

# **The Chicken Shak Spy**

**By Simon Lucas**

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For Claire

## Chapter 1

The door came crashing in, immediately followed by a crack team of armed police officers.

The four men sitting around the table were not entirely surprised. Indeed, this intrusion was almost inevitable, but that hadn't stopped them all hoping that it would not come to this. Quite how they were going to talk themselves out of this one remained to be seen.

"Guppy," muttered one of the men at the table.

"It was always going to be Guppy."

They had always had concerns about Paul Fish, known to them all as Guppy. If there was going to be a leak, it was bound to be Guppy.

"ARMED POLICE! GET DOWN ON THE FLOOR!"

Three of the men did as they were told. Johnson was rather enjoying his haddock and chips, so remained at the table, calmly eating as he observed the panic and fear of the others. Whilst the excitement of a police raid was something entirely new for the other members of the team, it was nothing unusual at all for him.

"YOU! GET ON THE FLOOR!"

Johnson was amused to see that the police seemed to be getting rather riled.

"Look, I'm just finishing my supper," he told them, liberally dousing his chips with yet more vinegar. He steered clear of extra salt; his blood pressure was not what it should have been, and he did not want to cause it to rise further.

With that, the lead police officer stepped forward. There was not a sound from the other three men, all of whom were spread-eagled on the dirty floor of the near-derelict flat.

"Johnson, you ignorant oaf," the officer said, in a voice that approached something of a normal speaking volume – or the normal volume for Chief Inspector Ferguson, anyway. Ferguson, who headed up one of the Metropolitan Police's Anti Terror Units was not known for his timidity. He was known throughout the force, and further afield, by the uninspiring nickname of Foghorn Fergie. Uninspiring it may be, but it was certainly appropriate. It was felt by his colleagues that perhaps he had adopted this rather loud speaking voice to compensate for his diminutive height. He was also known as Runty Rich – but never to his face.

"Do you mind, Richard, you're disturbing our meal. And you've destroyed the door. You could have knocked, you know. Terribly impolite of you."

"Shut up with the cockish remarks, Arse Face," Ferguson boomed, grabbing a chip from Johnson's polystyrene tray. "I hope you realise what you've got yourself involved with this time."

"No? Do tell."

Ferguson finished his chip.

"You're the one who's going to be doing the explaining, Johnson. And just in case there's any confusion, you're nicked."

With one swift move, Ferguson grabbed his handcuffs from his utility belt, pulled Johnson's arms behind his back, and cuffed him.

"Get those reprobates into the back of the van," Ferguson ordered. "I want a quiet word with Johnson."

The police officers picked the other three men off the floor, and began cuffing them whilst Ferguson pulled up a chair and helped himself to a battered sausage.

"You've pulled some stunts in your time, Arse Wipe, but this one takes the biscuit."

Johnson remained calm, and looked at the dingy, blackened ceiling of the bedsit.

"I have no idea what you're talking about, Richard."

"Well, there's breaking and entering, for a start," Ferguson remarked as he cracked open one of the cans of beer on the table. "This your des res, is it?"

"I'm house-sitting, Richard."

"What, all four of you, in a poky little bed sit? Pull the other one, it's got balls on."

"No, just me. I had invited some chaps round for a game of Scrabble this evening. Anything wrong with that?"

“And it’s pure coincidence that you’re just round the block from Lambeth Palace, is it?”

“Funnily enough, it is. I don’t tend to think about the presence of important ecclesiastical sites when I host my highly regarded Scrabble tournaments.”

“Look, you tosser, I know exactly what you’re up to, and Scrabble is not it. You saw this as a perfect opportunity to cause some trouble, didn’t you? Why else would you be this side of town at the same time as the Pope is staying with the Archbishop of Canterbury? The pyrotechnics we found in the van outside are nothing to do with you either, I suppose?”

“They’re for a charity Guy Fawkes’ celebration I’m organising.”

“A little early, no? It’s September!”

“The middle of September. And I got a good deal.”

“You’re talking bollocks, Johnson, and I’m taking you in. Get up, get out, and get in the van.”

Johnson reluctantly got out of the chair, just as the windows of the flat smashed and the missile burst inside. Milliseconds later and the whole flat became one enormous fireball, blazing in the cool, Lambeth night.

The chicken was going to be cold if he didn’t move soon. There were three large family boxes of wings in the back of the car that were already half an hour late, and at this rate they were not going to get to their recipients this side of midnight, by which time they would be completely cold.

