

WITH CERTAIN INTENT

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Prologue

'Edwin Bermonsby'. The words echoed loud and clear down the corridors of power to where he was standing. The jangling of keys and change stopped as hands were quickly withdrawn from the depths of his pockets. Then a pause, to straighten a bow tie that needed no straightening, before definite strides took him past the solid doors.

High windows that looked out onto Whitehall brought a welcome brightness to an otherwise sombre and characterless room. He saw his inquisitors, seated behind a long desk; saw the solitary chair that had been placed in front of it. Bermonsby let his eyes scan those assembled in front of him, meeting each gaze in turn. Only then did he sit down, draw himself up and finally, relaxed and at ease, place both his hands together into his lap. Edwin Bermonsby believed there was everything to play for and nothing to lose.

The shiny features of his superior, the Head of MI5, were immediately recognisable among the otherwise bland professionals and the well-intentioned outsider. The job, this interview, all set up as an ideal match to Bermonsby's experience and inclinations. His for the asking, was the gossip round the corridors. The Chairman set the scene; introducing each of the worthies who made up the interview panel before he proceeded.

"Bermonsby, we shall in turn ask questions of you. This post, in charge of C13, we all understand is central to the Government's new thinking and we would like to hear your ideas. Then, you will have an opportunity to raise any issues that we might not have covered and which you feel are important. MI5, as he is your man, would you like to start us off."

"Of course", was the welcoming response followed by an amiable smile toward Bermonsby.

"Edwin, I know you have given this considerable thought. Tell me, based on your extensive experience, what is there especially that we now need to include in the charter of this Department?"

Bermonsby had spent too many years confronting terrorism not to have formed very specific ideas. Ideas he was, as ever, happy to share.

“Gentlemen, we are all too painfully aware of the threat from terror. Maybe inclined too much to knee jerk reactions. This is not a time for headline grabbing exercises, or the soporific effect of glossy PR. History already teaches us enough about the tactics and the fate of terror groups – we are in that respect well prepared, able to make a measured response. No, it is the development of new forms of threat that should occupy our energies. We need to identify and understand any new phenomena – to seek it out, to interrogate and discover its methods. It is the only way to neutralise the danger.”

The Chairman interrupted with a certain sharpness.

“Bermonsby, may I ask if you have come across any such new phenomena? This danger you talk about.”

“Yes, I have. For the past several years I’ve been tracking the emergence of a determined and elusive individual here in Europe.”

“Ah, do you have a name then?”

Oh yes, thought Bermonsby, as he sought to deal with the Chairman’s probing and acerbic questioning. I have a file and a name.

“A name? Yes... Tanner... A name I found in the diary of one victim; a financier. The targets are varied but their deaths are all ones a professional would appreciate. Deadly, skilful and certain.”

The riposte was not what you would call friendly.

“But, Bermonsby, hardly professional putting our efforts into tracking a few individuals. And all this, in the hope that we shall find out something new. Doesn’t your approach rather leave us at some considerable risk? Shouldn’t we be seeking out likely suspects, rounding them up and bringing them to justice just as soon as we can? That’s rather the sort of line I had hoped you would be putting forward here. ”

As a strategy that was a million miles away from the one advocated in the working paper that persuaded Cabinet to revamp the role of department C13. Bermonsby felt it was his duty to put them right.

“I think perhaps you have not understood quite what I intend to do. Turning the terrorist is of more value to us than just interning them. Letting

their resentment build until it finally explodes, well that's no strategy at all. It's a bit of a joke."

"You think so?"

Outside the interview room Roland Bunt, who had been kept waiting, was uncomfortably sprawled across a hard bench seat in the corridor. He remained ready, anxiously checking his watch, waiting.

Bermensby, as he left the room, would have preferred to walk on past Bunt but found he could not avoid either the man or his inquisitive question.

"How did it go?"

Bermensby considered that with or without his help Bunt the policeman would find out for himself soon enough. With his ambition too easily read, Bunt was sure to face testing questions from the panel and, as Bermensby was well aware, Bunt's experience of dealing with terrorism fell considerably short of what the Government expected and C13 needed.

