

Tangled Moon



by

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Part One

Reflections of Hell

Chapter One

The end titles rolled across the screen, but only one name leapt out at Stephen Somerville. This was the man who had just brought about the end to existence. No nuclear explosions or manmade viruses. Just a mathematical equation which proved the world and everything on it weren't real. The Cosmic Hologram Theory had been proved; damnation for everyone thought Stephen still staring at the screen. Key phrases flashed through his mind, words and numbers that should have meant nothing to him, did result in nothing. All those numbers and symbols meant nothing, they meant nothing, just echoes of light that hadn't fallen into a black hole, but had been rebuffed by the event horizon.

The Church Leaders had warned the scientist that they were starting to look too deeply into God. The scientists mocked this continuing to look for the God Atom, or The God Something. Stephen stirred in his seat slightly as he tried to remember what it was called, but all he knew was it all begun when they started building that new collider in Mainland Europe. There were probably more which the public didn't need to know about. Looking for the God Particle, that was it.

"You want a cup of tea?" Asked Hilary Somerville easing out of her armchair and stiffly straightening up. "Are you all right yer awfully quiet, you're not ailing for something?" Hilary stretched again before adding. "I've told you cleaning at that university is too much for you. It's not as if we need the money."

“What money?” Asked Stephen snatched from his thoughts which were immediately replaced by more. How could he be thinking if this wasn’t real, or were these thoughts the reflection of someone else?

“You ought to leave those programmes alone Stephen, they’ll melt your brain. Just remember you’re a cleaner at that university not a lecturer, though I dare say you could teach them a thing or two.” Hilary rubbed Stephen’s shoulder as she passed him on the way to the kitchen. “Have to say your Professor Nugent looked good on the box. No doubt it’ll have added to his book sales and bank balance.” Pausing Hilary expected a dismissive remark from Stephen, but he remained silent and almost motionless. “Strained your brain this time. I warned you it would happen if you tried to follow those science programmes.” Laughing Hilary didn’t hear her husband get out of his chair and walk up behind her. Then as he gently put his arms around her neck added. “What’s come over you? Can’t wait until Friday night?” Hilary didn’t get a chance to laugh as Stephen snapped her neck and let her slip to the kitchen floor. He knelt by her side with a gentle smile on his face.

“We’re not real, so this hasn’t happened.” Whispered Stephen expecting to find himself back in his chair having imagined the murder of his wife. If life wasn’t real why was this? They were echoes, only reflections of the evil which hadn’t been allowed through. Was an event horizon really the gateway to heaven and only the pure were allowed through and evil turned away. Was he now evil? Had he always been evil? If so why was Hilary, innocent Hilary, stupid Hilary who didn’t understand what she had just seen on television not been allowed through the gateway? Had she been evil? Not a day in her life, a soft touch from the moment she’d agreed to walk home with him from the disco all those years ago.

A tooting horn brought Stephen to his senses, at least in part. He looked up at the kitchen clock. He'd been kneeling at Hilary's side for almost two hours; it had passed in a flash. Perhaps more proof that they weren't real, if nobody saw him, did that mean he didn't exist until someone else thought about him. Right now Rita, Harry and Trevor were thinking about him so he existed again, but before they had he hadn't? He needed it explained to him. Explained to him so that he could explain what he had done, done to the only person he had truly loved.

"Hilary keeping you up at night again?" Laughed Rita as Stephen climbed into the back seat of the car beside Harry. "If you're not up to it tonight..."

"Just drive the damn car. I've heard enough cackling for one day." Snapped Stephen trying to make it appear as though he and Hilary had been arguing. Only everyone knew that they never argued. All the ups and more downs, but they had never fallen out. They'd known life was too short for that sort of thing. "Life." Whispered Stephen as the car left the kerb and raced towards the city where the university sat pride of place.

Whilst Scotland might have lacked funding compared to a lot of countries and states, its engineering heritage was now reaching out in front of it again. Super minds appeared with every generation. Kids were leaving school able to discuss concepts which were only dreams a few decades back. All thanks to a politician who decided two things should happen immediately. Free internet for everyone and the abolition of any fees for attending college or university, only asking in return that these students stay in Scotland for five years for apprenticeships and degrees and ten years for MAs and PhDs. The affect was just overwhelming. The Give and Take Bill as it was called by the press was picked up around the world, just one instance where Scotland was leading the way.