Graham stood up and kicked the wheel of his ageing Volvo 240. He simply could not get the wheel off. There was more chance of the monkey wrench snapping than the wheel nuts coming off. If he couldn’t get the wheel off, he couldn’t put the spare on. If he couldn’t change the wheel he would not be going anywhere any time soon. Three families were going to be without their fried chicken tonight. And he was going to be in trouble again. Just for a change.

Traffic was speeding past him as he made his way to a nearby bus shelter and sat down. He put his head in his hands and pondered his next course of action. He had already notified the owners of the Chicken Shak – who also happened to be his parents – that he had a puncture, but that was forty-five minutes ago. He now had to face up to the fact that he was probably going to have to phone them and get them to come and rescue him.

Not for the first time, he wondered how his life had come to this. Decent grades throughout school, a first class honours degree from Cambridge, and yet here he was, in his early thirties, still working as a part-time delivery boy for his parents’ fried chicken restaurant. It was those years between his graduation and the present day that were to blame. He had been an idiot. A complete and utter idiot. He had only himself to blame, but that didn’t make it any easier for him to accept the position he now found himself in. To make matters worse, he still lived at home. A couple of years ago he had moved into what was in actual fact quite a nice attic room at the top of his parents’ rather large house, but it was nevertheless a bedroom in the family home, and so could be considered something of a backward step.

From his present position in his early thirties, his twenties looked like such a waste. Not just a waste, but a decade of total idiocy. If only he had not run up such huge debts in his twenties. He had been a prolific gambler and drinker, and whilst he had been a very good drinker, the same could not be said of his gambling abilities. He had lost a small fortune, and had to be bailed out by his parents not once, not even twice, but three times. Or it could have been four. He couldn’t recall.

That was before he had developed a passion for recreational drugs. It had seemed like an exciting thing to do at the time. He had begun with marijuana in Los Angeles, but had soon progressed far beyond soft drugs into the hard stuff.

He just had to face it; his life was seriously messed up.

And then there was his secret life. His alternative reality that he had not told anyone about. His parents and his friends had all just got used to him drifting off, sometimes for days on end, without explanation. Sometimes they feared that he had fallen back into his old ways, but they usually just put down his disappearances to his usual shambolic behaviour.

Graham stood up and started pacing. He always paced when he was angry, and he was certainly angry now. That stupid, bloody car. He pulled out his mobile phone and started pulling up the restaurant's phone number from his contacts.

Then he saw the Jaguar approaching. A dark silver Jaguar, brand new, with dark windows. He knew exactly what was going to happen. He considered running, but soon gave up that idea. They'd catch up with him in the end, and so he might as well give in to the inevitable. He didn't want to make life easy for them, though, so he climbed into the back of the Volvo and crouched down behind the passenger seat. You never know, he thought, they just might not notice me. Rather a dumb thought, it occurred to him, but then he seemed to be doing the rather dumb thing pretty well at the moment.

Sure enough, as predicted, the Jaguar indicated and pulled into the bus stop behind Graham's Volvo. Graham cautiously peered over the back seat of the car. There were two people in the Jaguar – a man and a woman. Both were immaculately turned out in power suits, in marked contrast to Graham's greasy red and white Chicken Shak uniform, which clashed horribly with his orange hair. Somehow, he thought, Jeremy had managed to find him. And he'd brought that bitch Helena.

Jeremy climbed out of the Jaguar's driving seat, and approached the Volvo. He opened the back door of the car and climbed in behind the driver's seat.

"What do you think you're doing?" he asked calmly, avoiding looking at the hunched – and smelly – form of his old school friend at his feet.

"I'm hiding," Graham whispered.

"Who are you hiding from?" That faintly irritating East Coast USA twang that Jeremy tried to hide was given away as he accented the word hiding. Those years in the CIA had clearly impacted Jeremy rather more than he might have liked to admit.

"From you."

There was a moment of silence.

"You're hiding from me. Graham, you're 'hiding' as you put it in a battered old red Volvo estate, emblazoned with the words 'Chicken Shak'. You might as well have fixed a large arrow on the roof of the car with the words, 'GRAHAM CHAPMAN IS HERE', you moron. And you know we've got your car chipped anyway." Jeremy had insisted on fitting Graham's car with a GPS tracking device after the first time he had tried to 'hide'. On that occasion he had been rather more successful, and it was several days before Jeremy had managed to find him. If he hadn't run out of money and fuel, he could have hidden for even longer.