"Well enough, thank you Bunt.... my experience spoke for itself," was his curt and evasive reply.

As he strode away Bermensby let his mind fill with thoughts of how, given his own Department and a fresh remit, he could now focus on capturing Tanner. Then he would be able to show them exactly how to counter the real threat of terrorism. He decided to find John Adamson, his very successful protégé, to spend time planning how he would run C13.

In fact the task of running C13 went to Roland Bunt, apparently because he was the man prepared to deal with terrorism head on. For Roland Bunt, who had been told Bermensby had very little left to play for and everything to lose, it was his moment of triumph.

Even so, events would turn until Edwin Bermensby would be forced to tackle Roland Bunt head on. But he would be left with little time to solve the puzzle that so bothered him.

Part I: Back in Service

Chapter 1

Monday afternoon 16th July 1979

Ramplins Bank was the target. The shortcomings were all too evident to a professional eye.

"Be discreet but find out where the weak links are", Ian Stepnall had been told. "Get what information you can and then we will act."

He had been given free rein to explore the situation as he saw fit but not however to do anything precipitately. He walked thoughtfully from the grand facade of the bank to where his car waited.

"Good afternoon, sir. Finished for the day?" enquired the chauffeur as he saw Stepnall into the rear of the car before taking his own place behind the steering wheel. Stepnall was far from finished, half formed thoughts of what would be done because of what he had seen were milling in his mind.

"Back to the hotel, sir?" he was asked, as the car effortlessly moved through the traffic.

"Yes, I've got what I was looking for", replied Stepnall as he brought himself back to earth, registering that he would have all the time he needed on the flight to marshal a plan of action. Nothing between now and then could change the facts or his conclusions.

For a moment he allowed more pleasurable thoughts to distract him, thoughts of the attractive companion he had met on his flight into London. She was vivacious, a fascinating woman in her own right. Talking to her had been so easy and they had soon been on first name terms, Ian and Anna. He passed her one of his business cards, on the back of which he had written the phone number and address of his hotel, just as she had asked. Ian Stepnall eased himself back into the comfortable seats, enjoying the view of the City as they pulled away. He wondered when she would call.

The chauffeur had seen the Stepnalls of the world before. A drive along the Embankment, past the House, Birdcage Walk and Buck House; these busy executives from abroad all loved it. More than that, it was part of his heritage, something for him to be proud of. He would make it a fitting exit from the capital; a gentle run and they would also see the greenery. St James

Park, Green Park, Hyde Park and this time the delights of Richmond Park. Then it wouldn't be long before he was home, no late night tonight. A rare chance for some time with his young family.

Ian Stepnall knew nothing of the bomb that ripped him apart. The drivers of the cars that followed him did. The intensity of the noise of an explosion overwhelmed their senses. Random pieces of metal and glass were ferociously propelled through the air towards them. The force of the blast that followed was so strong it shook an approaching bus and all its passengers. An orange ball of flame edged by a blossoming black boundary filled the sky. An image that engulfed all other visions of the world.

The chauffeur's last thoughts were those of a man at ease with himself and his work. No ease from the intrusion of the explosion for those left behind. Nor for the cars that had been immediately behind him. Unsighted, they ploughed remorselessly one into another. The thud of impacts was followed by the scrawnch of metal as cars ripped and tore at each other. The eventual quiet that ensued gave way to overwhelming cries of pain from damaged bodies. It must have been the fourth car that swerved away from the eye of the storm and came to rest at a distance.

The driver of that car moved quickly enough. He stood by his open door for a mere instant as looking back he took in the carnage.

"Jesus Christ!"

Any disbelief at the images in his mind was dispelled by revisiting the actual sights and sounds. It was the sounds, the cries of anguish from fellow human beings, which brought him back to his senses. No time to stand and stare, the rush of adrenalin made sure of that.

