

Escaping From A Murderer



By
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Codes: MF viol rp

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Preface

This story is part of the “Growing Pains” world. In this story, teenage mother Annabel is embroiled with a London gangster while a Scottish solicitor and police officer spar until a tragedy created hundreds of miles away brings them together. The setting for this story is Kirkcudbright in Scotland.

I was somewhat at pains at whether to release this story; it was written many, many moons ago when my mind was not in quite a happy place and it is a lot darker than I ever imagined. I am not totally happy with some of the prose, but I don't think it's that bad, so I will release it to allow it to be judged!

Please let me know what you think of the story; I cannot hope to improve as an author if the readers don't tell me where I succeeded and where I failed!

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Chapter I

“Ah cannae believe it,” PC Iain Kennedy cried as he crossed the road. “Ah caught 'im and that bloody ...” His voice trailed off as he checked the tax status of two battered vehicles parked opposite the police station, before turning right with his colleague and towards the big church that dominated the quaint Scottish town.

“Ah it's not right,” his partner agreed. “Do-gooders, the lot of 'em. He needs locking up.”

The two police constables nodded politely towards a young lady pushing her pram towards them and they returned to their conversation. “Aye, yer not wrong. Bloody solicitors. All this care in the community cobblers and now some dangerous nutter is out, 'cause of 'er messin'.”

Iain's colleague asked to stop in the local convenience store for some biscuits. “We're out,” he moaned, and Iain crossed the road to check another couple of tax discs, nearly colliding with a woman hurrying along the pavement.

“Yer,” he cried as he dusted himself down. “Yer the one been getting Jacky off.”

The young woman, complete with short brown hair and a pained expression, looked up to the Policeman and sighed. “He needed help,” the young solicitor replied. “And now he's got it. And you know ...”

“He needed locking up,” Iain shouted and stood over the wiry girl. “E's been dealing pills and he's an alka-oll-ic. 'E hit me and ...”

Margaret sighed. “The Prosecutor Fiscal agreed with me. T'eres too many young men in prison who need help. Locking them up doesn't help.” She gave him a curt smile and nodded. “Now, if you don't mind I got things to be doing,” she said firmly.

“E'll be up to no good. 'E'll always be up to no good,” Iain said firmly that was dismissed with a wave of Margaret's hand. “E'll be on pills again.”

Margaret turned and smiled. “You make out like he's a gangster. He's a kid. That's all. If you want gangsters then go to Glasgow or London.” PC Kennedy snorted and straightened his jacket; he had nothing more to say to the woman.

* * * * *

“Dealing on me patch,” the stocky London gangster shouted and held out an Iron bar, thumping it into the almost lifeless figure suspended upside down from the ceiling. The prostrate man cried into his gag, but the sound still echoed around the waterfront warehouse on the banks of the Thames.

The gangster walked away, nodding to a thin guy to remove the gag from their victim, while he pulled the hood from a figure kneeling down and crying. “You let her go,” the upside-down man cried the moment his gag was removed. “This is between me and you, not her.”

“Look at Daddy,” Tony shouted at the teenage girl on the floor. “Some eighteenth birthday present.” She sobbed into some cloth stuffed into her mouth and strained against her bonds but couldn't move. “I'll fuckin' ask again, what were you dealin' on me patch for?”

The dealer stared at his daughter. "I dain't know," he cried. "I was told to shift the Brighton over yer way."

The gangster pulled out a gun, and pointed it at him. "Who?" The girl behind him whimpered and cried into her gag. "I said 'oo sent ya?"

The dealer gulped. "Arry," he cried. "Arry told me. 'E say nothing 'bout you."

Tony shook his head. "Is 'e 'aving one?"

The dealer struggled with his bonds and cried out as the henchman punched him in the face. Blood, streaking down his cheek and across his eyelids, dripped onto the floor and Tony nodded towards the two men. They walked over to the side of the warehouse and the dealer's eyes widened as he stared into the eyes of the London mobster. "I dun know. I jus' did as I was told. I ain't into ..."

There was a slight scraping sound and he spun on his rope to see a small table being dragged across the draughty warehouse. Tony smiled as he roughly pulled the blubbering girl to her feet and threw her across the waist-high wooden furniture.

She cried out as her body hit the hard surface and Tony watched the father as he pulled down the teenager's trousers and smiled at him. "My friends 'ere. They gonna give your bitch a seein' to. Remind scum like ya, fuck with me and I'll fuck ya."

