared down at the paper allowing its contents to fully digest, so he was right they had followed him and those poor people had died because they had spoken to him, he could feel the anger well up inside him.

Well he would avoid speaking to anybody unless absolutely necessary but he could not go back to England now firstly because the French police might see it as suspicious but more importantly if he went back and gave them the money they would have to kill him as he knew too much.

He had to start things in motion and as the British authorities did not seem interested he decided that the newspapers were the way to get every body's attention but he would have to make sure that he was out of the way.

He folded the note and pushed it into his shirt pocket next to his passport and made his way to the door checking one last time before he left as he was sure that they would search his room while he was away.

The glare from the sun made Michael squint and he wished that he had brought a pair of sunglasses, he knew how difficult Paris was to get around if you were not familiar with the layout of the city so he decided to walk in what he assumed was the direction to the Eiffel tower, if he got lost he could just hail a taxi.

He knew he was on the left bank of the Seine so all he had to do was find the river and then follow it, easier said than done he thought, the streets were like a maze but he wanted to see who was following him and this was the best way of doing it.

It was amazing that one could wander around the streets of Paris and be round the corner from the Eiffel Tower but you could not see it, there seemed to be more pedestrians around so he gathered that he must be closer to the tourist attractions.

A sign announced the Parc du Champs de Mars and another the Ecole Militaire, well he was near a park and a military school, he could be anywhere, he thought as he made his way along the Av de la Bourdonnais which meant nothing to Michael until the majestic structure loomed to his left reaching up to the clear blue sky, dwarfing the throng of people milling around below taking pictures of each other capturing their own bit of eternity.

So the hotel brochure was not wrong it had taken him almost twenty minutes but then he did not know the direct route, he continued walking and stood on a bridge, Pont de l'Alma and casually looked around.

It was too busy to make out if anyone was following him so he elected to cross the bridge and make his way away from the tower along the Cours Albert and towards Notre Dame.

This whole area was very busy and he saw a sign to the Champs Elysees to his left but decided to rather go up the rue de la Pyramides as he progressed up towards the opera house the crowds thinned although there were still many people about.

He constantly stopped pretending to be looking at street names but all the while trying to identify any constant denominators in the faces of the people behind him.

The American Express office loomed up on his left as he made his way into boulevard Montmatre, he had been to the church at Montmatre before and knew it was busy but you could sit for hours at the café and eat and drink as you watched the people milling amongst the myriad artists who would paint or draw your picture, for a fee.

This area looked vaguely familiar and as he crossed into rue de Clichy the road was almost deserted, he turned round and noticed one man dressed in jeans and wearing sunglasses about a hundred yards behind him.

He carried on walking to the circle at Place de Clichy and turned again, the man was still there and there was another also with dark glasses on the opposite side of the road walking casually almost in line with the first man he had noticed.

Walking more briskly now Michael turned into Caulaincourt, the cathedral of Montmatre loomed large as he made his way up the steps and round to the square.

As he entered the scene suddenly changed and he was confronted with crowds of people just as he had expected. He wondered round and found a table recently vacated with some dirty glasses and plates still on it. He sat down his back to the café facing the frenetic spectacle of tourists milling around and artists trying to sell their wares by trying to entice people to sit for portraits or caricatures, it was pure theatre.

The two men suddenly appeared together now and one went round the square clockwise the other anticlockwise. Michael presumed that they had not seen him yet as they were quite a way behind and he would have been momentarily lost in the sea of tourists and artists and he was sitting down now so he was less conspicuous.

Michael ordered a cheese sandwich, a bottle of red wine and a glass of water as he watched the two men methodically work their way around through the crowd, one

passed within feet of him and he made a mental picture of the moustache and blue jeans with white Reebok trainers and a brown polo shirt.

He presumed the man had seen him although he gave no indication but unseen to Michael he must have signalled to the other man who had turned and was retracing his steps while the first man carried on walking round the square.

They both met at the far end and took up a position from which they had a clear view of him, an interesting standoff Michael thought but there was no point in trying to lose them as he was going to go back to the hotel and leave as he had planned on Sunday morning.

The problem was which newspaper should he contact in England and how to make them take him seriously. Christine had all the hard evidence; he had nothing really, for the moment he was going to enjoy Montmartre while he thought of how to overcome the problem..

The wine and sandwich arrived, he drank the wine slowly and enjoyed the crispy French stick filled with cheese. It was four o'clock when Michael finally decided to leave, his two chaperones must be tired of standing by now he thought glad that he had drunk water with the wine which had kept his head clear.

He made his way down the numerous steps and found a taxi, "le Meridien Montparnasse sil vous plait," he ordered and the driver pulled off in the maniac Parisian style of driving.

Michael collected his key from reception and took the lift to his room, he could see that his room had been searched albeit less vigorously than his flat in London but the tell tale signs were there, his clothes had been moved around, his bag and case lay open on the bed, a very crude attempt at being discreet perhaps they wanted him to notice.

As the case was open he decided to pack and left out what he was going to wear the next day, he put the night lock on the door. He sat on the bed and switched on the television flicking through the channels until he found a movie, it was Die hard another day, he had seen it but decided it was worth watching and it was quite funny to watch with the French dubbed voices.

He must have dozed off because he awoke with a start as he heard the door open and catch the night lock which stopped it from being opened any further than a few inches, "hello," he called out, the door was hastily pulled closed.

Cautiously he made his way across the carpet to the door and pulled the single chair across jamming it underneath the door knob. They probably wanted to make sure that he had not managed to slip away undetected.

The time was nine thirty; he had slept for about five hours so he decided to have a shower to wake himself up.

When he emerged from the shower he still felt dopey so he decided to go back to sleep after checking that his fortifications were sturdy enough, he struggled at first but eventually dropped off into a deep sleep.

It was seven am when he awoke and attended to his ablutions, he packed his previous days clothes into one of the hotels plastic laundry bags and put it into his holdall, he decided to take the bags down with him to breakfast wary that his room and bags might be searched again.

He placed the safety deposit box key in his trouser pocket knowing that the metal detector at the airport might go off when he passed through and alerting anybody watching to his hiding place.

Apart from himself there were only two other early risers at breakfast and Michael did not notice either of his two pursuers from the previous day in the lobby so he

presumed that either they had been replaced or they were waiting outside for him to emerge.

Breakfast over he paid his bill and asked the concierge to arrange a taxi to the airport. The concierge carried his bags to the waiting taxi and Michael pressed five euros discreetly into his hand before climbing into the rear seat.

The drive to the airport was much quicker and even the taxi driver engaged in some light conversation, asking if Michael had enjoyed his stay and where he was from, although mundane it passed the time, he was however pleased when they finally arrived at Charles de Gaulle.

The airport was noticeably less busy than when he had arrived on Friday evening but people were beginning to arrive and gather at various points around the terminal. Michael's flight was only at eleven but he decided to go through the check in early, there were two people ahead of him but he presumed they were for an earlier flight. The check in clerk remarked that Michael was early but checked him in, he decided to keep his hand luggage and not to check it in, the clerk commented that normally only one piece of hand luggage was allowed however the plane was relatively empty so she allowed him to keep both pieces of luggage.

Passport control and security over Michael made his way to the Café Corner New York and ordered a large latte, someone had conveniently left a copy of The Daily Mail, and so he read the paper to help pass the time.

The cacophony of sound steadily rose as more and more people arrived and departed, the tannoy burst into life more and more regularly making announcements about security and departures.

Michael had finished reading the paper and had scoured each face that came near him to ensure that he did not recognise anyone.

His flight had been announced so he decided to make his way to the departure gate where after checking his ticket and passport he boarded the aircraft and made himself comfortable in his aisle seat after stowing his two bags in the overhead locker.

The flight was uneventful and he felt a certain amount of apprehension as the plane touched down at Heathrow he was certain that someone would be waiting to follow him once he appeared in the arrivals terminal.

The events of the weekend had shaken him a bit and he now realised more than ever that he had to do something quickly, giving back the money was no guarantee of his safety and he realised that if he handed the money over they would surely kill him. Christine's involvement still bothered him and he still struggled to believe that she was one of them yet her latest actions tended to support that she was part of their operation.

He moved gradually forward in the queue as they went through passport control the uniformed immigration officer giving him the customary sneer as he compared the photograph before handing him back his passport.

After collecting his bags he made his way through customs and through the doors suddenly bursting from relative calm and quiet into the noisy arrivals hall greeted by a sea of faces, the noise was almost deafening and Michael jostled his way through the throngs eager to get out onto the pavement and into a cab.

Walking briskly Michael made his way from the terminal to the bus stop and waited for a cab to drop someone off, he didn't wait long and was soon settled in the familiar back seat of a London cab, he had asked the driver to drop him off in Ludgate hill as he recalled seeing an hotel there but could not remember the name.

They had travelled for about half an hour when he realised that he had forgotten to collect his two cases from the left luggage but decided that he would collect them later once he had found an hotel for the night.

Suddenly his mobile started ringing, he looked at the screen and saw that he had five messages, he pressed the button and listened to the messages in turn, they were all from Christine asking him to return her calls.

The driver moved slowly along Ludgate Hill suddenly stopping outside an imposing building which looked more like a bank than an hotel, the brass plaque on either side however indicated that it was called Club Quarters.

“Thank you very much,” Michael said as he handed the driver the fare and climbed out with his two bags, “you’re welcome mate,” the driver replied and drove off.

Michael looked up at the imposing entrance before walking through very impressed as he made his way to the reception desk, it certainly looked more like a gentleman’s club than an hotel.

The formalities over he was given his key and he made his way up the stairs to the first floor, his room was a decent size, the bed was covered with a striped bedspread in shades of blue with matching curtains this was spoiled by a light and dark blue check easy chair but it would do for a couple of nights he thought.

The great thing was the convenience to the office and Cheapside, he was not sure how many more times he would be going in but for the time being it would do, peering through the window he noted that it overlooked a small alley some twenty five feet below.

He took the safety deposit box key from his pocket and attached it to his left ankle, under his sock, he put his passport in his shirt pocket and left the room.

Once outside he decided to walk down Ludgate Hill away from St. Paul's as there were fewer people the further away from St. Paul's he walked and it would be easier to spot a tail.

A cab with its yellow light on approached from the other side and he held his hand up, the driver spotted him and made a U turn in the almost deserted street pulling up next to him, "where to mate?" the driver asked. "Heathrow terminal two, please," he replied, "sure hop in mate," Michael had a good look back in the direction he had walked and could see the familiar sight of one of the men who had tailed him, before, he climbed in and settled into the back seat.

It was obvious to him that these people were extremely influential and that he was going to need some expert help, he also knew that there was no one he could trust in England, he had however formulated a plan and he was determined to carry it out. The trip to Heathrow was uneventful, he noted that a taxi had stayed with them for quite a while now and assumed that it was his tail. Undeterred he retrieved his two suitcases from the left luggage and hailed a fresh cab for the journey back to his hotel enjoying the satisfaction of the run around he was giving his pursuer.

His mobile started to ring, one look at the screen revealed that it was Christine trying to reach him again. "Hello Christine," he answered, "Michael what are you playing at, I have been trying to contact you the whole weekend," she responded and he could hear the annoyance in the tone of her voice.