He reached inside the car for his mobile phone. Without realising it he had turned his back on the dreadful images, as though by so doing he could protect himself from their effect. He cradled the bulky device in his hand while he stabbed at the 9 button three short times. The sounds behind him receded as he concentrated on getting help.

"Come on, come on."

Why did they take so long to answer?

"Which service? All the fucking services. A car has just blown up."

What was that? Where was he?

"Richmond Park, Richmond" he responded.

For a moment he paused with the phone in his hand. Was that it? Was that all he could do? He needn't have worried. He had done enough.

Anna Trudaine's base in London was a cramped one bedroom flat, smaller than she was accustomed to but convenient for what she needed. No one ever stayed there very long, which suited her down to the ground. Anna had no plans to settle. She could only risk staying four weeks, after that there would be trouble. Just four weeks were going to have to be enough.

Her small suitcase still lay where she had dumped it on the bedroom floor unlike the carefully laid out wigs she brought with her; one of blonde long tresses that could be dressed and worn in any number of ways, the other shoulder length and of a rich chestnut hue. Both wigs contrasted with her own easily looked after 'urchin' cut and even that she had changed with the help of jet black hair dye. The end result was effective but not quite to Anna's liking. She held her hair back and away from her forehead while she looked hard into the little mirror on the wall; the dark colour did nothing for her complexion and she would have to change her lipstick. Still it would only be for a short time; she could live with that. Having reconciled herself to that fact, she applied herself.

Anna opened the sash window that led onto the fire escape and peered out; the situation was fine, high enough so she could look down on the world and its passers-by. Anna eased herself through the opening onto the platform of the fire escape then, skilfully and as quietly as she could, climbed down past the lighted windows of her neighbours.

Even if Anna had not been inquisitive she would have had to look in. There is some indefinable and compelling quality to the light that illuminates the lives of others. She watched the humdrum and tawdry lives that played out in the flat below hers but soon lost interest, with it lost her concentration and her footing. The clatter Anna made on the metal steps sounded to her enough to raise the dead.

The man she had been watching moved right up to the window, peering hopelessly out, then opened the window. She clung to the wall willing him to look straight ahead, not to the side. When his retreating shadow told her that she was safe Anna moved on with due speed and proper care.

Down to the bottom of the fire escape, over walls that were easily scaled and through the back gardens of three adjacent properties. Then she ran along the side of No. 27 and made her way directly out onto the main road just a few yards away from the entrance to the Tube station and safe cover. Anna checked her watch. A minute and a half from the bottom of the fire escape, say another 30 seconds to get out of the window and as long again to get down the fire escape at speed. To get to her anyone would have to take down the front door of the house, climb the two flights of stairs and break through the meagre timber frame vestibule before they would reach her front door. Adding another five seconds to the time, to allow for shutting the window behind herself, still left her plenty of time to get away. Anna always took such precautions even though she had never before needed to make use of an escape route.

The pronouncements of her horoscope that day told her that 'any frustration and chaos would be continually smoothed out of the way'. That was reassuring,

The Emergency services operator who took the call from Richmond Park assessed the situation calmly enough. Cars don't usually blow up on their own. Assume a possible terrorist action standing instructions said. That meant authorising the use of arms. Then closing down the area, setting up a cordon, saturating the ground area with men, and bringing in the surveillance boys. Alert all the services, then the special response control room. It was there, at the receiving ends, that any suggestion of calmness evaporated and the logic of the incident drove everything forward at a frenetic pace.

D11 moved their dark blue vans to Sawyers Hill and Queens Road cutting off the entrances to the incident arena. Men piled out, heavily armed and just as heavily protected. The roads were taped off and video surveillance

equipment put in place to capture the details of every vehicle and person leaving the scene. The traffic built up as the D11 officers stopped and questioned drivers.

In the Park itself, other D11 officers approached the scene of devastation at a steady run. They moved in from the perimeter of their cordon, closing a noose. Overhead the surveillance helicopter with its ominous bulge at the front, a bulge that housed its electronic eyes, quartered the whole area inside the park.