Barely a week went by when a new idea wasn't being bandied about or a new improved product released. It was like the lid had been taken off a pressure cooker suddenly and all its contents spilled out at once. Investment not only went into education and training, but was paid back tenfold as these new scholars and tradesmen and women leant their shoulders to bolstering the economy. This was true of the shining beacon of open thought which was The University of South Scotland. Not the most imaginatively named building but it was what went on inside it that mattered. What was about to happen tonight.

Stephen got out of the car and walked away from his colleagues.

"In a hurry Stephen?" Asked one of the security guards at the rear of the university. Auxiliary staff had to enter via the rear of the building. "Only asking Mate?"

"Can I go?" Asked Stephen forcing a smile to his face, but the guard wasn't taken in by it and decided to search all four of the cleaners before allowing them to continue.

Far from deterring Stephen from his plan it increased his determination to get at the truth. Cleaning each room as he had for the past three and a bit years, he knew Professor Nugent liked to work late with some of his students. There was every chance he could be in the labs, but he also liked to just sit in his office overlooking the Forth without the muddle of the ever changing capital getting in the way. Long gone were the tankers which used to make their way up to Grangemouth to have their contents refined into fuel for the masses. According to the latest reports less than twenty percent of vehicles on the road used fossil fuels and all of them were in restricted areas. It certainly did make the world smell a lot better and feel so much quieter. All these advances and offices still needed to be dusted and polished. The number of Professors who still liked wooden desks

to place all their gadgets on them was quite impressive given the beautiful fake ones made available by the university. Stephen and the others didn't complain as it added to their pensions or redundancy money.

"Hello Stephen, need me to get out of your way?" Asked Professor Nugent swinging his long legs off of the desk before reluctantly taking his nose out of the latest car brochure.

"Not at all, just as long as you don't mind me dusting around you?" Answered Stephen with his normal mixed smile of embarrassment given the heady company he was in and the menial tasks he was about to carry out. One of which wasn't dusting as such, he used an almost silent backpack vacuum cleaner to remove any dust five nights a week and once a week he applied a wax polish to the desk itself. "Caught the rerun of your documentary on television this afternoon." Added Stephen as he continued to avoid eye contact with the professor and started working.

"Oh yes, you won't believe me, but I had forgotten all about it. I must have filmed that over a year ago. Then there was a bit of hoo-ha over the content from the Government. What did you think of it?"

"A bit above me really."

"It wasn't meant to be, sensationalist yes because good ratings mean more investment in the university. Shouldn't need to play these bloody games, but we do." Professor Nugent was about to return to his desk when Stephen took the special wax from his utility belt. "I thought you only did that on a Friday to let it soak in over the weekend?"

"Does it matter?" Snapped Stephen furiously layering on the wax.

“What’s with the tone Stephen? I can cut you a bit of slack, but don’t push it.” Professor Nugent thought he stopped the situation from getting out of hand by smiling and adding. “I dare say a change is as good as a rest as my grandmother might have said.”

“Is everything a joke to you?” Stephen found himself stepping towards the door to block his prey’s escape. “Was it a joke to you when you told the world that everything we’ve done and everything we plan to do was a waste of time?”

“What are you babbling about man? Are you ill or something?”

“I’m nothing according to you, nothing.” Prodding himself in the chest Stephen glanced out the door and spotted a security guard heading up the corridor. Without warning Stephen stepped forward and punched the professor on the chin as hard as he could. The professor looked at Stephen in curiosity before collapsing to the floor. “Always knew you had a glass jaw, comes from spouting all those fancy words and formulae.”

“Everything alright in here?” Asked the guard at which point Stephen summoned him over to where the professor lay explaining that he had simply collapsed. Then standing up as if to make a call from the phone on the desk, he lifted a marble ornament from it and brought it down onto the security guard’s head. It wasn’t a pleasant crack, but it did mean he wasn’t going to give him anymore trouble with the added bonus that Stephen now had a gun.

Now it dawned on him this was all very real and everything that had gone before was Professor Nugent’s fault. Closing the door and then locking it Stephen pressed the barrel of the gun against Professor Nugent’s chest and forced him off of the floor and into his luxurious chair.