"I beg your pardon, do you think I am at your beck and call twenty four hours a day, you and your cronies," he replied curtly, there was a moments pause. "Sorry Michael but this is important all our lives are in jeopardy, these people will stop at nothing to get that money back and you must cooperate," her tone was more measured but he could hear genuine trepidation in her voice.

“Look Christine, we have been over this before, by the way Brian phoned me on Friday and told me about the company, so you and your thieving friends have brought the company down and thousands of people are going to suffer because of it. In your position as the company secretary you must have known how bad the situation had become, yet you said nothing, this just proves you are in cahoots with them,” he could not conceal his distaste and anger.

“Yes I am aware of the situation but I am not part of them I am merely trying to ensure that nothing happens to you or me.” “More like trying to save your own skin, I think,” he pressed the off button not wishing to continue the conversation, how stupid he had been, how on earth had he allowed himself to get lured into this mess. They arrived at his hotel, he paid the driver and carried the two suitcases through the foyer, the receptionist nodded as he went past but immediately averted his eyes and busied himself.

Michael heaved the cases up the stairs to the first floor and unlocked his door closing it firmly behind him and immediately engaging the night lock, pulling a chair and securing it firmly at an angle under the door knob.

He put one of the cases onto the bed and went to switch the television on as he felt it was too quiet in the room, he noticed a dust line under the television which he had not noticed before indicating that the television had been moved.

The cleaner must have been, he thought, but decided to check the drawers where his socks and underpants were, someone had definitely gone through them, there were only a few items but there were signs of disturbance.

Relieved that he had taken the safety deposit box key and his passport he proceeded to unlock the case on the bed but the key did not go into the lock freely, after a struggle he eventually managed to unlock the case.

He withdrew the key and examined the lock there were scratches on the front someone had definitely tried to open it, he flipped the lid open, revealing the contents and noting that everything was a mess, he knew he had packed all his socks together and his handkerchiefs.

His shirts had been carefully folded when he packed now everything was a mess, somehow they had got hold of his case and searched it, he put the second case on the bed and struggled with the locks as well, the contents also revealed signs of a search. Well he decided they were going to get physical with him sooner or later, tomorrow he would telephone Andrew Marchant and tell him he would be leaving at the end of the week but he would not be in on Monday as he had to arrange his flight and sort out a few bills, to buy some time. Brian would have told Marchant that he wanted him to return and that Michael had said he would return in about two weeks.

Now Marchant would not want to let him out of his sight and he would want to get the money back before Michael went to South Africa. He needed to get rid of any excess baggage enabling him to travel light, he unpacked everything from all the cases and drawers and sifted through selecting only the clothing he thought he should keep. He neatly packed socks and underwear, some casual shirts, jeans and a pair of trousers, he hung one suit up with a shirt and tie.

Next he packed a pair of trainers and one pair of formal shoes into the holdall, his toilet bag would go in there in the morning, eventually he was satisfied with his choices, the rest he packed into the drawers and the suits he hung in the wardrobe. Using the hotels stationery he searched through the telephone directory for the names of newspapers and made a note of their addresses and telephone numbers, he folded the piece of paper carefully and put it into his wallet next to the French inspector's card.

He undressed and after checking that the door was still secure he took his wallet, passport and the safety deposit box key and wrapped them in one of the hotels plastic laundry bags and took them with him into the shower.

After his shower he ordered a toasted chicken and cheese sandwich and a bottle of wine from room service deciding that there was no point in going out and risking having his room searched again or exposing himself to any chance of them trying to pick him up until he had a chance to have a word with Marchant.

His order arrived and after verifying through the peep hole that it was room service Michael took his wine and food from the waiter not allowing him to come into the room.

The night catch firmly in place and the chair solidly rammed under the door knob Michael settled down to his supper and watched television until midnight before finally retiring to bed.

Sleep did not come easily as he thought through his plan and reassured himself that his resolve to act was the right thing to do either way whether he returned the money or not they would certainly kill him to shut him up.

Eventually he fell asleep having set the alarm on his watch to seven am so that he could phone the office around eight am as he knew that was the time Marchant usually arrived.

Chapter 4

Michael's internal clock woke him up at five to seven and he decided to get up, switching off the alarm so that it did not go off, he checked the door and was satisfied that no one had tried to get in during the night.

He took his plastic package into the bathroom and showered, when he emerged he dressed in a suit and packed his toilet bag into the holdall, one last look at what he had packed and he closed the small air crew bag and zipped the holdall closed.

Unwrapping the plastic bag he put the safety deposit box key around his ankle and his wallet in his back pocket, his passport he put in his shirt pocket.

Deciding to pay his bill he bounded down the stairs and gently opened the door looking carefully around the door to see if his tail was around, the foyer was deserted satisfied that it was safe he stepped out and made his way to reception.

He paid his bill and hurriedly made his way up the stairs back to his room, no one had come through reception so he knew that no one could have gone through his room.

He watched television until eight o'clock and then telephoned Andrew Marchant's direct line, Marchant answered after three rings. "Ah good morning Andrew, Michael here," he said cheerily, "hello Michael, I tried your office a few moments ago but there was no reply, " Michael picked up the curtness in the voice and started to talk before Marchant could continue.

"Oh well I'm not there, I phoned to tell you, as I am sure Brian told you on Friday, I will be leaving to go back to help them wind up, but today I am going to arrange my ticket and a few other things so I won't be in at all today," he said commandingly.

"Oh really that's a pity I did try to get in touch with you on Friday but you had already left, I would prefer that you came in today though," Michael decided to cut him short and said. "No sorry old man I will come in tomorrow but I definitely can't make it today and as a matter of fact I need to get going so that I can get everything done otherwise I may not make it tomorrow either, look forward to seeing you tomorrow then, " he replaced the receiver before Marchant could reply.

There was no point in making comments about what had happened in France he would only deny it and would never admit it over the phone anyway in case it was bugged. He needed to get moving and decided that the best course of action was to try to buy time by making Marchant believe that he would be around at least for the rest of the week even though he had no intention of going into the office.

Now he knew he had to move quickly as Marchant would be phoning his cronies to keep close tabs on him or maybe even to try and pick him up, he needed to make sure he was not followed.

Michael opened the window and looked down at the narrow lane, it was deserted, he carefully dropped his bag, it landed with a thud, he then dropped his holdall that made considerably less noise. Quickly he climbed out of the window and hung from the window ledge before letting go, he allowed his legs to concertina as he hit the tarmac and rolled over sideways to break his fall.

Standing up quickly he brushed himself off checking that nothing had torn or that he had damaged himself, satisfied that everything was intact he gathered up his bags and hurried down the alley away from Ludgate Hill.

Almost running he entered Fleet Lane then Old Bailey and Newgate Street where he managed to hail a cab, "Paddington Station," he ordered, a little out of breath as he looked through the rear window.

His mobile phone rang he looked at the screen it was Christine, suddenly it dawned on him that they could track his movements by the signal from the mobile, he decided to leave the phone in the cab that way they would be following a signal all over London. If someone else found it and took it that would be even more amusing but he didn't want it to be found too soon as the cabbie would know it was his and remember where

he had taken Michael but if the third or fourth person found it, the cabby wouldn't know whose it was.

He switched the phone off and put it on the floor pushing it with his heel so that it fitted snugly between the right hand door and the seat, most customers would get in on the pavement side which was the left door so it should remain undetected for a passenger or two, he hoped.

Paddington station had a train service directly to Heathrow so Michael knew that would be the fastest method of getting to Heathrow when the time arose.

For the time being he knew that they would be watching Heathrow, he found a public telephone and dialled the operator to get the number of several newspapers.

One by one he telephoned the various newspapers and briefly told them his story each time when it came to evidence he was stumped, the only evidence he had was the hundred million pounds he had in a bank account, he was careful not to say where or which bank.

Dejected he replaced the receiver, they were not interested with any concrete evidence, the only one with any evidence was Christine and she was part of the whole operation. How stupid of him not to have got his hands on some of the fictitious applications and surrender documents that would have enabled the reporters to check and find that those people did not exist.

One thing he had to do now was stay out of the clutches of these crooks, he decided that staying in London was too dangerous, he had to get away to somewhere safe, he needed to empty his safety deposit box at Barclays but he would run the risk of being spotted.

It would be stupid to use his credit cards, he had some cash left but needed more, they might be watching Zurich as well although they would not know which bank, damn

Christine for getting him into this thing in the first place and damn himself for being so naïve.

Perhaps the answer lay with Christine, had her moving out to the hotel just been a scam to set him up, he questioned the sequence of events; she knew he had the false passport as well.

He decided that he needed some answers, he phoned her hotel and asked to be put through to her room knowing that she would not be there at this time of the day but to check if she was still staying at the hotel.

The hotel put him through to her room and he allowed it to ring, that at least confirmed that she was still staying at the hotel.

He decided he needed to buy two mobile phones, one for himself and one for Andre, who he was going to ask to come and help him. First though he had to put his two cases somewhere, looking around he saw a luggage sign and followed them to the lockers, his cases safely stored he took a cab to Bluewater shopping centre to ensure that he was nowhere near any area that his pursuers would think of looking for him. The myriad of shops helped to make the time pass quickly, he had asked the shop to charge the phones for him and was told it would take up to six hours, the centre was big enough to keep him amused as he wandered from shop to shop.

The book shop kept him occupied for a long time, he had copious amounts of coffee until eventually returning to collect his charged phones.

He asked the taxi to drop him off a block away from Christines hotel, he carefully selected a spot which allowed him site of the entrance far enough away to remain undetected while he pretended to read The Evening Standard he had bought at the shopping centre.

It had turned a little chilly and he was glad that he had worn a suit and his jacket afforded some protection thankfully it had not rained.

One of his tails appeared at the entrance to the hotel, so they were being careful and must expect him to contact her, he was starting to wonder whether her involvement was voluntary or not.

She was supposed to be going back to South Africa, the end of the month had arrived yet here she was still in London, there were too many unanswered questions here.

It was after eight pm when a cab drew up and Christine appeared but there was a man with her, he could not make him out from the back but when he turned to pay the driver Michael saw that it was Marchant.

Now he was even more intrigued, was she connected or was he keeping her here in the hope that Michael would try to contact her, now that they had lost him He wondered if they had located his other mobile phone, a smile crossed his face as he pictured them chasing his mobile as it went around London.

They disappeared through the impressive entrance the man who had tailed Michael before however remained outside, he guessed that her phone would be bugged so phoning her would not be wise Fifteen minutes later Marchant appeared, this time alone, he said something to the man outside and then hailed a cab and left.

Michael decided to have a reconnoitre of the hotel, there had to be a back entrance but he had to be careful in case they had someone watching that as well.

He rounded the corner of the building careful to stay out of site of the man at the entrance, there was a group of three people half the length of the building away, two wore white chefs jackets while the third had a waistcoat and bowtie, they were facing away from Michael but the plumes of smoke suggested that they were staff taking a smoke break.

Michael strode purposely forward; he had noticed a door that was open about twenty yards from where the group were standing.

The group had not paid any notice to him as they were engrossed in their conversation, they were standing facing away from the door and Michael easily slipped inside the door undetected.

He hurried along the corridor to another door, he opened it and ran up the eight steps to another door which he opened and found himself in a large room with chairs and tables stacked to one side, he assumed that it was a function room which thankfully was not being used today.

He strode across the room to a set of double doors; cautiously he opened one of the doors carefully looking up and down the wide corridor after a brief pause he stepped from the carpeted room onto the marble floor.