Back in Control, when everything that would need to be done practically had been swung into action on the ground, it was time to inform those first line agencies who would be charged with investigating, apprehending and concluding any terrorist activity. There was no let up. Immediacy was still the order of the day.

The incoming call that the Head of C13 received came to his desk directly from a senior level at Control.

"There's been a hell of a do in Richmond Park, Roland. It looks as though it's one for your lads."

Roland Bunt was always prepared for just such an incident and took the news in his stride.

"OK, tell me. What have you got so far", he demanded.

He made some notes as he half listened to the catalogue of events, far more interested in watching Sandra, his secretary, through the glass partition. He grunted every now and again to remind Control he was still there. Finally, to keep Control on his toes and let him know who was in charge, he responded with specific orders.

"Right. Make sure I get a detailed report from the Incident Control Unit. And I'll need to see all the reports from the Bomb Squad and HQ forensics."

As he came through to the outer office his secretary was still filing papers away. Bunt restrained himself. A patronising tap on her backside would have to do. He had work to get on with.

"Sandra, it looks like it's going to be a long night. Get me organised with one of those double sandwiches, plenty of mayonnaise. Tell Peters, Jones and Fewster I want them and their lads in the briefing room. Now."

He wished. He wished for a very different sort of night to the one that was unfolding.

The afternoon had been far less disagreeable for John Adamson. He was simply planning the detail of a visit the following day to GCHQ. No major excitements and no risks to life and limb. He should be finished early enough now the uncertainties and demands of operational work were behind him.

The International Terrorism Research Unit he headed had been set up when the UK decided it had better respond to pressure from the US once the terrorists hit them. That had sharpened the Americans' senses no end and they expected everyone to join in their wagon train as they circled to repel all subversives. It had been a godsend to Adamson. His pedigree (Seconded from Washington, working with Bermonsby and finally assignment with GCHQ on clandestine surveillance, 'Signals fieldcraft' as the locals called it) meant he was made for the top job. It was also exactly the opportunity he had awaited. His chance to settle in the UK permanently and an escape from earlier operational work, most of which had been full of front line edginess.

The title of the unit was a bit of a mouthful but one that was usually, in the way of these things, shortened to ITRU. A jumble of initials that only held meaning for those who were already in the know and which, if you had to ask what they meant, meant that you were not entitled to know. It had taken Adamson three arduous years to settle securely into that civilised job. In fact civilised, settled and secure best described Adamson's current demeanour. His wife could take some of the credit for civilising the man. He could take the credit for keeping himself in shape.

However Adamson's past and his future life were always inevitably going to stumble across each other. The call he received from Incident Control was the start of it.

The sense of immediacy in their call momentarily perturbed John Adamson. However there were myriad explanations for a car exploding in

Richmond Park. He would wait until the dust settled and meanwhile leave the donkeywork to others.

"Thanks, but it's not one for me. Everyone else informed?"

On this occasion, as far as Adamson was concerned, it was down to C13 to get their hands dirty and sort it out.

Men lounged about in the C13 briefing room, speculating as to what this latest case could be. Bunt took it all in as he moved to the front of the room and put his sandwich down. Unselfconsciously he licked his fingers clean of the oozing mayonnaise. He was quite oblivious to the hitch by which, fingers placed between his gut and his waistband, he raised his trousers in defiance of the visible effects of his drinking, the force of gravity and the spread of middle age. It was the only hitch in the proceedings he would allow.

"Get yourselves sat round here. Just when we thought we might be getting on top. Bang. A bomb right under our noses."

The paraphernalia of an investigation waited his attention - the flipcharts, the whiteboard, and the photo board – all ominously present and blankly receptive. His men responded to his presence.

"Where, boss?"

"Richmond Park. We are waiting for incident reports from the scene."

Bunt carried on speaking, feeling the need to occasionally raise his voice to hold their attention while he laid out the detail on the whiteboard.