“What’s this about Stephen? They won’t give into ransom demands and there are a dozen others ready to take my place the first time I falter.” Professor Nugent rubbed his chin forcing a smile to his lips, but just like Stephen he was petrified. However he had to be grateful that he was at least alive.

Stephen shook his head like a madman whilst glancing out of the window fully expecting the emergency services to be hovering outside. However the only thing outside was the world going about its business, but if he turned his back did it disappear altogether. This thought caused Stephen to glance back and forth until his head felt dizzy. “Is it still there?” Asked Stephen softly looking into Professor Nugent’s eyes, but he didn’t answer. “Is it still there?”

“Is what still there Stephen? Look you’re ill and even cleaners are covered by the medical insurance of the university. Give me the gun and this will be all over.” As if it was going to be that easy, this wasn’t a suggestible student, no this was Stephen an old man with an error message flashing up in his brain. “Can you at least tell me what I’ve done wrong, or what the university has done to irk you?”

“You took it all away, told us none of it was real.” Raged Stephen in a helpless state of pointing out of the window, but too frightened to look for himself. Calm only returned to his body as he watched the dawning of the truth rise on Professor Nugent’s face. “You said we were turned back at the gates of heaven, but the Bible tells us we’re made in the image of God.”

“Oh you’re one of Doctor Munro’s proposed point two of a percentage point.” Professor Nugent’s superior disdain was answered by a random shot from the gun. Most of his right shoulder was missing and he screamed like a hysterical woman. Over this he could hear Stephen ranting on and on that it was all his fault. “You’re insane.”

“What does it mean?” Cried Stephen covering his eyes and refusing remove his hands’ because he understood the truth of it even if they didn’t.

Detective Chief Inspector Haven stood in the large university suite taking in his surroundings. Two men lay dead on the floor. Documents, books and equipment which would pay for his house and car were splattered with blood and flesh. There was no escaping the fact that Government Forces had been at work here. He and his men had been told to secure all the other floors whilst the hostage taker was talked down. That was code these days for he’s fair game for the first sniper’s rifle. Only the burn marks on the chests of both men meant that they had been killed at close range. These brought forth thoughts which he would need to keep to himself. As would everyone else who could see more than they were told to.

“I don’t get all this tech stuff Sir.” Uttered Detective Constable Carter wincing at the gore.

“Oh?” Responded DCI Haven in his distracted state.

“I mean will any of it get me to work quicker in the morning?”

“I can’t think of anything short of a cattle prod that would make you work quicker at anytime of the day.” With a sigh DCI Haven started out of the room adding as he did so. “Record the whole scene and start taking statements.”

“Terrible business Haven, but you appear to have a handle on it as per usual.” Stated Superintendant Castle catching her subordinate’s arm as he tried to walk past her in the corridor. “All very straight forward however?”

“Appears routine Mam, as you suggest.” DCI Haven wasn’t a good liar.

Chapter Two

“I really don’t care if he makes Judge Dredd look like an amateur. He cannot be allowed to stand in the way of progress either in here or out on those streets.” Chief Superintendent Monkland looked out of his window and straight at the sculptured university building, all done in house. From the artistic impressions, architect’s models to the stone work around the front entrance all by Scottish hands. There was hell to pay across Europe and rumbles from around the rest of the world, but it never affected the Euro Dollar for a second. Such was Scotland’s standing; no longer just a large county north of Berwick upon Tweed. “And such standing needs defending and sometimes from itself.” Concluded Chief Superintendent Monkland. “So what are you going to do about it Superintendent Castle?”

“There’s very little I can Sir. This is his case and to change him for someone else now would raise concern in certain circles.” Answered Superintendent Castle. “Of course such routine case means he can, we can start the transfer immediately. I hear that the Highlands and Islands Division are keen to recruit more experienced men. I’ll start the paperwork when I return to my office Sir.”

“It would be deeply appreciated Rhona, I know for a fact more than one external source is taking an interest in your career. These are very influential people.” Chief Superintendent Monkland had made his point as clearly as he needed to at this point and now expected Castle to leave but looked hesitant.

“Haven won’t take it lying down. Can I count on your support Sir?”