As he walked slowly along the corridor he noted the ladies and gents toilets, in front of him he could see the foyer and beyond the entrance to the hotel.

He quickly made his way to a large pillar which obscured him from the entrance, the lifts were to the right as he remembered and he would be exposed for only four or five paces, he took a deep breath and turning his face away from the entrance walked to the lifts where he pressed the button, one of the lifts opened immediately and he stepped in pressing one floor above Christine's floor and the close door button, the lift responded immediately and the doors closed.

Relieved he leant back against the side of the lift, the lift stopped and he stepped out, immediately walking towards the fire escape, he opened the door and bounded down the stairs to the floor below.

Cautiously he opened the door sufficiently to see along the corridor, it was deserted, he moved quickly along the corridor to her room and knocked on the door, he could

feel his heart thumping in his chest, what if they had someone in the room with her, he thought but decided that as they had a man downstairs they would not have another inside.

The door opened and she looked at him, she was about to say his name but he quickly moved forward and placed his hand over her mouth, quickly looking past her to see if she was alone. He closed the door quietly as he removed his hand from her mouth and putting his index finger in front of his lip indicating for her to be quiet. Michael steered her into the bathroom pushing the door to behind him and quickly opening the tap on the sink.

He sat on the lent against the wall and she looked at him, "tell me honestly now are you part of this mob or not?" he asked looking into her eyes. "No I am not I have told you Michael, they have threatened to harm my family back in South Africa so I have had to play along. They will not let me go back home until they have the money back," he could see the tears welling up in her eyes. He pulled her to him relieved his mind racing, "do you still have your laptop?" he asked. "Yes, why?" she asked, do you want to get out of here?" he looked at her face now cupped in his hands. "Of course but I know they have a man downstairs and there is one along the passage" she was shaking. "Oh I saw the one downstairs but not the one on this floor" he responded. "He may have gone to the loo or something," she replied, "okay get your laptop and a few clothes into your smallest bag" he had turned off the tap and opened the bathroom door. She hurriedly threw a few panties and other clothes into the holdall she had placed on the bed, Michael stood watching his mind racing. "Okay you take the laptop, I'll take the bag," he picked up the hold all and walked towards the door opening it very carefully he peered up and down the passage. He saw the man at the end of the passage; he closed the door carefully and pulled her

back into the bathroom. "You will have to get him to come in and I will have to take him out," he whispered, she looked at him wide eyed, "oh god, no Michael he will kill you" she held him and looked into his eyes. "Look we have no option, we can't get out of here with him there, I need your help, now please," he looked at her waiting for a reply. "Okay what do you want me to do?" she asked. "Just open the door and signal for him to come to you, then ask him to come in, I don't know on the pretext of a telephone call for him, or something. I just need him in the room, I'll hide in the bathroom and then get him when he goes past the door" he explained.

"Oh god, okay leave your laptop here" he said as he put the holdall on top of the closed toilet seat out of sight of anyone passing by the bathroom door, he lifted the heavy ceramic lid off the toilet cistern.

"Okay lets go," Michael motioned to the door, he quickly walked to the telephone and placed the receiver next to the phone. He then went back to the bathroom and hid behind the door, the ceramic top in his hand, she was visible through the crack between the door and the jamb. She stood halfway in the passage holding the door open against its spring, "excuse me," he could hear here calling to the man. Michael could not see her but after a few seconds he could hear her say, "phone." "For me," he heard the man ask in a cockney accent as he made his way towards Christine.

"Yes come in," he saw her pass by the door followed by the man, quickly he moved from behind the door. He quickly peered round the door and could see the back of the short thickset man, Christine was standing well out of the way near the window the door had closed.

Michael took the two steps forward the ceramic top in his hands and swung it from his right to his left. There was sickening thud and the top split in two from the force, the phone clattered onto the table top and the man flew onto the bed head first, he

bounced twice before coming to rest facedown on top of the bed. Christine let out an involuntary whimper as she winced seeing the man fly onto the bed. "Is he dead?" she asked, Michael dropped the two pieces of the ceramic top onto the floor, quickly raising his finger in front of his lips. He quickly went over and held his fingers on the mans neck, he found the beat that confirmed that the man was still alive." He's still alive" he whispered, "come on" he went into the bathroom and brought the laptop and holdall in either hand, he handed the laptop to Christine. He opened the door and ushered Christine though, "this way" he said taking her by the hand and moving swiftly towards the end of the empty passage and the fire exit. They ran and stumbled their way down the stairs until they reached the flight marked "foyer" on the wall.

Trying to catch his breath he opened the door just enough to look into the foyer, there were a few people but none of the men he had seen tailing them, he pulled her through the door and they hurried across the foyer towards the function room he had come through earlier.

They burst through the double doors into the empty room and quickly strode across the room to the door on the far side, he opened the door and pulled her through. Before moving on he held the function room door open slightly so that he could see if anyone was following, noone appeared.

They stood resting against the walls as they struggled to catch their breath, "are you okay," he gasped. "Yes thank you, "her voice trembling.

"Okay lets get out of here," he took her by the hand and hurried through the fire escape doors, closing them behind him the fresh evening air on their faces. There was noone about as they hurried in the direction he had come.

They made their way along the side of the building and turned into a side street away from the hotel.

He felt happy that he had was with Christine again and was convinced that she had told the truth he only hoped that he had not jeopardised her family, he had to get his bags from the station and get to an hotel away from here, he hailed a cab and they made their way to Paddington station.

After retrieving his bags Michael led them away from Paddington station and set about trying to find an hotel, they walked out of the station and down Chilworth street in Gloucester terrace, he spotted The Paddington Hotel, the plaque on the wall indicated only two stars but it looked as though it had been recently refurbished and it was close to the station.

After checking in and paying for one night in advance with cash went up to the first floor via the elaborate staircase, the room was light and airy, the cream and chocolate brown bed cover complimented the dark wood of the furnishings by helping to provide a feeling of light.

“Michael dropped the bags and took the laptop out of Christine’s hands and placed it carefully on the bed before wrapping his arms around her. They said nothing for a full minute, “I need a shower,” Michael said as he pecked her tenderly on the forehead and released her. Christine sat heavily on the bed her mind mulling over what had just taken place in the hotel. Michael stripped off his clothes as he walked to the bathroom dropping them in his wake. He was careful to make sure that he had his trousers and socks on when he got inside the bathroom. Quickly he removed his wallet and the safety deposit box key from around his ankle. He hid them both behind the toilet outlet pipe before entering the shower. He lent against the wall his hands outstretched the warm water cascading over him, his mind filled with the evenings events, he could feel his legs trembling. The cool air caught him in the side, he looked over to the door and saw Christine enter the shower, naked and enveloped her fragile looking frame

with both arms. They stood like statues, under a waterfall enjoying the contentment of being together again, he could feel her body trembling even though the water was quite hot.

It was a good fifteen minutes before they emerged; there was no erotic arousal as they washed each other, few words passing between them. Refreshed and dried they each changed into fresh clothes without saying a word. Michael went back into the bathroom and retrieved his wallet and the key; he placed the wallet into his back pocket and slipped the key around his ankle under his sock. He picked up his clothes and took his passport out of his shirt pocket.

"How are you doing now?" he asked breaking the silence, "I think I am okay," she replied as she turned to him, "just the shock and speed of the whole thing, I think" she continued. "I am afraid that chap is going to have a massive headache when he wakes up but although I don't like violence but there are times when it is the only way," Michael said as he sat down on the bed.

"Can you put this cash into the laptop bag, I don't want to leave it here, just in case," he held the pile of notes that he had withdrawn from the bank out to her. She opened the flap on the out side of the bag and pushed the money down to the bottom. "I'm starving how about a curry?" he said standing up. I noticed an Indian restaurant when we arrived and I am suddenly starving," he continued.

"Funny so am I all of a sudden," she stood up and swung the laptop bag over her shoulder, satisfied that they had everything of value with them they made their way downstairs to the Indian restaurant they had passed along the way from the station. Pausing momentarily at the entrance to the hotel to get his bearings Michael took Christine by the hand as they steeped out into the cool evening air. They soon relaxed with a bottle of wine, which the waiter went next door to the corner shop to get as the

restaurant did not sell alcohol but Michael suspected that the same family owned the shop and the restaurant.

The chicken breyani was as hot as he had expected but she battled a bit with the spiciness not able to finish hers. They were the second last to leave the restaurant, the other being a young couple seated near the entrance.

Michael paid the bill and they sauntered slowly back towards the hotel, there were a few people about but generally the streets were quiet, he imagined that at the weekend things must liven up.

They reached the hotel, the young man at reception, who Michael assumed was Arabic or Turkish looked up at the, smiled and returned to what he was doing they walked up the stairs to their room. They were soon naked and slipped between the sheets, she rolled onto her side and he cuddled up behind her, his hand cupped over her breast, soon they were both sound asleep.

It was seven o'clock, when he awoke the weak morning rays of the sun were streaming through the closed window, he had not bothered to draw the curtains. She never stirred as he slid out from under the bedclothes which were barely disturbed confirming how soundly they had slept. He went into the bathroom taking some clothes with him, when he emerged fully clothed, she was still sound asleep. He touched her exposed naked shoulder, "hmmm" she muttered her eyes flicking open and then closing then flicking open again. "Good morning and how we are this morning?" he said in a sickeningly cheerful voice. "Oh is it time to get up," she said as she threw the bedclothes off and swung her legs so that her feet were on the ground. She stood up her naked firm body facing Michael, she reached her arms up above her head and stretched and yawned at the same time. "Oh yes, that is a sight for sore eyes," he remarked as she turned and went into the bathroom.

When she eventually emerged, naked except for the customary towel wrapped around the head, Michael was watching the news on television. "Aha, she lives," he said as he stood up and they embraced long and slowly. "So my little tulip, time to get dressed and move on to the next phase of this adventure," he released her and walked over to the window, remembering his last leap from the previous hotel. "We need to go and have something to eat and then move on, these chaps have an uncanny knack of finding us so I like to keep moving," Michael looked back from the window and watched her as she pulled on her jeans. They had to pass through the foyer to get to the dining room and they lingered briefly as Michael looked around carefully. It was quite busy with people milling around, mainly dark men possibly Arabic some seated, it was almost impossible to tell if any of them were following him and Christine. The dining room was almost full and he managed to get one of the two tables that were free after getting orange juice, toast and a cup of coffee from the buffet table. A waiter came over and asked if they wanted to order a full English breakfast, Michael declined happy with his selection and not used to having a heavy meal at the start of the day. They chatted briefly not mentioning the previous evenings escapade happy to be in each others company again. They finished their breakfast and went upstairs to pack, the room was as they had left it, relieved they packed and took their bags, Michael allowed his eyes one final sweep of the room and then closed the door behind him. The foyer was even busier than before and they jostled their way through the melee of people, he dropped his key on the reception counter, "thank you," he said, to no one in particular and strode out into the fresh English morning, thankfully it was not raining. They carried their bags walked briskly along the busy sidewalk towards Paddington

station, Michael looked warily at the multitude of dark men around but none of them looked like any of the men who had followed them before.

They reached the station where there was a line of black cabs, Michael spoke into the passenger window, "Cheapside please, do you know where Barclays bank is?" "Yea Guv. hop in" the driver replied in that familiar cockney accent. It was a long stop start journey which Michael was oblivious to as he discussed what they were going to do with Christine. He remarked that he had come to England to start a new life and ended up being hounded by the mob, what would his friends in South Africa say if they knew.