"Car bomb in Richmond Park at 16.30 approx. Two dead, financier and chauffeur. Both identified, car traced. We're working on its last movements. Hired, complete with chauffeur. The financier was called Stepnall. Ian Stepnall. The chauffeur; Mark Finlay, family man. We think he's clean. Financier had a flight booked for Germany. Leaving from Heathrow."

"Does that make it an out of town job?"

"We can't be definite about that yet, but the incident site tells us a lot."

He explained the implications, "Richmond Park; minimum civilian damage; wide open space; lots of escape routes; well prepared; nothing untoward seen by witnesses. Obviously a professional assassin who's chosen their venue well."

He added 'Professional assassin' to the details on the board.

A moment's thought was all it took for one of his men to respond.

"Well that means it wouldn't be a command wire system or a missile. A trembler would have triggered earlier, so that's out."

Bunt interrupted, "Maybe a radio controlled detonation", adding this to the steadily growing incident profile being built up in front of them."

He considered it all for only a moment.

"Which would explain how. They probably got to the car. There's practically no security at some of these car hire sites. A gift for a professional. Right who do we know who's in town?"

As Bunt reached for his sandwich the briefing room door was thrust open. Little ceremony was allowed to stand in the way of any urgent news for him. Terrorists don't wait on such niceties the messengers had very bluntly been told, so if a message is urgent then fucking well get it delivered.

"We've had a telephone call from the Provos."

"Coded?" challenged Bunt

"Yes", came the response, "normal channel."

"So it's one of theirs?"

"Yes, but it's not straightforward. They've got a rogue on the loose. Identified as Tanner."

A pause for this to sink in, then straight on.

"Wasn't meant to happen so they are putting daylight between him and them. He must have really upset them. They have given us an address."

"Well let's have it then."

"Smithers Street, Chalk Farm. They said we'd have the number."

"That certainly narrows it down", responded Bunt, with a new sense of urgency. "Right, let's get busy. Which of the nasties is in Smithers Street?"

One of Bunt's men immediately got everyone's attention as he held a file aloft. Bunt looked intently at it and then listened carefully as the story of the man from Smithers Street was unfolded for them all.

"Here he is. Always claimed to give conditional support to the Provos. Shady. Nothing naughty for the past 6 months but always in there. He's helped fund them in the past. Not always in the UK."

The details of the man's life rolled out into public view. The conclusion?

"Sometimes we think he's in, sometimes we think he's out."

Bunt took it all in. He took the file that was proffered from an outstretched hand; looked at the file himself, looked at the picture of the man in his early thirties, looked closely at the face.

"It's that bastard, he's in alright. We're going to be straight out on this one and nip his little pink bud. Someone let the lads on mobile duty know we're on for a shout. Operation Tanner."

The track record was a violent one, not an easy one to deal with.

"No pussyfooting about with psychiatrists and megaphones."

With no reaction from his men, a confident smile flickered across Bunt's face. First, he'd beaten Edwin Bermonsby to the job as Head of C13, now he would beat him in the hunt for the terrorist.

"Understand. We'll be taking no prisoners on this one. And I mean no prisoners."

Bunt didn't need to say any more. Tanner was in their sights.

Chapter 2

Monday evening 16th July 1979

Anna paused at the roadside as she left behind the confines of her flat, this time exiting by the front door. She heard rather than felt the splish of the fallout from a pigeon in flight overhead as it landed all too evidently on the front of her coat. Anna shuddered when she saw what had befallen her. A cabbie, stuck in the slow moving stream of vehicles, seeing the look of disgust on her face couldn't resist shouting his personal advice to what he reckoned was 'a fair bit of stuff'.

'You need to keep moving, love; they can't hit a moving target.'

Anna shrugged.

"You'd think I'd have learnt that by now."

With a grin she slipped past his cab and headed for the newsagents. The billboard shouted the news of Ian Stepnall's demise and she grabbed a copy of the latest evening paper. In the circumstances the cabbie's advice was all the more pertinent

Once back in the flat she scanned the newspaper for detail and hard facts, which were few and far between. Anna didn't like or welcome the speculation already being offered about Ian Stepnall being the target of a possible terrorist attack. She also scanned the airwaves and finally settled to listen in to one selected channel. While the empty static rattled at her, she looked at Stepnall's stars in the paper. 'A good day for Taurus. Keep your own counsel. You will succeed where others have failed.'