"No! Leave her alone," he yelled and Tony reattached the gag to the man, before smashing the Iron bar into his kneecaps. The dealer yelled into the gag, just as the daughter did as she was roughly taken from behind by the first henchman.

"Watch it," Tony cried and turned the man around to watch his daughter be raped in front of him. "Watch her." He cackled as the young woman struggled with her binds and screamed into the gag. Tony laughed as the first henchman finished with her, and she begged to be allowed to go when the other gentleman, roughly impaled her.

She wailed, crying constantly, as she was brutally attacked. The dealer made muffled sounds and he took his gun, and aimed it at the daughter's head. He looked at the upside-down man, staring at him in the eyes as he laughed, pulling the trigger as his accomplice ejaculated inside of her.

The daughter's body fell lifeless and Tony cackled. The man screamed into the gag and Tony looked at him. "Ya did that," he told him. "Ya killed ya daughter when ya fucked with me." He gulped and muffled something into the gag but Tony pulled the gun up and fired it into the chest of the dealer. "Bury 'em," Tony shouted as he put the gun back in his holder and ripped two bracelets, a necklace and a two ear-rings – her eighteenth birthday present – from the dead girl before putting them in a little box.

He strode out of the warehouse to an expensive black saloon, and a waiting chauffeur. He lit a cigar in the back of the plush car as it meandered its way through the east London traffic and pulled up outside a large detached property.

The gangster got out of the vehicle, taking a small package with him, opened the door to his house and watched as his brown-haired teenage girlfriend embraced him and kissed him on the cheek. "Good day, babe?"

He grunted and passed her the gift. "All-right," he said coldly and she smiled at him as she saw the jewellery in the box.

"Thank you," she cried and put her arms back around him. "Guess ya want ya usual," she said with a grin. "Or the special?"

"Special," he grunted with barely a smile.

"For this," she said with a wink and holding up the box. "Anything. Later babes, or now?"

"Yeah," came the gruff response. "Now!"

The nineteen year-old mother gave him a coy smile and giggled. She put her hand out and took his wrist, walking backwards up the stairs and leading him into their double bedroom, staring at him in the eyes. She ran her hands over his shoulders in their bright red room and then unbuttoned his shirt, sliding her hands over his hairy chest.

The gangster pursed his lips and watched as his teenage lover moved her hands down her body and unbuckled his belt, looking up at his brown eyes staring down at her. She licked her lips and slowly unbuttoned his trousers, before allowing them to fall to the floor.

Annabel kissed his cock through his cotton underwear and he gave a groan; she was good at that and she felt his mass of pubic curls with her nose, peeking out around the sides of the blue garment. She put her hands in the waistband and yanked them down, allowing his cock to bob free and poke her in the nose.

She smiled as she did and reached into the drawer behind her taking out a pair of white silk stockings that she rolled up. She pushed him gently back on the bed and put the first one on his left foot.

His erection stiffened the moment the smooth silk came into contact with his skin and his lover gently rolled up the women's underwear to his thigh.

He bit his lip as she took the other stocking and repeated it, before rubbing her hands up his legs. She could see the dark hair underneath the legwear squashed up against the translucent fabric, but his legs felt smooth to the touch.

Annabel blew him a kiss, and undressed herself, taking her moistening knickers and draping them over her lover's face. He breathed in deeply, swearing at his lover indulging his perversions and she nibbled gently at his cock, sucking the tip gently and allowing her mouth to slide down the shaft.

He gave an audible grunt and she slid up and down his cock, gleefully taking his entire five inch length in her mouth and sucking as her lips came up the shaft.

He writhed underneath her experienced touch and squeezed the mattress with his fists as his legs quivered and she pressed against his balls. He closed his eyes, inhaling deeply through Annabel's discarded and dirty underwear before he gave a cry.

She detached her mouth from his manhood, used her hand to pump him vigorously and aimed his spewing cock onto his stomach. She watched his body tense, and his head shake with his mouth open and five strings of semen line his stomach.

She looked at him and smiled. "Love you," she whispered and he just put his head back and groaned into the underwear on his face.

Chapter II

“George,” the nineteen year old cried and the door opened.

“It's you,” he snapped. “What d'ya want?”

“To see you,” the girl simpered at his aggression. He closed the door to the small flat as she entered, pushing him out of the way.