They arrived at Barclays bank Cheapside and Michael paid the driver, he stood on the pavement at the entrance to the bank and watched the cab drive away.

He recognised the two men about a hundred yards away, Michael recognised the one immediately and made sure that he had a good look at the other one.

At least he now knew what the men looked like; "okay lets go to the Internet Café," he said to Christine picking up the two holdalls pulling his in flight bag.

They ordered coffee and selected one of the vacant computers, Michael positioned himself at the end of the row so that he had a clear view of the doorway.

The café was empty apart from them and a young woman using a machine two seats away, Michael opened his email but there was nothing apart from reams of spam which he deleted.

After finishing their coffee they left the café walked briskly the two pursuers maintaining a constant distance behind them as they made their way down Bow Lane and into Canon Street they stopped at a card payphone box within sight of the office building.

A quick glance over his shoulder revealed the two men standing a short distance away, one had lit a cigarette and they appeared engrossed in conversation.

Michael inserted his card and dialled an international number, a mans voice answered, "hello," "hello Brian, Michael here I wondered if I would get you on your direct line. How are you," Michael chatted cheerily, "I'm fine, how are you, I received a call from Andrew saying that you had gone awol but I told him that we had spoken and that you said that you would be back here in a week or so, he seemed surprised."

"Well I suppose he would be because I never told him, in fact I told him I would be in during the week but there is a reason that I have not gone back Brian," Michael waited for a response.

"Oh yes and what's that Michael, what's going on," "Well I'm sure you are aware of more than you are letting on so I'll make it brief, I don't believe it would be safe for me to go back, I am being followed by this mob and Andrew Marchant is involved." There was a short silence before Brian replied, his tone a whisper, "Jesus Michael I know there is some skulduggery going on but I did not know Andrew was involved, I know that certain directors here are but I'm keeping out of it," Michael could hear the fear in his voice.

"Well I am unfortunately involved not in the whole laundering thing but I have taken one hundred million pounds of their money and I think they are a bit pissed off about it to say the least," Michael replied sarcastically.

"Fucking hell Michael how the hell did you do that, oh shit," Brian stammered, "yes oh shit sort of sums it up anyway I am not giving it back to them, its not theirs they have fucked up my career and affected a whole lot of honest people who trying to honestly provide for their pension, so I am going to hit them where it hurts," he felt the venom in his reply and enjoyed it.

“I believe you are not involved Brian, I thought that you did know more but maybe I was wrong, I think you know bits and pieces, otherwise I would not have phoned you and I won’t involve you but as we have got to know each other reasonably well I thought I would put you in the picture,” Michael said relieved that he had been able to share his predicament with someone.

“Well I’m not sure I am happy you did share all that information with me but take care Michael these people are dangerous and good luck,” “thanks Brian, you take care and I’ll see you when I see you, cheers,” he waited for the click of Brian’s receiver before replacing his, he waited and followed the onscreen instructions before removing his card.

A quick glance at his watch revealed that it was just after two pm, “lets go to The Seahorse, we need to get rid of these two goons somehow but I don’t know if they are going to fall for the same trick again,” he picked up his bags and they crossed over Canon Street and made his way down Friday Street towards The Seahorse. He had not bothered to conceal the call as it was of no consequence if they found out that he had phoned Brian.

The pub was quite busy, the pubs reputation for good affordable quick lunches made it a popular destination for the local office workers, he never recognised anyone from his office. “Hello strangers, how are you,” Mannie greeted them, the blonde barmaid smiled as she carried a cup of coffee across to a table, Mannie’s wife was not about and he assumed that she must be in the kitchen cooking.

“Would you like something?” Michael asked as he turned to Chrisitne, “A glass of orange juice please,” she said. “Make that two please, I’ve just had some coffee and its too early for a beer” Michael said to Mannie as he placed the bags onto the floor and straddled the bar stool. Christine climbed onto the stool next to him and placed

her handbag onto the bar top. "Sure, so how's it going, are you off somewhere,"

Mannie asked "yes we are actually, I don't know if you know but my company is going into receivership and all the field staff have been laid off" Michael explained.

"Yes someone mentioned it the other day, that's a shit one, isn't it you haven't been over here long either have you," Mannie replied.

"No I haven't I hope you don't have a pension with us," Michael added with a chuckle, "no mine is with Norwich I think, I don't know, the accountant does all that crap but hey one of you bloody insurance companies is as bad as the next." He let out an earthy laugh.

"You know that day I helped you guys through the cellar, some bruisers didn't half give me grief wanted to know if you were still here, had a bloody good look around, what's that all about," Mannie asked quizzically.

"Its better that you don't know mate, the less you know the better but thanks a million for that," Michael replied. A man in a luminous yellow vest appeared to Michaels right, "beer delivery mate," he said to Mannie, "okay you know where to go, I'll be down in a moment," Mannie responded.

"Hey Mannie, how do they get the beer into the cellar?" Michael asked, "theres a hoist and a trapdoor to the bay just off the street along that passage that I took you through, there is a removable ceiling which reveals the trapdoor." Mannie replied.

"Shit I never noticed, may I have a look," he asked, "sure follow me," Mannie started to walk to the entrance to the staircase off the bar.

"We'll just finish our juices and then we'll be down in a minute," Michael replied glancing over his shoulder he spotted one of the men who had followed him coming in through the door, Michael waited until the man had disappeared down the stairs to the toilets on the opposite side of the bar.

They were obviously keeping a tight watch on them and Michael suspected that the man had come in to check that they were still in the bar. There were two of them so Michael assumed that because they had been given the slip from here before one would wait outside the pub front door and one outside the office front door but they could not know about the beer delivery entrance to the side.

Michael waited for the man to eventually reappear and he watched him through the mirrors at the back of the bar until he disappeared through the front door out of the pub.

Michael grabbed the bags, "lets go" he said and Christine picked up her laptop bag and quickly walked followed Michael as he went behind the bar and down the steps, the barmaid gave them a quizzical look and then returned to serving a customer coffee.

They bounded down the stairs their hearts thumping in their chest, the cellar door was open and Mannie stood in the middle with a clipboard and pen in his hands.

"So where is the hoist," Michael asked, "over there" Mannie replied pointing down the passage returning his clipboard. "You don't mind if we have a look?" Michael asked, "no, no go on" Mannie did not bother to look up. Michael and Christine went through the door into the passage they had passed through when they had walked from the office to the pub some weeks before.

Two yellow vested Dreyemen were offloading silver kegs of beer, from a sturdy wire cage in the middle of the passage, a long cable was attached to long chains fixed to the four top corners of the hoist, they walked closer and saw the opening with the cable reaching up to an electric hoist above.

"Can that hold a mans weight he asked one of the Dreyemen, "yes it can take fifteen hundred pounds, no problem," the man replied enthusiastically, "can we try it," Michael asked, "well its against health and safety, really," the man said.

"We're mates of Mannie, the owner, don't worry Michael threw the bags into the empty cage and pulled Christine in. "I'll take responsibility," Michael said as he took the mans hand and placed a hundred pounds into it, "have a beer," he said looking up to the other man operating the hoist, Mannie was nowhere to be seen.

"Ready then, stand in the middle of the cage that way it will stay more or less level" the man said holding the cage steady, "okay, lets go," Michael ordered, the dreyman signalled to the man at the top.

The motor emitted a low powerful whirr and they felt it start to move slowly upwards, it started to swing slowly as it approached the square opening of the trapdoor and banged on the side causing it to swing back violently, they held onto the sides their fingers poking dangerously through the sturdy wire frame, Michael clasped the bags tightly between his feet, "hold on tightly" he whispered to Chrstine.

"Are you okay," he heard one of the men below call out, "yes fine, carry on" Michael replied as the cage now moved upwards through the opening, the operator having allowed the cage to swing so that it was square with the trapdoor opening.

Suddenly they were through the opening and the operator pulled the cage to one side on a gantry so that they could step out onto the ground away from the opening.

"Well that was great fun, thanks a lot," Michael said as he took his bags out of the cage and helped Christine onto the concrete loading area.

They were on a raised platform, the delivery truck took up half the space of the large delivery area, Michael walked down the four steps to the road level floor and stepped out onto the pavement.

He paused looking up and down the street getting his bearings, realising he was in Friday street he immediately motioned for Christine to follow him as he crossed over and made his way up towards Canon street furtively looking over his shoulder to see if any of the man waiting outside the entrance to the pub had spotted him. This was a totally different exit point that they would not have thought of, they had foiled them again, he chuckled to himself.

After what seemed an eternity they reached Canon Street, around the bend which obscured them from the entrance to their office and the man who must be waiting in front of the building. They turned the corner walking briskly away from the office and the pub, and crossed the road before scurrying like two scolded cats up Bow lane back towards Cheapside.

Darting between the traffic they crossed the road and hurried to the sanctuary of the bank casting a furtive searching glance over his shoulder to assure himself that they were not being followed, he pushed the double glass doors open standing to the side allowing Christine to go first. They made their way to the customer service desk.

"I'd like to access my safety deposit box please," he said to the pretty black woman who looked up at him, "certainly sir have you got identity and your account number," she asked as she pushed a form across her desk towards him, Michael already had his passport in his hand.

He placed his passport onto the desk and picked up the pen in the pen holder on the desk, he quickly scribbled the number he had memorised, entered his name and signed the form before pushing it back towards her with his passport.

Michael remained standing while she punched up his details on the terminal facing her, after a brief period she stood up, "follow me Mr. Wheeler," she said and Michael picked up his bags and motioned for Christine to follow.

They reached the security entrance and concealing the pad with her body the clerk punched in the code and the door opened, she passed through and held the door open for Michael and Christine.

She ushered them into a cubicle before she disappeared through another door, they waited in silence, Michael knew what to expect having gone through the procedure a few times before, he knew she would eventually return with his safety deposit box. The door opened and the woman appeared a thin metal box in her hands she placed it on the table in front of him, "just press that button when you are finished," she said pointing to a button on the wall before she turned and left the cubicle closing the door behind her.

Michael reached down to his ankle with both hands and removed the key from his ankle he unlocked the box and opened it, he removed all the money, the Zurich account information and the false passport from the box, one final look confirmed that the box was now empty.

He closed the box and locked it replacing the key under his sock and around his ankle the elastic band holding it firmly in place. "Clever, you are becoming a regular little James Bond" remarked Christine as Michael stood up, she watched him unzip one of the holdalls; he took everything out of the holdall and put the money and fake passport in before replacing all the contents on top.

Not wishing to waste too much time he walked across to the button on the wall and pressed it, before walking back to the table and picking up the bags.

The door opened after less than thirty seconds and the woman appeared again, "thank you we're, done," he said as they walked towards her. "If you could just wait one moment while I put your box back in security, I won't be a moment" she said picking up the box and making her way down a passage before disappearing out of sight.

Michael sat down again impatiently and waited, Christine covered his hand with hers, patience,” she whispered. The woman reappeared within a minute and motioned for Michael and Christine to follow her as she led the way, Michael followed, his gaze fixed on her shapely derrière and long legs, he could not help himself as he’s thoughts drifted to having sex with Christine, “God I need a good shag,” he said softly to himself. “Excuse me,” the woman turned around and looked at him surprised as they reached a door she turned to the keypad punched in some numbers. “no nothing just thinking aloud,” Michael replied embarrassed, Christine had heard him and was smiling.