It said nothing about the forces set against you succeeding as well, leaving a hollow victory.

Her own star forecast was more revealing. 'You will receive news from an unexpected quarter and would be well advised to act on it promptly. However, caution should be your watchword for the weeks ahead. Friends are not all that they seem to be.'

On cue the surveillance and listening equipment she had acquired chattered out. Anna heard all too clearly Bunt's instructions as they were broadcast.

"Full terrorist alert. All units operational repeat, operational. Operation Tanner. Procedure Red three, RED THREE" toned the voice from Control.

She listened as each unit followed procedure, checking back with Control.

"Saffron 2, acknowledging. Tanner. Status Red 3..."

Gold 4, acknowledging. Tanner. Status Red 3..."

The voices were sharp, aware, alerted. Anna had little doubt they were already on to her and she waited as details of the location were passed on. Even if it was the wrong location there was little doubting their intention. A status Red situation. They were out to kill her. Weapons would have been taken out, checked and made ready.

Pinned down, she had to confound and confuse the enemy. Anna looked back to the newspaper. It took a hurried minute to find the phone number of the news desk, hidden as it was below the confusion of the weather maps and forecast right at the bottom of page two.

Making the call to the paper took her outside again but giving them Smithers Street and alerting them to the raid was all that was needed. Eager ears listened to her every word. It bought her the time to carry on as planned, to smarten herself for a trip, dressed to mingle not to kill. She was confident she could still do that; there ought to be only a bare police presence to deal with where she was going.

In contrast Chalk Farm and Smithers Street in particular had never been so well policed ever before. Maybe one police car once in a blue moon would go down Smithers Street. It was one of those nondescript Victorian rows of houses. Terrace houses that served as home to a motley collection of families and individuals. Many of the houses, now too large or too expensive for one family, had been broken down into flats and bedsits. No one quite knew whether as an area it was on the up and up or about to take a dive downwards. Many hoped for the financial rewards that gentrification would bring. But they didn't hold their breath waiting. The massive police presence did nothing for their aspirations.

The police cars and vans arrived at both ends of the street and closed it off. Bodies piled out and were everywhere. Snipers took position. Men in body armour evident all round, covered by their vehicles until the word to go in was given. Officers taped off the ends of the street; pushing back the passers by who no longer felt compelled to pass on by, their numbers added to by the Press.

Bunt who took pride in leading from the front on these occasions checked around as his men rolled out yet another quarantined shut down of a target area. He looked quizzically at the Press. His frustration showed.

"What the fuck are you doing here?" he shouted to the nearest of them.

He didn't want to hear the response when it came. Bad enough that they were here at all.

"We've had a tip off. And it was right wasn't it? What's going on then?"

Bunt ignored their questions; rather he was at pains to make sure that any observers were kept at a safe distance from No 15, Smithers Street. This was not a spectator sport, particularly where there was a good chance that the target was safely indoors, unaware of the impending assault on his otherwise uncomplicated evening. Bunt's men would still be in and out like a dose of salts and, in the confusion, who could say what happened? All he had to do was keep the reporters out of the way and get on with the job, as planned. He rejoined his frontline men, all waiting for some signal.

"Orders still stand. Let's get on with it."

Strong lights showed as officers ran up the front path, covered by others behind walls and cars. Speed not caution their byword now. The dark blue front door gave in to the first strong shoulder. Bunt lost track of how many men went in but he could see their progress as lights went on through the building. He waited for the sound of shots.

Behind Bunt a different drama played out. A man pushed to the front of the crowd, looking to see what all the drama was about. A can of drink carried safely in a pocket, a box, marked up with the logo of a pizza company, held firmly in front of him. Dinner for one. He looked at the house with its blaze of lights, at the men with guns and the figure of Bunt. He heard the sounds of wood breaking as yet more doors were kicked in. He realised all too well exactly what this was about.