"Look, this really isn't a good time for me. I've got three family boxes I need to deliver, and I've got a flat. Can't we do this some other time?"

"No we can't, you dope-head. Get in the Jag."

Graham huffed, but he knew there was little point in protesting. He extricated himself from his hiding place, and walked towards the Jaguar, hunching his shoulders like a teenager who had just been told off. He raised his head when he thought of an idea which might just save his bacon, at least as far as his parents were concerned.

"Can we deliver the chicken boxes en route?" he asked enthusiastically.

"Don't be a retard, you cock. Just get in the car."

"Let's dispense with the retard jibe, shall we?"

"All the time you try hiding from me in such a cretinous way, the retard jibe stays."

"Suit yourself."

"And all the time you insist on spelling Shak without a 'c', the retard jibe stays too."

"I told you – that's a trademark issue. We can't do anything about that."

"Like I give a shit. Just get in the car, retard."

Twenty minutes later and the Jaguar had left the decay of Croydon's concrete heart behind and arrived at 30 St. Mary Axe in the City of London, the location of the headquarters of the elite Hunter Group, an agency that specialised in carrying out the dirty work of the secret services. When Jeremy had been tasked with setting the unit up he wanted a discrete location to serve as base so, for reasons best known to himself, he had chosen one of London's most

distinctive modern landmarks – the Gherkin. He reasoned that it was easiest to hide in an obvious location. Graham, for what it was worth, thought he might just be right. If he had based the unit in a grotty industrial estate in Wimbledon, say, people coming and going dressed in suits and driving Jaguars would attract attention. Here in the City, though, no one would even notice. They could just blend into the anonymity of fancy suits and posh cars. Life became slightly more complicated when they had to bring in someone against their will, but it was amazing what people turned a blind eye to in London.

Within half an hour of leaving his decrepit car in Croydon, Graham found himself in the rather more glamorous location of the group's glass-plated briefing room on the thirty-third floor of the Gherkin. He was not surprised to discover that Sally, Anthony and Tom were already present and were awaiting their return.

"Nice hat, Graham," Sally commented as Graham entered. "Nice of you to wear the fancy dress."

"This, as you know, is my Chicken Shak uniform," he responded.

"Yes, your Chicken Shak uniform. Of course it is. Because it's obvious that you should be moonlighting with a fast food restaurant whilst simultaneously working for a top secret security agency."

"Come on, team, let's get down to business." Jeremy called them to order as he entered the room, throwing out folders to each team member. "As you might have heard, we have a bit of a situation. You're aware that the Pope is in town this weekend. You'll also be aware that the security services have received various threats on his life over the past few months, all of which have been dealt with. Today, however, MI5 received an entirely new threat, which they believe is credible. A group calling themselves "The New Reformation" have indicated that they intend to take the Pope's life, and that they intend to do it tomorrow. This may or may not be connected with a call that came into the Met's anti-terrorism earlier today that a group calling themselves CARN, or the Campaign Against Religious Nutters, were planning on making a strike against the Pope tomorrow."

"CARN are a bunch of cranks, Jeremy," Graham responded, still annoyed at having been pulled in. "We all know that. They're hardly a terrorist group, and they're hardly likely to even to try to take out the Pope. They're more into 'countering religious propaganda' as they put it."

"Ordinarily I would agree with you, Graham, but the police followed a tip off earlier on this evening that CARN were holed up in some dreary council estate in Lambeth, just around the corner from the Archbishop of Canterbury's residence, and that they were sitting on a significant stockpile of explosives. When the police got to them, they found that they did indeed have the potential to cause a significant bang."

"Where are they now, this CARN group?" Tom asked.

"They themselves were taken out as the arrests were being made. Someone fired a missile into the flat they were hiding in, taking out the gang, the police squad, and making a mess of the flat. Almost no evidence remains."

There was silence around the table as this was taken in.

"So what are we saying? They were taken out by some militant Catholic congregation, or perhaps bumped off because they knew too much?"

"At this stage we know nothing at all. All we do know is that there is at least one heavily armed organisation out there that is capable and willing to kill. If they launch a similar attack on the Pope tomorrow, then he's dead."

"Is there any intelligence to suggest that such an attack is likely?" asked Helena, Jeremy's second-in-command, and a rather striking tall brunette who had caught Graham's eye on numerous occasions, despite the repeated barbed comments that she aimed at him.