She opened the door and stepped through holding it open for him, “thank you,” he said as they followed her to another door which she opened and held for them to pass through. “Thank you again,” he said still embarrassed as he turned and walked across the banking hall to the exit Christine by his side. “You are a naughty man, Michael Wheeler, Christine said with a wry smile, “but I love you,” she reached up and kissed him on the mouth.

Once on the pavement they paused looking up and down the road before turning left and hurriedly walking away from Cheapside, wanting to get as far away from the pub and the bank as quickly as possible.

They briskly walked in a wide loop until they reached the stairs leading down to Bank station where they dived down the stairs happy to blend into the myriad of people going to and fro about their daily business.

Standing in front of a map of the tube Michael considered their next step, they had to get out of London and needed transport other than public transport, his company car was no longer an option.

Deciding to hire a car they looked up the nearest Avis office, and then made their way out of the station, after a short ride by taxi and brief formalities they were sitting in a white Vauxhall Astra, one point eight heading for the M25 ring road away from London.

The Vauxhall was a sufficiently unobtrusive car which was what Michael wanted, he now needed to find a small hotel where they could organise the next step in their plan and he needed to phone Andre back in South Africa to enlist his services and those of a few of his contacts. The M25 was the normal frenetic nightmare and Michael got off as soon as he could heading along the M20 in the direction of Dover which he felt would give them further options, not too far from Heathrow or Gatwick and close enough to Dover ferry port.

After an hour he turned off in the direction of Ashford, he had seen an hotel sign and as he was now tired of driving, he decided this was as good a place as any, it was only half an hour or so from Dover.

He pulled off the M20 they passed a sign which indicated the International Hotel and pulled into the parking area, "another bloody hotel but it will give us a chance to get organised, come on sweet lips" he said as he eased himself out of the car.

The hotel receptionist insisted on a departure date so Michael gave her two days, after that he would play it by ear, he doubted that they would stay more than one night.

Once ensconced in their room Michael had a shower and changed into his only pair of shorts and a t-shirt before taking a Becks from the mini bar while Christine showered. He sat on the bed and dialled Andre in South Africa, it was five thirty, so he reckoned it was six thirty in Durban.

The phone rang twice and a male guttural Afrikaans accent answered which Michael recognised immediately, "hello Boet," he said, "shit is that you Michael, where are

you?” Michael revelled for a while in the excitement in Andre’s voice and felt good at hearing his old friend.

“I’m still here in the UK, how are things over there?” he asked making light conversation, “Na everything’s great man, Sammy sends her love, is everything alright over there, I read in the paper last week that the company you work for over here is in the shit, how does that effect you that side?” Andre asked.

“Same thing here, they are also going bust but I know why and that’s why I phoned, I need some help, ou boet,” Michael said his voice trembling a bit.

“Hey are you sure everything’s alright, you sound a little off there boetie,” Andre’s voice dropped, the excitement now replaced with concern, they had known each other a long time and although they were not brothers they always called each other boet or boetie which meant brother in Afrikaans.

“Well I need a few favours, I can’t explain over the phone but I need you to get a few of your strong arm boys and to come over here but I mean some really serious boys who know what they are doing, you understand?” Michael said slowly to get the seriousness of what he was asking across.

“Listen boet that’s no problem, they’ll want bread though, is that a problem?” Andre knew that Michael would understand, “On the contrary, boetie that’s no problem at all I have enough money to pay them well, so don’t worry about the bread. “I also need someone to look out for some friends of mine over there,” Michael explained about Christine’s family and that they would need protection.

They spoke a while longer and Michael asked Andre to organise everything, he would sort out the money when they met up and that that he would phone Andre the next day to get an update of how things were going and flight details.

When they eventually finished, Michael leaned back sipping his beer and turned the TV on, his mind was racing as the pictures danced on the screen but he did not register what was showing, he was preoccupied with how to get the money and get away with Christine, in one piece. Christine appeared from the bathroom, her wet hair for once with no towel wrapped around her head. She stopped and stood naked looking at him waiting expectantly, “what he asked?” looking at her knowing she was expecting something from him. “Where’s the towel around the head?” he chuckled, “that’s the point” she replied “there isn’t one for me, “room service will hear about this” she responded in mock anger.

“God I’ve missed you and now seeing you I realise how much,” she said as she bounded across the room and kissed him on the cheek. Quickly she slipped her hand down under the waist band of his shorts and underpants, she grabbed his soft member. She tugged at it, “what are you doing?” he asked looking down, “well that’s a first but it won’t be like that for long,” she whispered and he could feel her warm sweet breath close to his ear.

“You’re mad,” he offered weakly, she pulled the shorts and underpants down and shoved at him to lift himself up so that she could take them off, Michael raised himself up enough for her to pull them down and off in one movement. “Bugger you’re good” he laughed as she knelt down in front of him her head buried in his groin. He could feel the excitement welling up as her wet lips encircled his man hood which was rapidly growing into an erection.

She looked up at him withdrew and stood up before stepping back and flopping backwards onto the bed with her legs open “come here big boy”, she curled her right index finger motioning him to come to her. Michael stood up and in pulled his t shirt over his head. “He knelt down in front of her and moved his muscular arms around

her thighs making her draw her feet up so that he could reach her already hard nipples. He ran his tongue down her right inner thigh crossing quickly over to her left thigh as he passed by her vagina teasing her, he could feel the warmth of her on his cheek. Slowly, deliberately he moved his head back towards her inner thigh millimetres away from the soft lips that beckoned, he could hear her moaning softly as he stopped his tongue licking so close but just inside her left thigh. "Oh please Michael, please," she pleaded her right hand trying to reach down and push his head to the opening that was now trickling with her juices. He gently massaged her breasts just flicking his fingers gently over her nipples. Michael teased her some more with his mouth while she moaned a little louder now and tried to open her legs even wider. Very slowly he moved his head a millimetre at a time his tongue almost at the mouth of her vagina, she was almost wriggling in the agonising pleasure of him being so near yet so far, she wriggled as she tried to manoeuvre so that his tongue would go inside her. He moved his tongue up and flicked over her clitoris, she shivered as she moved his head back doing the same thing from the other side. Slowly he put his lips on her clitoris and hummed softly, "oh my god" she screeched as she pushed hard up towards his mouth her left hand pushing down on his head. Michael hummed louder his lips vibrating more rapidly, he removed his left hand from her right breast and slipped his index and middle fingers in her and felt the hot wetness while he took a breath and continued to hum, his lips firmly on her clitoris. "Oh god, I'm coming, please don't stop she panted her whole body arched up as she felt the electricity like shocks shooting through her body. Michael stood up and slipped himself into her as she arched her body towards him momentarily ridged. They stayed like that for a moment while he allowed her passion to pass before he rhythmically moved his lower body, he could feel her relax and then move with him. They gradually increased the

pace of the rhythm until their bodies stiffened as one and they enjoyed the pains of passion as they shot through their bodies. Michael rolled off Christine and lay next to her his hand squeezing hers as they drew short gasps their chests heaving. "Well you said you needed a shag," Christine commented having almost regained her composure, "I certainly got one, that for sure," he replied as he sat up and reached over to kiss her on the mouth before standing up and making his way to the toilet. When he returned she was standing in front of the mirror brushing her hair, Michael opened the mini bar and took out a bottle of white wine, "care for a drink?" he asked, "that's a good idea" she replied.

There was a double door leading onto a small balcony overlooking the swimming pool at the back of the hotel, Michael walked out onto the balcony the bottle of wine and two glasses in his hands. She opened her holdall and took out a crumpled blouse and underwear and a pair of jeans which she pulled on before walking out onto the balcony. She found him leaning on the railing and gazing dreamily out over the pool. "Want a swim,?" she asked, "you must be joking, its not exactly the weather," he said referring to the light drizzle that had started to fall.

"Oh well, never mind I'm sure there will be plenty of time for that later," he replied matter of fact handing her a glass of wine.

They said nothing as they each took a drink from their glasses, after a few second, she turned and pulled his head towards her with her free hand and kissed him, her tongue gently parting his lips he responded and they were momentarily lost in time as they embraced, all the problems evaporated in a moment as their minds were filled with only each other.

Chapter 5

“Are you hungry?” “yes” she replied. “Okay lets go downstairs and see what they have to offer, is there anything in particular you fancy?” he asked. “No not really,” she replied as they left the room and walked down the passage. The dinning room was the usual hotel style room they passed a self serve island in the middle as they were shown to their table. They ordered wine and looked through the menu, “I don’t really know what I feel like to be honest,” Michael commented. “Was there anything that caught your fancy on that self serve thing?” she asked. “Lets go and have a look, they stood up and made their way to the wooden clad stainless steel island heaving under the wait of the variety of fare on display. Deciding to choose from the island they took a plate each and selected their food. “You are hungry you little minx, will that be enough for you?” he asked looking at her heaped plate. “Yes I am in need of sustenance now that I have had some exercise and then I think I will go to sleep, if that all right,” she replied with a teasing chuckle. “Yes I am also tired, what with all the excitement of rescuing you and then being ravaged, I’m bloody exhausted.” Michael explained that he had arranged for Andre to meet them in Zurich and that he was organising for Christine’s family to be looked after until this whole thing was over.

After their meal they went back to their room and went to bed, they curled up together, his left hand cupped on her breast as he lay tightly behind her and within minutes they were both blissfully asleep. Michael rose early and got the telephone number of The Swissotel in Zurich from enquiries, he had booked four rooms for one night.

When Christine awoke, Michael was on the phone, “Ja okay boet thanks a lot hey I’ll see you in Zurich then.”

“Hello, sleepy head, how are we this morning” he said replacing the receiver. “I don’t know yet, I’m still dopey” she replied groggily, “who were you talking to?” she asked.

“Andre, I’ll explain all when you are up and about and we are downstairs having breakfast, I am bloody hungry again and if you move your shapely arse we can just make breakfast,” Michael reached down and pulled the duvet off the bed.

“OHHH I’d love some more of that” he said looking at her as she lay naked in front of him. “Not on an empty stomach,” she replied as she swung her legs out of the bed and sat up.

“Right give me five minutes and I will be ready” she said as she moved towards the bathroom.

True to her word she was ready in five minutes and they were in the dining room well before the ten o clock close.

“So what’s the plan?” she asked as they waited for their breakfast of two mushroom omelettes to arrive.

“Well I have some reinforcements coming, my friend Andre and two of his buddies will be arriving at Heathrow and then making their way to Zurich where we will meet them” he explained. “Zurich again?” she asked quizzically. “I don’t know how these Swiss banks work, I believe that they are secure but that is where the money is and I think we should move it in case there is a way for them to get to it “We could move it electronically, which would be safer, as I am sure they have people in Zurich waiting for us to show up.” she replied. Their food arrived, “two coffees please,” Michael said to the waiter.

“We can’t,” Michael said emphatically, “why ever not?” asked Christine, “I specifically asked for there to be no access electronically. The only electronic transaction that can be made is to move money in like any bank account but to take anything out has to be done personally, suffice it to say that we have to go to Zurich” Michael replied reluctant to tell Christine everything until he was two hundred percent sure of her.