This was not a time to run. They'd only track him down again and again move in for the kill. This was a time to act. Be sharp, save your life here son. He turned to the man with the camera.

"Are you press? 'Cos that's where I live and I know what is going on."

An old hack who had placed himself out of the way pricked up his ears. Time to start shaping the extraordinary story that was undoubtedly due to run its course here. He eased himself forward and into the situation with an emphatic "What is going on then?"

"I'm dead meat if I don't get protection. And I mean protection."

At that, the young man grabbed frantically at the arm of the reporter and shouted desperate instructions to the man with the camera.

"Start photographing me. They want to kill me. I'm very much alive and I want to stay that way."

Bunt still waited for the shots. Nothing. An upper window opened and a voice called out,

"It's clean".

His men came out of the house, empty-handed.

The sudden glitter of flashlights attracted the attention of the officers in the street. One went directly to the heart of the matter with stern words and others followed him in.

"You know the drill. No pictures and no lights."

The crowd paid him little notice, their attention fixed firmly on the scrummage where the Press were standing. The response that he did get, from a man directly in front of him, was unbelievable.

"That's my fucking flat you've just wrecked."

They grabbed their target, put him to the floor with textbook precision as others, their rifles and guns pointed directly at him, stood guard. The flashlights continued, standing out like a halo of disco lights above their prisoner. No matter what the drill should be, no reporter worth the name would miss such a photo-call. Never having seen this happen before, not sure what would happen next, a young reporter shouted,

"He's given himself up".

The old hack joined in the chorus that was breaking over the heads of the officers who had the man spreadeagled and in some discomfort. Discomfort, not how the reporter saw it but he felt sure that would be the official description if any were offered. He couldn't resist having a dig as Bunt approached.

"Looks perfectly healthy to us at the moment."

Encouraged by the older mans disregard for protocol the cub reporter again added his voice to the proceedings,

"And we've got that on film".

Then from another source in the crowd a more thoughtful rejoinder,

"Make sure he stays OK".

Bunt, anxious to defuse the situation, reacted automatically and defensively,

"What does that mean precisely?"

As he expected, no reply. When it came down to it none of them had the bottle. None of them were brave enough to stand ground against him. Bunt understood what he had to do. He gave a firmly shouted order to his men who were destined otherwise to remain in a tableau, one that grotesquely maligned the roles of the perpetrator and the victimised.

"Get Tanner into the van and get him away."

Then under his breath and to himself, as they bundled the violently struggling prisoner into the van.

"Make us look like pratts, he'll wish he never had."

Bunt went back to the old hack. He had lost count of how many times he had seen him in situations like this, he was always there or thereabouts. One of the old lads. He understood the way it was. How it had to be. Still, it was time for a word to set the young reporter right. He'd been a bloody nuisance. Bunt picked him out and spoke to him directly in a voice that appeared to mock but in fact, in the company of his peers, was deeply wounding.

"You. You choose strange bedfellows. That was one of the worlds most professional and dangerous terrorists. You happy about that? He's responsible for the bomb that killed Ian Stepnall, and his chauffeur. Want to tell the chauffeur's kids what you've just been doing?"

The young reporter stood silent and crestfallen until the old hack came to his rescue. "Sod off Bunt", was all that was needed as a rejoinder to Bunt's homily. Whatever had happened to upset Bunt it wasn't down to the Press. With nothing more to be said they variously and all started to drift away.

Anna's tip off had sown confusion, gained her some valuable respite – but she would pay a heavy price. The old hack, like so many others present at the scene, was going to make sure this was a front page story. His paper, like so many, would now be full of speculation about terrorists and Tanner for days to come.

Bunt returned wearily to his office. In truth it hadn't gone too badly after all. He lifted the phone and dialled an outside number.

"Everything's gone to plan, except the press were there. Now we still have a terrorist to deal with, not a body."