“If you require my support to rid the department of a bad apple, then perhaps you’re not the woman we thought you were. Now if you’d excuse me I have more pressing matters to attend to. The media want to know why Haven is still on the case when

it is so obvious what happened. Make sure Haven tows the line or you can expect me to sign off on your transfer papers.”

Superintendent Castle left the office and took the lift down to CID. She was the only Superintendent not to have an office on the seventh floor and that was directly related to Haven’s behaviour. “Have Haven come to see me the moment he shows face Ella.”

“He’s in your office now Mam. He arrived about ten minutes. I did explain...”

“As I didn’t get as much as a sniff of Chief Superintendent’s independently branded coffee. Could I ask you to fetch me one please? No he won’t be in my office long enough. Remind me to lock it every time I leave.” Castle smiled wistfully before charging into her office where Haven sat pretending to be asleep. “You are most definitely not funny. Chief Inspector Haven are you trying my patience.”

“Then tell me why the top brass have got their silk knickers in a tangle over my case?” Asked Haven playfully appearing to suddenly wake.

“Probably the same reason I am stuck on this floor and not needing an oxygen mask up there.”

“Oxygen masks just make it more difficult to kiss their polished arses. Come Jean, join in a proper shift on the streets. You remember them? The things you stare at through your bullet proof security glass when you’re driven home.” Haven tutted loudly when there was a gentle knock on the office door and Ella walked in with two cups of coffee. “Where did you have to go for it? I asked for this ages ago. Only thing that keeps me going when I do thirty six straight hours.”

“You told me it was twenty four. Sorry Mam, but he had been waiting a while.”

“It’s fine Ella, just make sure they both come off of his budget. If he can afford all this overtime he can damn well afford two coffees, but obviously not biscuits.” Castle smiled as she waved Ella out of the office. “I know you Sandy Haven and I haven’t known you to pull a ghoster in years. Why now?”

“Tell me why the security goons saw fit to shoot both men at point blank range Mam, and I’ll be able to tell you why I pulled a ghoster with Carter. Poor wee sod is out cold at his desk.”

“He looks up to you, though God alone know why.”

“It may be something to do with the fact that I know my place in grand scheme of things.”

“Of course you do. By the way how are your sea legs? The crossing can be quite rough in the winter.”

“If I thought I could do myself half a favour I’d fill in that form myself, but you and I both know I’m needed here. Your university town needs coppers like me. By day everyone is pushing our noble country forward but by night and in the shadows we’re not quite so enlightened. So let me get back to work and keep our diamond encrusted intellectually paved streets clean, so good folk can walk them.” Haven was convinced that he’d been sincere enough as to persuade his boss to lose the transfer paperwork again. Not that he didn’t appreciate what it meant for his superior.

“Why is this case important, nutter kills professor. Nutter killed by Peacekeepers. I don’t care what you call them. I’m waiting on my answer...”

“I don’t understand why they killed the professor. Oh but they did.” As previously noted, Haven would not have remarked on this matter if he didn’t trust Castle. Which was why he asked and expected an answer.

“You know better than ask a question like that. So if there is nothing else on the case that bothers you then start packing. Keep poking into this and they won’t give you that opportunity. Just go home have a shower and some sleep. I’ll speak to you tomorrow. If you don’t want the Highlands and Islands, you might think where you want to go.” SI Castle showed Haven out to Ella’s desk where they parted company. “Go home Chief Inspector and phone me before you come in.”

“Are you suspending me?”

“Before you start waving your Federation Card at me, just think about what I said. Sweet dreams.”

Haven didn’t look back but waved dismissively as he headed along to his office where he collected his things before taking the lift down to the basement where his politically correct car; not a word which he would use for a battery on wheels. Nonetheless it was tax free and as he was a policeman he got a charge allowance in his wage packet. Nobody got wage packets anymore, just confirmation via email that his account had been credited every four weeks. He wasn’t one of those officers who complained about his salary, he had enough years in to get a good pension.

“Finally sacked you?” Asked neighbour and good friend Alonso Baxter as he washed his car.

“Alonso you and I know the world would crumble if I wasn’t out keeping those mean streets safe.”

“So you say.” Alonso looked about himself furtively before approaching Haven causing him to frown impatiently. “You had service men in today. They’re not due until next month.”