“Okay, tell me the plan then?” she asked, “okay, well Andre and two of his chaps are coming over and they will meet us in Zurich. The two chaps are ex marines, they call them Rekkies in South Africa, most of these chaps are trained here in England by the SAS. They were originally in the South African army but now do contract work all over the world, I don’t know too much detail but lets put it this way they know how to take care of themselves. So the way I see it a lot of the money is made up of false names but because they have been laundering the money using these false names, innocent policyholders have suffered by the poor investment performance. The performance in fact has not been poor but the money that the fund has made has had to cover the cost of the commissions and early redemption of these false policies. You have the list of all the real policy holders who have lost out through the money laundering?” Michael asked. “ I have a list of all the real policyholders and the false ones as well, that is why they are so keen to get the money and the lists, I told Andrew that you had the lists meanwhile it was on my laptop in the hotel all the time” she explained. “You little minx, so that is why I was having my luggage and rooms searched, thanks for that,”do you know what the total amount is to compensate them?” Michael paused. “Well I had to buy time trying to find a way to get away, its around eighty million” if my memory serves me correctly” Christine replied. “So that

means we are making off with about twenty million of these thieving swine's laundered money, that will hurt them," he chuckled as he put down his knife and fork. "So less expenses we will have enough to compensate us for all the trouble they have caused and the wronged policy holders get their money, the only ones unhappy are the scum" Michael felt elated as he stood up from the table. "Lets go and pack and make our way to Dover and I will explain the plan in detail on the way. You go and pack, I'll pay the bill and then come up," Michael made his way to reception while Christine waited for a lift. The bill paid Michael went to a telephone cubicle at the far end of the foyer where he hastily retrieved the Zurich bank telephone and bank account number. He arranged with the bank to have fifteen million pounds ready in cash at three o'clock in two days time.

By the time he got to the room Christine had packed, "all done then" he asked "yes" she replied, "okay lets go, but first we need one more item" he said as he opened the drawer next to the bed and took out the local telephone directory. He unzipped his holdall and stuffed the book inside and zipped the bag closed, "okay now we can go" he said taking the case and bag while she carried her laptop bag, looking puzzled but saying nothing. Michael let Christine drive, "once we get to Calais we make our way over land to Zurich, we meet the boys and then go to the bank where we withdraw fifteen million. We'll rent one of those virtual offices, hire two or three temps to do letters to all the policyholders you have on your laptop, we can then follow up with electronic transfers to all those policy holder accounts that you have, I'm sure I can arrange with the bank, they will do that for a fee. We take the fifteen million give the boys a million to split between them and bugger off, so that leaves five million in the Swiss bank, we spread the rest around different banks throughout the world, and have

a lovely life together, how does that sound, so far?" he looked at her waiting for her reaction.

"Okay I guess but we are going to be spotted and they are not going to let us just walk off with the money," she replied sceptically. "Quite right, but they will only really be interested in us when we come out of the bank now and they will looking to get the lists at the same time. So we have three or four bags each filled with the money that makes it more difficult for them to get because they now have to catch all of us to get all the money. We make a floppy disk of false names and addresses from the directory in the bag. You me and Andre go one way and the other chaps go the other way and we all meet up at a rendezvous point later" Michael continued, not giving her the full plan, in case he was wrong about her.

"Okay I suppose if you have all the finer detail worked out, I just want this over as soon as possible" Christine replied, her eyes focused on the road ahead. They finally arrived in Dover and went round the numerous roundabouts until they reached the terminal. Michael allowed his eyes to sweep around the car park as he waited for Christine not willing to leave the car and its contents unattended, he told her to be careful and had parked close enough to see her enter the terminal. The trip across the channel was uneventful and Michael had not noticed anyone suspicious, on arrival in Calais they immediately made their way down to Lille then on to Brussels and through to Strasbourg where they decided to stay the night.

Michael knew that he had to meet Andre in Zurich and they had arranged not to meet at the airport as Michael was sure that they would have someone watching for him and Christine.

He arranged to meet Andre at The Swissotel right in the middle of the city because it had its own car park and was close to everything.

Michael had arranged to leave the mobile phone at reception in a padded envelope with his number so that Andre could phone him when they had all booked in rather than use the internal phone and have to ask what Michaels room number was, this way there was no obvious connection between them. There was a shuttle bus to the airport so Andre and the boys would not even need a taxi.

They were up early and they drove the last hundred kilometres to Zurich in forty five minutes. Michael headed straight to the tall glass building and parked the car, it was ten thirty too early to check in but Michael needed to get two pay as you go chips for the phones using the Swiss network. They decided to leave their luggage in the boot of the car for the time being.

They made their way on foot to The Zurich shopping and exhibition centre which they had passed when they arrived.

They found a phone shop and Michael arranged the two Swisscom Mobile pay as you go packages which the assistant installed and setup.

They decided to go and have some coffee while they waited to book into the hotel, Michael did not want to wander around too much in case they were spotted although he did not expect them to be waiting on every street corner.

They chatted while they had coffee after which they went into a stationery shop where Michael bought an A4 size padded envelope.

They slowly made their way back to the car and removed their luggage before walking the short distance to the hotel.

The light wood panelled reception highlighted the fact that the hotel aimed itself at travelling businessmen; the receptionist pointed out that booking in was normally from three pm but on checking she found a double room that had not been used the night before.

Michael and Christine took the lift to the fifth floor and walked the short distance to room five twenty.

The room was a standard double room although the bed was an enormous king size, “look at the size of that bed” exclaimed Christine, who promptly dived onto the bed, “its enormous, I’ll never find you in the dark, I’ll have to search with my hands for your hammer” she chuckled. “Naughty girl, you have a one track mind” Michael said as he put down the bags and took the envelope out of the packet. “You love it, Mr prude” came the response, as Christine got off the bed and went to the toilet. “you’re right I do.” Michael quickly pulled one of his hairs from his head and licked it before placing it carefully across the receiver and the body of the phone. Michael took the phones out of his pockets and carefully wrote the numbers down on two separate pieces of hotel stationery which he found on the desk/table in the room, carefully he tore the address part off so that there was no evidence of the hotel.

He placed one piece with the phone numbers of the two phones carefully into his wallet and the other he placed in the envelope with one of the phones.

Andre De Lange he wrote on the envelope before sealing it, “right now I am going to take this down to reception and ask them to give it to Andre when he books in, don’t go anywhere” Michael stood up and walked towards the door. Christine emerged from the bathroom and gave him a kiss on the mouth as he passed her on the way to the door. “Don’t be long” she said picking up the remote for the television.

Michael strode quickly to the stairwell not content to wait for a lift; he bounded down the stairs and opened the door at the reception floor, he stood for a moment watching the receptionist waiting for her to turn round. Noting that she was not the one when he arrived he quickly made his way to the reception desk.

“Hello” smiled the receptionist, “Hi can I leave this envelope for this gentleman, he is booked in and should be arriving later today?” the receptionist took the envelope and punched some details into the computer, after a brief wait she said “Ah yes Mr De Lange is booked in okay no problem, I will see that he gets it on his arrival.” “Thank you” Michael turned and walked towards the entrance and through the doors out into the sunlight and the street. He walked a short distance and stopped looking right and left and then crossed over the road walking back towards the hotel. He crossed the road again and walked through the doors and turned immediately towards the lifts. The receptionist he had just spoken to was busy attending to a new guest and he quickly climbed into the open lift and pressed the fifth floor button.

He knocked on the door, “room service” he said in a guttural voice, attempting a Swiss accent but knowing he sounded nothing like them, after a moment the door opened, “got ya” Michael said as he pushed through the door and lifted her off her feet and after four strides he threw her onto the bed. They kissed him laying on top of her the television with a news report in Swiss in the background. The telephone suddenly burst into life, momentarily startled they stared at each other in silence, Michael looked at his wrist watch, “it could be Andre, it can’t be anyone else” Michael rolled off Christine and swung his legs to the floor.

He could see the hair he had placed there earlier and it was still attached to the handset and body of the phone. “Aren’t you going to answer it” he heard Christine say relieved that she had not attempted to phone anyone, he reached over and lifted the receiver. “Hello boet, hoe gaan dit?” he heard the guttural Afrikaans voice on the other end and relief flooded his body. “Bloody hell I didn’t expect you so soon, I have only just left the parcel down there for you welcome to Zurich, boet” he said his voice slightly croaky. “You okay” Andre asked, “yes, yes we are fine just wasn’t expecting

you quite yet,” “We arrived about fifteen minutes early and the shuttle was already there so we jumped on and here we are, we are in our rooms and I am using the mobile as you said, so what happens now, the boys are waiting for instructions.”

“Well let’s meet here in our room you organise the boys but arrive at say one minute intervals” Michael suggested. “Okay, I’ll sort that out now, hope you two are decent you randy old fucker you, see you in a minute” the phone went dead and Michael replaced the receiver.

“Okay the show is on the road, they will be here shortly,” Michael stood up and went to the bathroom, “I’m getting some water do you want some?” he asked. “No thank you I’m fine,” Christine replied as she stood up and opened her suitcase, retrieving a hair brush she proceeded to brush her hair. Michael returned with a tumbler full of water which he placed on the table near the window. “I’m looking forward to meeting these friends of yours, I’d better unpack” Christine started to remove clothes from the case and walked to the cupboard near the door, the door bell rang, “that was quick” she remarked. “These boys don’t mess around” Michael responded. “Obviously not” Christine placed the clothes she was carrying onto a shelf and turned to open the door, she was greeted by a large blonde ruggedly handsome giant, of a man, dressed in a pair of dark trousers and a burgundy short sleeved shirt with a modest Pringle motif emblazoned across the top of the pocket who bent down and lifted her with one of his huge muscled arms and carried her into the room, allowing the door to close behind them on its spring. “You must be the lovely Christine, he has been going on about?” his guttural English was familiar to Christine, she received his kiss on the lips. “Yes and you are obviously Andre” she replied as he bent forward and lowered her to the floor. “Juslike boet she is only a little thing, and you, you old bugger, good to see you, have you got a bit fat” Andre said as he bear hugged Michael both patting each other

on the back. "Fuck off rocky" Michael replied "this is all pure muscle." "I vouch for that" Christine said as she took another handful of clothes to the cupboard where she busied herself again. There was a brisk rat tat tat on the door, "this one prefers knocking" she said as she reached for the handle and opened the door. She was greeted by a slightly smaller man about Michaels height with mousy curly hair and freckles about 30 years of age, he was dressed in blue jeans and a white t shirt, obviously very fit, the muscles in his arms straining the sleeves of the shirt "hello, I'm looking for Michael or Andre" he said almost embarrassed his accent even more guttural than Andre's. "Hmm I don't know anyone by that name" Christine teased seeing the immediate confusion in his face as he looked at the number on the half opened door. "I'm only playing" she said as she flung the door wider revealing the two men inside. "Juslike lady, you scared me there for a minute" he responded relieved to see Andre and Michael. "I'm Johan" he put out a huge meaty hand which Christine took, "Christine" she responded feeling her hand engulfed in a hand obviously used to hard work, she felt him gently squeeze her hand and then release it almost as though he was scared of the small fragile thing he was holding. He walked into the room and shook Michaels hand as Andre introduced him, Christine pushed the door closed and turned back to the cupboard and the clothes.