"Until a couple of hours ago, I'd have said that there was nothing credible at all to suggest that an attack was likely. The warning from 'The New Reformation' came out of the blue, however. We have no idea who they are, and no idea where they've suddenly sprung from. No one's ever heard of them. I figured we could probably put the threat down to a crank, but tonight's attack on CARN was significant and unexpected. If that was NR, then they have firepower, they have secrecy and they have the potential to carry out their threat.

We need, therefore, to investigate, and we need to move quickly. Your folders contain all that we know, which, at this stage, is very little. Anthony, I want you to search online and check for anything we can find out about NR. Sally, I want you to do the same for CARN. Tom, get over to the Met and see what we can find from them. Graham and Helena, get down to Lambeth and see what's going on at the explosion. I'll go over the Pope's schedule for tomorrow and see if I can identify any obvious weak spots in his security. We need to get to the bottom of this tonight, guys, so get to it!"

The team members made their way to the sliding door of the briefing room in silence. Just as Graham reached the door, Jeremy had an afterthought.

"Oh, and you two, Graham and Helena. Will you at least try to get on? We've got a serious incident developing, and I don't want any of your childish sniping tonight, please."

"But he stinks, Jeremy!"

"I smell better than you, you sour faced cow."

"That's exactly what I'm talking about," Jeremy said. "Just shut up and get to it. If you can't think of anything nice to say to each other, just stay silent. God, I feel like your mother..."



## Chapter 2

Five minutes later, and Graham and Helena were in another Jaguar speeding towards the scene of the explosion in Lambeth. Graham was driving, whilst Helena, always concerned about her appearance, was beautifying herself. They had not uttered a word to each other since they had left the Gherkin.

Graham and Helena's relationship had always been somewhat tense. He viewed her as a stuck up bimbo with an overinflated sense of her abilities as an agent. She, meanwhile, viewed him as a joke, and a smelly one at that. Their backgrounds could not have been more different. Helena was a career spook with a distinguished career as a field agent behind her who had been head hunted by Jeremy specifically to join his team. Graham, on the other hand, had no discernable career behind him at all, certainly not one in the security services. As far as Helena was concerned, Graham should not have been on the team at all, and should have stuck to delivering fried chicken for his parents' restaurant. On that point, at least, they could agree. He was on the team, though, whether they liked it or not, and he should at least have made an effort. You could tell just by looking at him that he wasn't going to be any good. Anyone who went around in a fat-soaked fast food chain uniform was unlikely to convey a professional approach to his job.

Eventually, Helena broke the silence.

"We'll need to get Wiggy in for this. Give him a ring and tell him to meet us there."

"I'm driving, Helena. Why don't you do something rather than just sitting there filing your nails?"

"Would you like a stiletto in your testicles? Because that's where you're heading at the moment. Give me your bloody phone."

Graham fumbled in his pocket, trying to locate his mobile. As he did so, the car careered towards an oncoming taxi. The driver violently sounded his horn.

"Will you watch where you're going?" Helena shouted. "You'll get us both killed!"

"Well you're the one that asked me to find my phone! Why don't you just use your own?"

"Because I can't find it. It's in my handbag somewhere, but I can't see it."

Helena opened her enormous Prada handbag and rummaged through it.

"Ah, here it is!" she exclaimed as she pulled out her Blackberry. "Never mind Wiggy for the moment, though. Do you actually know where we're going? I'll swear we've driven past Waterloo Station at least three times now."

"It's round here somewhere," Graham responded, not entirely convincingly.

There was silence in the car for a moment. Helena was caressing her phone, keeping a watch on where Graham was driving. Once again, Graham had shown himself to be completely incompetent.

"Look, Graham, you don't know where we're going." Helena was losing her patience. She was trying to hold back her anger, but unless she did something soon it was going to boil over. "If we don't get there soon, I'm going to scream. Pull over and I'll drive. You can call Wiggy."

Over the years that they had worked together, Graham had learnt that it was best not to argue with Helena, so not for the first time that evening he pulled the car over to the side of the road. Unlike last time, however, all four tyres of the car were intact, there was no audible rattling, and the engine was running smoothly. Brand new Jaguars, Graham found, were rather nicer than ancient Volvos.

They both got out of the car and changed places, with Helena now taking the driving seat. As she belted up she turned to Graham.

"You stink."