“Thanks.” That’s why Haven didn’t retire. He would be bored out of his head within a week and he didn’t fancy taking a bullet for some fat cat no matter how good the wages were. Not that he’d ever been offered a job in the private sector. His old Chief

said he was too honest for a job like that. If it was true then it was stupidity on his part.

The flat looked like no one had been in since he left it. Haven could pinpoint most of the places for the bugs, but he left them be and in doing so he was one up on whoever planted them. Who was he kidding it was the Peacekeepers, European Soldiers drafted into bolster security during the emergence of Scotland's late drive into the twenty first century. Exactly the same people who had taken out Stephen Somerville and Professor Nugent. Nugent was a fair target in Haven's mind, high profile scientist out to rock the world with genius no doubt borrowed from his students. Old Somerville on the other hand was a nobody who'd cracked for whatever reason. The rise in price of fish and chips, or he didn't win the Lottery. He could have been talked down, had it been Haven, then he would have been talked down. None of it fitted.

"Just listen Carter. Right I want the other cleaners questioned and the Somerville's house gone over. Just who do you take orders from?" Haven was shouting at his subordinate and didn't care who was listening in. "Get yourself and the team up and running. By whom?" From bellowing like a bull to cold and calculating Haven's tone changed in an instant. "Bitch. Then you and I will have to cover it ourselves. You as well, send what you have to my computer and just you watch your back if you're working with them. Good Lad." Haven turned his back on the computer and went for a shower before getting a couple of hours sleep. His day was far from over.

The squawk of the computer woke Haven from a deep sleep and groggily he ordered it to accept the call, but audio only. "What time of day is it?"

"Seven thirty three AM. Do you require the date?"

“No thank you, just put the call through please.” Suddenly it dawned on Haven what he had been told, but it was impossible. He’d set the alarm for four hours sleep.

“Are you there Haven?” Asked SI Castle worriedly.

“Apparently. Is this the call to say my leave has been approved pending my transfer?” Haven poured himself a cold mug of coffee then stuck it in the microwave.

“I would have thought, but not expected all that sleep would have taken the edge off your tone. I’ve no choice, but to ask you to take some leave.”

“No problem. I’ll hand in my ID and what have you in on my way past. Anything else?”

“Don’t count on your pension if you continue to piss them off. Whether you believe it or not, I am trying to protect you at this end. So less attitude and a little more compliance would be appreciated.”

“Understood, with friends like you who needs enemies? Bye.” Haven drank the vile coffee and smoked two cigarettes causing the house sensors to activate a health warning. “Like I’m going to live to care.” Smokers had been harried to the point of illegality. Registered smokers had to go through monthly programs to get them off of the weed. Like junkies, there was nicotine replacement therapy. Smokers were expected to queue for chemically approved cigarettes either daily or weekly. A twenty packet of cigarettes off the net were nothing more than dried grass and not the good stuff either. Percentage levels of nicotine rich tobacco ranged from under ten, that being the strongest most chemists carried and they were prescription only. On the right website you could, but for a price get thirty percent could be had. That said they were invariably fifty Euro Dollars, soon to be credits, per packet. No the only place to get over fifty percent

and for a price which proved they were illegal was down at the docks. Crews brought them in from countries where smoking was still used to bolster the coffers of various governments usually with no free health service.

“The National Authorities at the last presentation to the Government suggest that smokers die slowly and painfully.” Gone were the days of friendly suggestions, nothing but brutal truths, but like all brutality it becomes acceptable and then ignored completely. “Your next health check is in two days. Twenty five percentage points will be deducted for all smokers thus increasing you health insurance premiums. Good health leads to good wealth.”

“Blow it out of your vent.” Remarked Haven as he checked his appearance in the hall mirror. He was never going to look younger, but he looked really old this morning which was the thought he carried out to his battery on wheels. “Alonso. Am I a luddite?”

“What’s brought that on?” Asked Alonso just back from his first foray down to the local shops and the clock hadn’t struck eight yet.

“I don’t know, but every time I look at these jelly moulds, I long for the days when cars looked like cars. Had horny V8s or V12 engines and drunk petrol when the ignition was off.”