Within a few moments the door bell rang, Christine was intrigued to know what she would be confronted with this time, she opened the door and was greeted by a dark haired baby face which belied his years which she guessed at around twenty five, still about six feet tall and his black t shirt and jeans certainly struggled to conceal the rippling muscle of a fit young man.

“Hello, I’m Justin, is Andre or Michael here” he said politely his accent lacked any of the other two’s guttural pronunciation and Christine guessed that he must originally be from Natal.

“Hello, come in” Christine opened the door fully and ushered him in closing the door as she followed him into the room, Andre did the necessary introductions and they all found a place to sit in the now crowded room.

Michael remained standing his back to the window, “right I am not ordering any drinks chaps because I do not want to draw any attention to us, the people we are involved with are ruthless and will stop at nothing to get what we have got which is a list of names and some money.” “Briefly I think it is Mafia money, I may be wrong, which has been laundered through the Life assurance company I work for or worked for which has now gone into receivership.” We plan to distribute the majority of the money back to the policyholders who would otherwise lose out and the balance, well that’s for expenses and inconvenience” There was a chuckle from the three newcomers. “Lets sort out the money first, I will give Andre one million pounds, after we have completed the job, to divide among you as he sees fit, that’s a tidy sum in Rands.” “There was a mutual sucking in of air from the three big men, whew, I’ll say” responded Justin smiling. “Right that’s payment sorted out, now we need to take some cash from our bank here in Zurich. Its called La Rochelle and Cie Banquiers, which is just up the road about one hundred and fifty yards, and get it out of the country and into other banks in a variety of other countries without the baddies getting their hands on any of it and this is where you chaps come in.” “Andre will go into the bank first with a briefcase dressed smartly looking like any one of hundreds of businessmen who do banking everyday. He will wait, there is a couch and some chairs to the right as you go in, Christine and I will go in a few minutes later with a holdall

bag, which will be filled with newspaper. We will take the briefcase and fill it with money, in the meantime Justin will come in casual clothes with a holdall, looking totally disconnected from Andre, make sure yours is green, blue or black so that it is different to ours and we will take that and fill it with money. At this time Andre will leave the bank and come back to the hotel, hide the money in the wardrobe of his room and come back to the bank but wait across the road. Then Johan will come into the bank with a small haversack on his back and we will fill that with money, at this time Justin leaves and comes back to the hotel and does the same as Andre then picks up the hire car from the parking garage and drives round to the bank and finds a spot to wait to pick up Andre. The same with Johan when his bag is filled he goes back to the hotel but does not come back, now this should take no longer than ten minutes at the most, Christine or me will be waiting for you in the foyer, we'll take your bag and fill it with the money, once filled we return it to you and off you go. We will wait until Andre phones to say he is in position, once I hear from Andre we will come out of the bank with our bag full of newspapers, we will then take a taxi to the airport, hopefully by this stage you will have identified who is following us. Justin will pick up Andre and follow us to the airport, just in case, follow discreetly. Johan will retrieve all the bags with the money, so make sure he has a key to your room, take it down to the car. Johan then drives off to Andorra, its quite a way, don't speed take it easy, there is a map in the car. You book into the hotel Comabella and wait for us all to arrive and don't let the cash out of your sight. Andre and Justin follow us in the other hire car to the airport, somewhere on the way I expect them to make their move. It may be just outside the bank, I don't expect them to let us get too far. "Hopefully it will be a case of grabbing the bag and making off without checking it, they will somehow try to get the lists from us but we will leave a disk in the bag which will

hopefully be enough to give us time to get away. That's where Andre and Justin come in, if it happens before we get a taxi then you pick us up and we get the hell out of Zurich. It's risky but it's the best I can come up with at this time, so be alert for any slight change of plan.

The bank is not far away so you need to know how long it will take to get there and back from here and exactly where it is. Any questions?" Michael asked, "yes, where are the bags" asked Andre, "okay you each need to go out and buy a bag independently and make sure all your bags are different. You brought a jacket and tie as we discussed, I presume," Michael asked Andre. "Ja, no problem, and when are we going to do this?" Andre asked as he stood up, stretching his huge frame. "I've arranged with the bank to collect the money at three o'clock this afternoon" Michael answered.

"Fuck me, that's earlier than I thought, okay then we better get off our arses, let's go to the bank individually so that we know where it is, once out of this room we don't know each other, on the way back buy the type of bag you are supposed to be using." Andre issued orders to Justin and Johan as they all made their way to the door. "Right we all meet back here at, say two o'clock" Michael said looking at his watch, first to leave was Johan, then Justin a minute later. "Michael, may I have a word please, Christine you wouldn't mind powdering your nose would you?" Andre asked politely holding the bathroom door open. Christine obediently stepped into the room and closed the door behind her, Andre had switched the television on and had moved to the window, the farthest point from the bathroom, Michael stood in front of him and Andre moved closer his lips at Michael's ear, he spoke softly. "I just want you to know that I was met at the airport by one of my contacts who has given me, Justin and Johan a gun each and a few extra clips, as well as a couple of grenades, I just wanted

to tell you” Michael moved his head so that he was facing Andre. “Okay I trust you, you know how to handle any situation that arises, only use them if you are absolutely forced to, I want to try and get away cleanly, death and mayhem is not in my plan” Michael said. “By the way Andre there will be an envelope for you at reception, don’t take it, it is the money to pay our hotel bills, I will phone them later and let them know. “Okay boet see you later” Andre said as he made his way to the door. Michael opened the bathroom door, “it’s okay, sorry about that, he is just very cautious,” “its okay” Christine responded. Michael put his arms around her and they hugged, “right lets go buy a bag and hire another car” Michael said releasing her from his grasp. They left the room and made their way down the stairwell to reception, Michael put the room key in his pocket and held Christine’s hand from now on he was not letting her out of his sight. They were back in the hotel room by quarter to two with a red holdall which Michael thought would stand out so that Marchant’s men couldn’t miss him. Christine quickly started to enter names, addresses and telephone numbers at random jumping from one letter of the alphabet to the other in the telephone directory. They all assembled as arranged the three men arriving at one minute intervals as before and after a brief check that everything was as arranged they left at one minute intervals.

Michael and Christine were the last to leave, “well here we go then” she remarked as she handed Michael the disk and put her laptop in its bag, Michael closed the bedroom door and they made their way down the stairwell with their luggage to the parking garage where Michael opened the car with the spare key and put their luggage in the boot. They walked back up the stairs to reception and made their way to the receptionist.

Michael had filled one of the hotels envelopes with enough cash to pay for all the rooms, “hello, I’d like to leave this envelope for Mr. DeLange in room four twenty. “Certainly sir, no problem,” the attractive receptionist smiled and took the envelope and placed it in a pigeon hole behind her which was marked 420.

Michael and Christine strode purposefully out of the front doors; he would phone them tomorrow and tell them to take the money in the envelope for the rooms. They meandered through the city eventually getting to the bank at ten to three, Michael scoured the area for any suspicious looking characters, he could not see any but knew that they must be there somewhere. It didn’t matter now if they followed him as long as they did not see him with Andre and the other two, which was unlikely.

They entered the bank and made their way past the two couches that Michael remembered, Christine went to sit on one of the couches while Michael went to reception, where he told a different woman to his last visit who he was. She indicated for Michael to take a seat while she picked up the telephone and spoke briefly before replacing the receiver. A few minutes passed before the telephone rang, she spoke briefly and then stood up, Michael and Christine remained seated as the woman walked over to them. “Please can you follow me,” she said in her Germanic accent, Michael and Christine stood up as Andre came through the doors carrying his wide briefcase, the sort used by salesman to carry samples. Michael waited for Andre who handed him the case, “take a seat over there, Christine will bring the case back” he said indicating to the leather couches.

He took the case and walked briskly after the woman and Christine who had both stopped, “sorry about that, he said as he caught up to them. They went through a door and entered another room with a table in the centre and two doors next to each other

on the wall opposite to where they had just entered, “wait here please” she said before disappearing through the door to the right. They stood in the middle of the room the case on top of the table, “nice size case” Christine said, “it is rather Andre has excelled, I must admit I would not have thought of one of these. The door which she left through opened and a tall well built man dressed in a white shirt, tie and black trousers, one of their security men Michael thought, came through the door pushing a trolley with a large metal box on top, the woman held the door open until he had passed through, they both made their way to where Michael and Christine were standing. The man unlocked the one lock and the woman the other before opening the lid of the box revealing neatly packed rows of twenty pound notes. “Please can you sign here” the woman said as she placed a sheet of paper on the table in front of Michael. Michael read the contents; it stated the account number, the date and the amount of fifteen million in numbers and words. He signed in the appropriate place and handed the paper to the lady, the man withdrew and stood in front of the door he had come through, the woman disappeared through the other door. Michael removed a pile of the money and placed it into the case; he filled the case and closed it the clasps clicking loudly in the room. “Okay I’ll take this out to Andre, its quite heavy thank god he is a strong ox” he said as he picked up the case leaving Christine to watch over the remaining money. Michael opened the door and walked across to Andre, Justin was sitting on the couch not inhabited by Andre who stood up and walked across to Michael” it’s heavy but not too heavy for you, off you go, see you later” Andre took the case as Michael motioned to Justin who was on his feet and strode across the floor quickly, Michael took the black bag and disappeared through the door. Christine stood next to the table, “right now this one” Michael said as he quickly filled the bag, once satisfied that he could get no more in he zipped the bag

closed and hurried to the door. Justin walked across briskly, took the bag and walked toward the front door just as Johan entered with his rucksack over his shoulder, another elderly man and woman had entered the foyer and were at one of the tellers apart from them, Michael and Justin the foyer was empty. Justin walked straight up to Michael who took the bag and went back to Christine at the table. He emptied the remaining money into the rucksack and zipped it closed, "thank you" he said to the man standing at the door who now stepped forward as Michael and Christine turned to the door to the foyer. Once in the foyer Michael handed the bag to Johan who took it and walked casually to the open front door. Michael and Christine walked across the foyer and sat down on one of the couches, Michael placed the red holdall at his feet, the elderly couple were still at the teller. "Okay so now we wait for Andre to phone us" Michael checked to see if his mobile was on, it was on but on vibrate, he wanted to be as quiet as possible. Five minutes passed before the telephone started to vibrate, Michael pressed the green button and listened, "I'm back, I see two men standing one to the left and one to the right of the doors about twenty five metres from the entrance, there is also a black Peugeot parked about fifty metres to the right with two men sitting in it, which was there when we came in. If you turn right as you come out of the doorway you will walk towards me and that is where the taxi's are and Justin is parked about twenty yards from the door to the right. "Okay" Michael said as he pressed the red button and kept the phone in his hand. "Right, lets go, we are going to go right, once we get outside and then just walk naturally towards the taxi's" he picked up the large red holdall and took Christine by the arm with her on his right, the bag over his left shoulder and nodded to the receptionist. He was shaking and he could feel Christine shaking as well as they walked towards the door, it seemed to take forever but suddenly they were on the pavement and they turned right. Michael