"Well I'm sorry, but I've been working at Chicken Shak all evening. Smelling of fried chicken is hardly unexpected in the circumstances!"

"You could have changed, though. You smell gross and you look like a clown. At least take that disgusting baseball cap off your head."

It was true. With his jeans and oversized red and white shirt, emblazoned with a

chicken's head on the pocket, Graham did look a little like a clown. Or a baseball player. Or perhaps an escaped convict.

"I don't know why you persist in working at that place."

"I'm helping out my parents. And besides, it's good cover. No-one suspects I'm also an elite, international master spy." He grinned at Helena, trying desperately to lighten the atmosphere in the car.

Helena barely stifled her snigger as she put the car into gear and pulled off.

"That's what you are, is it? An elite international master spy," she said, tapping his thigh with her hand.

"You know I'm the brains behind this whole operation."

"Of course you are. You keep telling yourself that, won't you. Maybe one day the rest of us will believe it too."

Graham didn't respond to Helena's remark. It was easier to judge her feelings when she was angry, which seemed to be her default mood. When she was like this, Graham never knew if she was trying to be friendly in her own, special way, or if she was taking the mick. He decided to ignore her, and took his phone out to ring Wiggy.

Wiggy was something of a peripatetic member of the team; his day job was as a weapons developer for the military. He was also a complete genius. His specialism was weaponry, but his knowledge was truly encyclopaedic. Whenever they needed someone to identify weapons, calculate where they were fired from, and even who fired them and from where they were sourced, there was no one in London to rival Wiggy. He was something of an elusive character, however. He turned up when you least expected him to, and didn't when you were expecting him. There were some in the team who thought he was a mythical character, since they had never actually met him. In their parlance, to "do a Wiggy" was to say something particularly insightful. Graham often "did a Wiggy."

Much to Graham's surprise, Wiggy answered the phone on the first ring. Graham had a quick conversation with him and hung up.

"He'll be at Lollard Street in twenty minutes."

"I'll believe it when I see it."

The two of them sat in silence as they entered the decaying remnants of the 1960s council estate. Whenever there was trouble, they ended up in similar environments. It was almost as if these sociological experiments in housing acted as breeding grounds for terror.

As they approached, their target became clear; the block was still blazing well, and was surrounded by blue flashing lights. It quickly became apparent that they weren't going to be able to get particularly close to the scene, so Helena parked the Jag up behind a battered old Escort that lacked any wheels and windows, and they walked down to the police line.

"Hey, it's the Chicken Shak guy!" exclaimed one of the officers patrolling the line as they approached. Graham's heart dropped. He had no idea who this offensive officer was, but he had met him on a couple of occasions, and he was, without exception, rude. He could really do without this right now.

"How's things, Shak Man?" the officer continued. "Did you bring us some food? I could do with a bucket right now!"

"Officer." Graham greeted the police officer as reluctantly as he could, looking around him as he did so. "What a mess. What on earth happened here?"

"Some kind of missile was fired into the building. We lost a bunch of crooks and five officers, including Chief Inspector Ferguson."

"Ferguson? Shit, I'm sorry," Helena said. "He was a damned good officer. What were they doing here?"

"Investigating a tip off that the crooks were planning an attempt on the Pope's life."

"This was CARN, right?" Graham said, staring directly at the block of flats as he spoke.

"Yeah. I think they'd got out of their depth this time, though."

"This doesn't ring true at all," Helena said. "CARN are more into public meetings, leafletting and publishing dubious websites than trying to kill religious leaders."

"If you say so, love. I can't claim to be an expert on the group myself, just saying what I've heard. They were found to have a van packed with explosives, though, which would

suggest that they were upping the stakes this time.”

“No, this isn’t right,” Helena replied. “Why would CARN have a van packed with explosives? It just doesn’t fit at all. If you said they’d been found with a van of booze, maybe, but explosives? I can’t believe it.”

“Let’s just take a look, shall we?” Graham suggested. “Where is the van?”

“Parked round the block. I really shouldn’t do this, but I guess it won’t do any harm. Come on, I’ll show you.”

The officer led Graham and Helena round to a large car parking area tucked behind another block of flats, to where a white Transit with “Green’s Fruit ‘n’ Veg” painted on the side was parked.

“Nice to see a greengrocer who understands apostrophe usage,” Graham said as they approached.

“Oh shut up, Graham,” Helena said.