“You got a minute? Come on in. I was keeping this for your birthday, but it sounds like you need it now.” Alonso led Haven into the pristine house where he disappeared into the bedroom which was now a study come library of mainly old periodicals. “Here I think you’ll like it. I got it in a job lot last month down at Newcastle in a house clearance.”

Haven felt truly humbled as he was handed the floppy gift wrapped in brown wrapping paper which was worth more than its

weight in gold. “Dear God, but you can’t give this to me. It’s a collector’s item.”

“You’re only fifty once. I thought you could scan the centre fold, just a pity that female is in the picture. No I didn’t think you would mind. It would certainly brighten the sitting room up.”

“You are truly a good friend Alonso. Here, I’m going to get more later. I won’t take no for an answer.” Haven handed over his cigarettes then hugged Alonso again. “Real cars rock.” With that Haven placed the brown paper down and carried the pristine magazine out to his jelly mould on wheels and powered by batteries. “Destination work, and no hurry.” Snapped Haven and waited for the vehicle’s heads up display to blink into life before crawling away from the front of his house. The battery indicator was displaying that he had just under half the reserve left, which was more than enough for what he needed.

“Alternative route being downloaded.” Announced the satnav. At moments like this Haven could only be grateful that his car wasn’t fitted with remote control. Haven asked who was sending the new destination. “New destination sent by Superintendent Castle, these coordinates are valid for one hour.” Haven swiftly changed direction causing several tooting horns. Which made Haven wonder why these cars weren’t fitted with a modern version of The Finger for these occasions. His idea was simple enough. All the driver had to do was select which window he or she wanted to use, then pick which message they wanted to send. All this sounded complex but it was fairly straight forward and he had suggested something simpler when senior officers were force to come up with creative ideas as an example for their subordinates. “Balls.”

Chapter Three

With a final check of the battery meter had Haven wondering whether he was going to make it back to the house.

He very much doubted that Castle was there to welcome him back to the bosom of the police station. Hauling himself out of the low slung vehicle Haven made his way over to the info pod at the entrance to the wind farm where SI Castle stood out of her normal uniform. "People will talk." Uttered Haven as he walked past Castle and into the wind farm where huge sails swooped round and round. "So you know my favourite thinking place. What do you need me to think about?"

"I know why you come here. There's an interference field generated by the sails and power cables." Castle looked as though she was being energised by some invisible force which surrounded her and it suited her. However Haven just wished that she would get to the point. "I received a call last night. They want you to start digging properly. Don't look at me like that. They've suggested I get you a driver stroke bodyguard. You're going to need it. Her name is Stella Forsyth. Yes the same one. It was The Commissioner who called on me last night." SI Castle waved in the direction of her car and from it stepped Stella Forsyth looking more like a high class hooker than a bog standard DC. "Not a word she's just come off six months with vice. I told her your pace is a little more pedestrian. Well it is."

"Pedestrian?" Asked Haven as he made room for Forsyth to join them.

"I was thinking pensioner. What are you sixty, more? Please don't tell me I need to carry you on this case?" Asked DC Forsyth still carrying some dockside attitude.

"You won't have to do anything unless I tell you to. Then I'll expect it to be done without question. And please remember that you report directly and only to me and no one else." Haven started back for his car. "You can pick me up at my house in an hour looking a lot less like a ten dollar whore and more like a police officer. If you don't fancy that idea, or can't handle real

police work, then.” Haven made a point of looking at his watch before adding. “Then you’re father should be just getting ready to tee off and you can leave the real police work to those who can.”

“He can’t talk to me like that Mam.”

“The only reason your father decided that you were being teamed up with Chief Inspector Haven, is simply because it would be two honest cops in one place working for a common goal. I’m not going to lie to you and say he’s the best, because he’s not and that makes him better. Listen and learn, just don’t let him walk all over you.” SI Castle laughed as she watched her career being flushed down the toilet. Oh she’d had a fair kick at the ball and had it not been for a few impulsive choices she might have made it further up the ladder by now, but she’d been late to the game and it was never the same trying to play catch all the time.

“Isn’t this just a straight forward kidnap gone wrong?” Asked DC Forsyth joining SI Castle in the back seat of her car.

“Not according to your father and more importantly Chief Inspector Haven. If he smells a rat there’s usually a nest of them needing burned out. Just remember your rats could be in some strange places.”