did not see where the men were as they walked briskly in the direction Andre had indicated, they could see the taxi's, they could see them getting closer as they walked without saying a word. He saw the black Peugeot and instantly recognised Marchant sitting in the passenger seat, he could not make out the driver at first but then saw the scowl of Ulliano sitting behind the wheel, his hands resting on top, the sun glinting on that distinctive gold ring on his right ring finger. Michael could hear footsteps behind them but did not turn around; ten metres and they would be at the taxi. Michael reached the door and pulled it open, "get in quick," he said just as he heard a bang which reverberated against the buildings, Christine was in, he dropped the bag on the ground and jumped in and pulled the door closed, there was another bang followed by two more "the airport please and hurry. The driver looked startled but his English was good enough to understand, he started the engine and Michael felt the car surge forward just as one of the men drew level with the rear of the car. Michael turned around and watched as the man bent down and picked up the red bag and unzipped it, the taxi turned left and Michael lost sight of the man. "Well was a bit hairy but it seems to have gone well" he said to Christine who was slumped against the opposite door. "Christine, Christine, oh no, no Michael pleaded as he reached across to the dark red patch on her head he felt the blood trickling from her head down her neck her shoulder now covered in blood. Her eyes were closed and he did not know if she was dead or not. "The nearest hospital please quickly" he barked at the driver the driver changed direction and hurtled down a busy road, "oh god, please don't let her be dead" Michael implored aloud. It was only a few minutes before they pulled up in front of a hospital, the driver jumped out and ran into the hospital appearing almost immediately with two white coated men and a white stretcher on wheels. Michael sat next to Christine, "it's too late, he kept saying as Andre and Justin pulled up behind

them. Andre quickly opened the door on Chirstine's side catching her as she almost fell out of the taxi. Justin had opened Michael's door and dragged him out of the taxi and almost frog marched him to support his legs in the direction of the hire car where he opened the rear door and pushed him inside. "Shit" said Andre as he helped the orderly's to place Christine's limp and bloody body onto the stretcher, "go, go" he shouted. The orderlies rushed the stretcher and the body through the glass doors, Andre hurried across to the taxi driver and pulled a wad of money from his wallet thrusting it into the stunned mans' hand, before almost running to the hire car, he opened the opposite rear door and slid into the seat next to a stunned Michael. "Let's go," he barked at Justin, get us out of this city; he reached for the map rammed between the passenger seat and the centre consul. Michael sat motionless in shock Andre quickly scanned the map, "here go off here and head for Lyon from there we will go down to Andorra, just drive normally, we don't want to be stopped. We need to think, what to do next, I don't know if she is dead or not. Andre stared through the rear window searching for any sign that they were being followed, he turned to Michael and noticed the tears running down his cheeks, "you'll be okay boetie, we've been here before" he said quietly and sank back into the seat as he watched the outskirts of Zurich slip past the window. "We have a tail," said Justin calmly, Andre immediately sat up and turned around, "yes it's the Peugeot, I know I hit one of those guys, I saw him go down but I don't know if I killed him," Andre replied. "We need to get them somewhere quiet, we need to get off this road once we are completely out of the city and lure them to some quiet spot. The city outskirts quickly receded and they were soon in open countryside, the traffic now no more than the occasional car. The Peugeot maintained a steady hundred metre distance. "Turn right over there" Andre indicated pointing through the front windscreen at a narrow dirt track which

disappeared into thick trees. They swerved off and swayed for a few metres just missing trees on either side before Justin brought the car back under control. The sudden movement making Michael steady himself as he snapped out of his shocked state. "What's going on?" he asked, "take the left hand track" Andre barked as they reached a fork, "you stay with Justin no matter what boet" Andre looked out of the rear window but could not see the Peugeot, "slow down just enough for me to get out and keep going then stop about a hundred metres from me." Andre already had the door open, Michael sat and watched as his friend held the door open, the car lurching from side to side. "Now," Andre flung the door fully open and rolled out hitting the soft earth and rolling some distance. Justin saw him get to his feet and disappear to the right hand side of the road; he gauged the distance to be about a hundred metres and stopped. He turned the car around just in time to see the Peugeot come into view, they could just make out Andre's head as he crouched in a ditch, he tossed something into the middle of the track in the path of the oncoming car and disappeared out of sight and a few seconds later there was a flash of fire, the sound reaching Justin with a deafening boom moments after the flash. The car slewed across the track the left hand wheel had vanished and the drivers side of the car was partly missing. There was a dull thud as the car careered into a tree before flipping over rolling twice before coming to rest on the passenger side, the front pointing in between trees only the boot remained on the track. Andre was sprinting up the track and was almost at the car, he was waving to Justin to come to him. Justin put his foot down and raced to the car, he pulled up the hand brake at the same time depressing the foot brake allowing the car to skid to a halt. He leapt out of the car and in one movement a gun suddenly appeared in his hand, he stood next to Astra his hands raised, pointing the gun in the direction of the Peugeot. Michael opened the door and stepped out of the car his legs a

little shaky but he steeled himself as he stood behind the open driver's door. They watched Andre haul himself onto the side of the car looking down; Andre saw that the driver was dead; half his upper body seemed to have been ripped apart by the blast. The passenger was hanging to his left still strapped in his seat belt, the man at the back moved, Andre raised his gun and fired twice the man lurched and then lay motionless. Michael winced at the sound of the bullets, he was not made of the same stuff as these chaps but he was glad that he had arranged for them to be with him. The portly man in the passenger seat lay motionless, Andre reached down and felt the side of his exposed neck, he could feel a pulse, he stood up and pointed the gun at the mans head and fired twice the man's body shook as the bullets penetrated his skull the side of his head turning red. Andre leapt down from the car, "let's go," he shouted, "let me see if I recognise any of them," Michael said as he stepped out from behind the door passing Justin who slid into the driver's seat. "Okay boet but be quick" Andre said, Michael hauled himself up onto the side of the car and peered in, the sight making him want to vomit as he knelt on the car door and peered closer at the gory sight of the bodies inside. Satisfied he stood up and jumped to the ground and walked quickly to the car, Andre had climbed into the passenger seat; Michael climbed into the seat behind Andre and closed the door as Justin gunned the engine and they lurched forward. "Let's go back to the hospital, we must see if Christine is alright or not," Michael said taking charge. "Like old times hey," Justin said to Andre, "yes but it gives me no pleasure, especially that cold blooded way, thank god this is the last time" Andre replied. "Well we will be able to retire now anyway, that's a lot of money in South Africa, I'll probably buy myself a little restaurant come bar on the garden route" Justin said as they reached the tarred road and he went back in the direction they had come.

“Sounds good boys, I recognise that bastard Marchant and I think the driver was Ulliano, the suit he was wearing was Armani and that distinctive ring on his right ring finger I positive that was him, the guy at the back I don’t recognise but he was probably one of the men who was waiting outside the bank” Michael said almost relieved his words ringing in his ears, hoping he was right. Justin took them straight to the hospital and parked as far away from the entrance as possible in case someone recognised the car. “You wait here, they never saw me, so I should be okay,” Michael got out of the car and closed the door. He walked through the casualty doors and found himself in large room, with two stretchers on wheels against the wall and a wheel chair all in a row. The hospital smell hit him and memories of Theresa flooded back, he wiped the wetness from his eyes and tried to clear his mind. There was a counter with a large lady standing behind it, two nurses busied themselves behind her, there were a few chairs in a row against a wall, two people were sitting chatting, they looked up as he passed them on his way to the counter. “Excuse me, do you speak English,” he asked politely, “yes” came the unexpected polite response, in a Swedish accent. “A woman was brought in a little while ago with a head wound can you tell me if she is alright?” he asked, “you are a relative of this woman?” she responded, “her brother,” Michael lied. “Do you know what happened?” the woman stared at his eyes, “no a friend who she works with just phoned me to say she had been involved in an accident so I came down” Michael replied. “Ah so where does she work,” Michaels mind raced, “at the Swissotel, she is an accountant there” he hoped that she bought the lie. The woman looked down and scribbled something down on a piece of paper, “what is her name?” the woman looked up at him, “Alison Bently” Michael said the first thing that came into his head. “Look is she alright, can I see her?” Michael implored the woman his hands firmly grasping the top of the counter. “Yes

she probably has a headache but we notified the police and we are waiting for them to come,” the woman scribbled something else down on the paper. “The police, why was it a motor vehicle accident, what?” Michael tried to sound convincing. “We think her injury looks like a gunshot wound which fortunately for her grazed her head but it will leave a nasty scar. “Gunshot wound, what here in Zurich, surely not,” Michael said incredulously, elated that she was still alive. “Can I see her, please?” he leaned on the counter imploring her. “Yes, go through that door,” she said pointing in the opposite direction to which Michael had entered the building, “turn right and it is the second door on the left.” “Once the police arrive we will bring them through and when they have finished questioning her she should be free to go, if they say so.” “Thank you” Michael said as he hurried to the doors she had indicated and burst through almost flattening a nurse coming the other way. “So sorry,” he blurted out to the attractive woman who glared at him as he held the doors open for her before hurrying down the corridor. He opened the second door slowly and peered into the slightly darkened room, he could see Christine lying on top of the bed, the top of her head and down the left hand side of her face to under her chin swathed in white bandages, her eyes were closed. He stepped into the room and was quickly at her bedside, she opened her eyes and looked up, “hello you” she mouthed and he bent down and kissed her gently on her lips. “Thank god you are alive,” he said clutching her hand, we have to get out of here as fast as possible, are you able to walk?” he asked. “I think so but I am still a bit woozy” she started to sit up and Michael supported her back. “Oooo just give me a moment,” she swung her legs slowly to the side allowing them to hang over just short of the floor. “Gently now” Michael said and he held her arm, as she wriggled off the bed and onto the floor. “My shoes are here somewhere” she said looking down, “yep got them,” he knelt down and held her

shoes as she slipped her narrow little feet into them. "Okay let me just phone Andre quickly," Michael pulled the phone from his trouser pocket and dialled. "Hello, he heard the familiar voice," listen boet bring the car to the double doors and I am going to need you to help me, so come in past the reception counter and through the double doors, we are in the room second on the left." "So she is okay then" Andre sounded as relieved as he felt, "yes, yes but a bit groggy, we need to get her past the reception as quickly as possible, now get your arse in here," he pressed the off button and put the phone back in his pocket. Michael helped Christine to the door told her to lean against the wall to the side, while they waited. Michael kept peering round the door when at last he saw Andre coming through the double doors waved to him. "Okay here he comes" he whispered as he helped Christine to stand upright, "howzit doll, don't you look like shit" Andre said quietly as he stood in the doorway. "Thank you very much, shit I'm afraid, but I'll live" Christine tried to make light of her pounding head. "Okay you hold that side and I'll take this side once we get to the double doors we can lock our hands, my right your left so that she can sit on them and we can hold her round the back to support her, my left your right locked, like a chair, she's only a little thing anyway", Michael added the extra bit to get her to smile. "Sure boet no problem," they were at the double doors and stooped down and locked their hands and Christine sank thankfully as they lifted her and pushed the double doors with their feet. No one took any notice at first until they were past the reception desk, the woman looked up and muttered something in Swedish as she stood up, Michael and Andre were almost running now as they moved quickly down the passage and burst through the double doors and then the few metres to where Justin sat waiting the engine running. They put Christine down and opened the rear door and she almost fell

in, Michael slid in next to her and Andre closed the door, wrenching open the passenger door just as the large woman burst through the doors gesticulating wildly. Justin floored the accelerator and the car sped away just as the woman arrived, Michael looked back and waved. "Right lets get the hell out of here and to Andora!" Michael said aloud as he sank back into the seat Christine's hand in his as he watched the city rapidly flash past, relieved that the nightmare was finally over.