The officer walked them round to the back of the van, nodding to the single officer who was on guard. He opened one of the rear doors and shone a torch in.

“Shit.”

As soon as the meeting had finished, Tom had headed for his own office across the corridor from the briefing room. Their outfit on the thirty-third floor of the Gherkin guaranteed that the Hunter Group had some of the best office facilities anywhere in London, certainly better than anything that Tom had worked out of as a police officer. Each of the six members of the team had their own dedicated office, which was not something that very many police officers were able to enjoy. Each of the offices was of a similar size, although Jeremy, as the boss, had secured himself a room that was slightly larger than the others. Anthony also had a room that was more generously sized. As the technical expert of the group, he needed plenty of space for his computer equipment.

In addition to their offices, the headquarters also included a large briefing room, in which the meeting had taken place. Kitted out with some of the most state of the art presentation equipment, it could have passed for the bridge of the Starship Enterprise. There was also a sitting area, which doubled as a reception area for the few visitors they entertained, a spacious shower room, and an interview suite including two individual interview rooms, and a cell block, right in the core of the building. They had provision for holding up to nine people, three to a cell, but it was rare for them to have more than one person locked up at any one time. If they apprehended a villain, they normally took him straight to police custody, usually to Charing Cross Police Station. Also scattered across their headquarters were two cloakrooms, a small kitchen, and several large storage rooms, all of which were tightly secured.

Security was, in fact, very tight across the whole floor. The only way into the compound was from the lift, which would only stop at the thirty-third floor if a Hunter Group security pass was swiped through the panel, or if called from within. Once onto the thirty-third floor it was impossible to pass beyond the reception area without using a security pass, a digital fingerprint and a retina scan. The offices were amongst the most secure in London.

When he reached his office, Tom sat on the corner of the desk, and picked up the half-drunk can of Fanta. He drank, and considered who the best person to contact would be. He picked up the phone and dialled the number for the Metropolitan’s Police Counter Terrorism Command Unit - his old stomping ground. A civilian answered the phone, and Tom asked who the senior officer on duty was. Much to his delight, it was Chief Inspector Raymond, an old friend. He explained who he was and asked to be transferred.

“Matthew! How goes it?” he said.

“Tom! Hello! Things aren’t too good here right now. You heard about Ferguson I take it?”

“No? What’s Foghorn been up to?”

“He was killed this evening in that incident in Lambeth.”

“Shit, Matthew, that’s not good. I’m sorry to hear that. He was loud, abrupt and extremely rude, but he was a good copper, and deep down, a nice guy.”

“Yes, he was, and he’ll be sorely missed by us all. It’s tragic, it really is. We lost several outstanding officers tonight, though, and are really feeling the pinch. Hopefully you guys are going to step in and take some of the pressure off us, aren’t you?”

“We’ll certainly try to, Matthew. We’re working on this New Reformation thing at the moment, which may or may not be connected to tonight’s incident.”

“You mean this Papal death threat thing?”

“That’s the one, Matthew. Just wondering if you’ve got anything you can give us to get us started. This New Reformation group’s a new one on us. Rather worryingly, we don’t know anything about them at all.”

“I’m sorry to say, Tom, that we’re staring at nothing here too. This group seems to have come out of nowhere, and we know precious little about them.”

“You’re treating the threat as credible, though, I take it?”

“I’m in two minds, personally. Prior to Lambeth, I’d have said it was a hoax. If they were responsible for what happened this evening, though, I find myself thinking that perhaps we should take this organisation seriously. If tonight is any indication of what they’re capable of pulling off, we should be worried. The fact that they were able to pull off such a major incident without anyone having any knowledge of them scares, me, Tom, I’ll be honest. I think we have to assume that the threat is credible, and so we’re making enquiries.”

“What line of enquiry are you looking at at the moment?”

“Tom, you know the routine. I can’t comment on that.”

“Oh, for goodness’ sake, Matthew! You said you wanted us to take some of the pressure off you, and yet you won’t tell me anything. How am I supposed to get anywhere unless we work together on this? I need anything you’ve got, and I need it now.”

“Aren’t you supposed to be an intelligence organisation?”

“We’re a security service.”

“That’s a euphemism for an intelligence organisation, and you know it. I think, therefore, that you should get your own intelligence and stop wasting my time.”

With that, Chief Inspector Raymond of the Metropolitan Police’s Counter Terrorism Command Unit, Tom’s old friend Matthew, hung up.