“Yes Mam.”

What always surprised Haven was the insistence of car manufacturers who fitted warning lights and buzzers to say the charge was about to run out. They in themselves were draining resources. However his car had managed to free wheel into the garage where he plugged it in and tried to not think about the glistening metal and petrol powered cars in his magazine. The latter was taken into the house where Haven sat and read through the files Carter had managed to send out to him before being transferred to another squad.

“One hour and seven minutes, but that did include a shower and my last case report.” Uttered DC Forsyth standing just outside the open front door. “Can I come in? May I come in then? Thank you.”

“You were vice? Did you do any real police work before that?” Haven lit a cigarette to see what his colleague would do or say and was quite taken by the fact that she didn’t react at all, but looked through the house as if it was a prelude to an arrest. “See anything you like?”

“Besides the magazine Sir? Not much.”

“I asked you about your previous work experience.”

“The standard training, four years on the beat in York, yes during the food riots. I got a temp secondment to vice and stayed there for another five. I’m twenty nine and yes I have a degree, but did most of it during my beat years. No my Dad doesn’t approve of my career choice, but the one time I hoped he would fish me out he was on a ten day golfing holiday for team building purposes. That’s where I got most of my scars. I didn’t get shot until a year ago during a raid on a ship bringing in sex slaves. Yeah that was my reaction. I was stuck in an Insurance hospital for two weeks. Am I allowed to ask your past?”

“Thirty plus years of facing down scum on either side of the desk. I don’t like bribes, I won’t be coerced and I won’t lie for you if you fuck up as you will. Be told I’m known, not respected and definitely hated in all quarters. If you still want to work with me then stick your nose around the back of that picture and tell me what you find.” Forsyth did as she was told and ripped a tiny bug from the back of the picture. “I told you all quarters and I meant it. There’s an outside chance this case could lead to nothing, but you and I both know that’s highly unlikely when that was only put in yesterday. Must have taken the old ones away.”

“You should have this place swept properly.”

“What’s the point? They just put new ones in their place. Right now you’re not sure if I am mad, just paranoid or the enemy. Keep thinking that way and you might just live to figure it out.” Haven sighed and hauled himself out of the chair, but before heading for the door added. “We’re a day and half late in starting this, but that doesn’t mean we cut corners. We’ve got to go back to the scene of the crime and compare it to our original video evidence recorded on the fateful night. Given that it’s not corrupted in any way we can piece together what happened at the end. Then we talk to colleagues, friends and neighbours. And only when we have run out of them do we surf the information highway.”

“I notice you don’t carry a sidearm.”

“I have two arms and a similar amount of feet, but all four pale into insignificance to my wit. So no guns. We only want to talk for now. And there will be on or two people wanting to talk to us.”

“Yes, I see it now. This is going to be your swan song. Well just remember and with the greatest respect all ways. I don’t intend going out there without a gun.”

“Then you’re a bigger idiot than your father. I told him promotion isn’t everything and I’m telling you guns aren’t.”

Driving over to the University was a bit like coming out of the dark ages to the twenty second century. Not that the estate on which Haven lived was anything but the best. However he did feel a little taken by the new university town. The streets were cleaner and brighter and just a feeling that nothing was impossible. That’s what made it a little frightening. The no holds barred science attitude could easily be carried out of the university and into society. However Haven was there to ease it

back again. This wasn't student revelry which upset the neighbours or a few shopkeepers. At the very least there was a kidnap to investigate, but Haven's radar was telling him it was more likely to be a double murder and once that stone was lifted he dreaded to think what might crawl out.

Forsyth brought the car to a halt at the front of the university in the visitors' car park. Patrolling guards all but pounced on the car. "Go about your business. We're police." Ordered Forsyth flashing her badge and expected the guards to back off, but they didn't. "Are you stupid? Go about your business or I'll arrest you for interfering in an official enquiry."

"Just ignore her. Would you be as good as to point us in the direction of the main reception please?" Haven was calmly spoken and put his arms up so he could be searched if desired. "I'm Chief Inspector Haven this is Detective Constable Forsyth Trainee Class. New Town Station."

"You want to teach your Rottweiler to behave." The security guard pointed to the main entrance then he and his colleague went about their business.

"I think you should take your mind out of the gutter your last assignment put you in. By the numbers and as softly-softly as possible. We'll ask to be taken to the room. Hopefully they won't have unlocked it yet."

"I bow to your better judgement and leadership."

"As to be expected."

The reception was bright and kitted out with huge video screens displaying various accomplishments. Only one screen of the many was displaying any sort of memorial to the late Professor Nugent. The latter's accomplishments and family, friends and colleagues were all shown silently in a loop.

“Chief Inspector Haven? Excellent. I was told you were on your way in by security. I’m Doctor Munro, but please call me Sheila and this is?” Dr Munro was a shapely woman in what could only be described as casual to the point of scruffy clothes. Nonetheless she offered her hand it was taken by both detectives. “Are you any relation to..? Yes. Well shall we go to my office? I’ve ordered coffee and biscuits.”

“This isn’t a social call Sheila, we need access to Prof Nugent’s room please. As soon as you like, this is an ongoing enquiry.” For no apparent reason Haven had decided to use a surly tone.

“As you wish. My rooms are only just down the corridor from his. I thought you might want to know about his work first.” Sheila stepped into a glass lift which would have been more suited to a hotel or shopping mall. It appeared to be far too good for scruffy students and lectures. “I can’t understand why you are involved, I was told by the Dean that this was being tidied up by the security services.”

“If this was a straight forward case why would the security services even be involved?” Asked Forsyth expecting to catch Sheila out.

“When they are not involved in this university. I should be asking you what you hope to find they didn’t. No offence they’re much better situated to this sort of thing than you.”

“The security services are only interested in scandal which might upset the balance. Whereas our job is to investigate crimes and hopefully arrest the bad people who commit them. If your offer of coffee is still available when we’re finished I would appreciate a chat.”

“I only have one tutorial today so I can soon palm that off on one of my researchers.”

“Oh I remember this corridor. This was where we were held until they tired of trying to talk Somerville down. Evidently they hit the odd snag. Still we’re not here to criticise our colleagues from different departments. Now then that is interesting. A security services seal. Did you know this was here?” Haven kept his tone relaxed whilst he was seething inside.

“I dare say I did, but I assumed it was only to keep the likes of me out. Scientists have been known to borrow from one another without permission.” Sheila might have laughed but Haven was on his phone and walking away from the two women. “Strange man, have you worked with him long?”

“Too long.” Frowned Forsyth trying to hear what Haven was saying.

“I assume this is a punishment detail.”

“What? Sorry, but what did you say?” Forsyth thought she had caught a few words or sounds in there in, but with Dr Munro’s constant chatter it was hard to be sure.

“I was simply sympathising with you.” Dr Munro pulled a strange face before approaching the seal which was little more than a magnetic lock. “There’s bound to be a way around this thing.”

“There is, so don’t touch it.” Snapped Haven as he put the phone back in his pocket and rejoined the others. “I wouldn’t play with that Dr Munro unless you fancy life teaching behind bars. We will get in, but for now we’ll retreat to your suite for tea and crumpets.”

“I don’t think I’ve heard that since the university’s drama club put on some high brow play a few years ago. This way please.” Dr Munro led the way to her suite which was slightly larger than that of Prof Nugent. However it was far more work

orientated and had that smell of musty paper which Haven remembered from his younger days.

“It’s not real. The smell Chief Inspector. Just an experience from a bygone day.” Dr Munro summoned a coffee tray which was brought in by a woman who looked old enough to Haven’s mother. The woman placed the tray on a small round table and withdrew. “Thank you Valerie.”

“Is there a shortage of younger staff?” Asked Forsyth placing her recorder on the table which had immediately recorded everything in the room.

“You have no idea how hard it is to find staff. Besides security staff and a handful of technical assistants, all we really need are domestic staff and the wages offered for them are pitiful, every penny as we have as you might expect is kept for research and teaching. What I think makes it worse is the way they’re treated.”

“Invisible people?” Asked Forsyth cutting across her superior.

“Exactly, the gray economy, literally. Most of them use it to top up their pensions, or use it for a reason to get out of the house. Whilst the media is being more and more at them, to keep them inside and stop them from cluttering up our nice clean and relatively crime free streets.”