“Annabel,” he muttered. “What ya doin' here? I heard you were shacked up with some nutter.”

She scowled. “Tony. Tony Ratcliff.”

“Him. And if Tony finds out I don't want to lose bits of me, you understand?”

“He ain't gonna find out,” she snapped. “He ...” Annabel cocked her head and kissed him on the cheek. “He's cutting up some dealers over Dagenham way. I came to see you.”

“Why didn't ya visit me? Nearly two years, it's long time without anyone visitin'?”

Annabel scoffed. “What an 'ave Tony find out?” She snapped. “'E knows the odd guy in the nick,” she told him firmly and got a resigned grunt in return. She softened her expression and rubbed her hand on his forearm. “I've missed ye.”

He snorted. “Yeah well ... ya found Tony now.”

“Ah don't love 'im. I love you.” He shook his head and walked into the kitchen.

“But fuckin' late for that,” he told her. “I 'eard ya had his baby.”

Annabel pursed her lips and took a deep breath. “Yeah 'bout nine months after that night.” His eyes narrowed and he pushed a button on the base of the cream and brown kettle. “I left your house after the Police came for you. I cried for a bit. And then a day or two later met Tony at 'is club.”

George shook his head and the girl stood in the doorway. “Not even a letter.”

“And have Tony find what ya sent back in return,” she snapped. “D'ya know what he does to people he dain't like? I had to hide the two ya did send.”

“Then why you with him?”

“Oh yeah, 'cause I'm gonna tell him he's dumped,” Annabel snapped. “And if I run 'way he'll find me.” She took a deep breath and rubbed her ear. “He'll get bored of me soon and he'll find some other tart. 'Til then, I 'ave to be careful. For Abigail's sake.”

“He ain't gonna let ya take his kid,” George moaned.

“It's a girl. 'E wants a boy.”

“If ya want rid of 'im ya gotta run away. Go far and cut ya ties with London. Like Manchester, or Wales, Ireland, Scotland.” She grunted and squinted.

“I know, seems a long way away, mind. Only got my mum 'round 'ere anyway. She's got

Abigail today. If I go ...”

“I ain't coming with ya.”

“Why?”

“I got business to do,” George told her firmly and ran his hands through his short hair. “And I got my own little girl with Charlotte. I ain't leaving her behind.”

Annabel pursed her lips. “But ...”

“But I got a business down here ...”

“It got you in jail,” Annabel thundered and sighed. “Oh come on, ya can't keep doing blue movies ya whole life.”

He gave a tortured smile. “Ya weren't complaining when I was givin' ya a few quid for it.”

Annabel threw her hands up in the air. “Ahh come on babe, I wan' to be with you but it can't be London.” She sighed. “I dain't want to be with Tony.”

George bit his lip. “Shouldn't 'ave 'ad his baby then.”

Annabel sniffed. “I dain't.”

“Ya did,” he snapped.

She shook her head slowly. “Abigail's yours,” she told him and awaited for his expression to change. “She's your baby. She was conceived that night, George.”

“Don't believe ya.”

“Do the sums. She was born on 7th January last year. You were arrested on 11th April year before.” He gulped and she wiped her eyes. “I ain't told anyone before, but she ain't Tony's, she's yours. And she's got your smile.”

George sniffed, shaking his head and Annabel nodded. He leant against the worktop. “Mine?”

“Yeah,” Annabel told him. “She's really your kid. You can see it in the eyes. Now d'ya see why I want to be with you, George? We had something great before. Let's run away, get married and just start a new life. I don't want Abigail to grow up 'round here.” He snorted and Annabel raised her eyebrows, sinking to her knees and kissing the shorts of her ex-partner. “Ya know I can do your special things.”

He shook his head and tried to push her away but she brushed his hand aside and nuzzled against his crotch with a giggle. “Annabel,” he cried but the teenager just pushed him against the worktop.

“Ah come on,” she encouraged him and gave him a smile. “Ya know ya want it. Two years long time for any man. And one that does mucky films.”

He gulped and closed his eyes as Annabel slowly removed his shorts and kissed the tip of his erect cock. She knew how to get around the pornographer and worked her way down his oversized manhood. He mewed and took a deep breath. “Annabel,” he panted. “This doesn't mean ... ahhh god!” Annabel sucked on his left testicle as she began to gently

pump his shaft and he closed his eyes, holding onto the worktop.

His legs began to move and shake, pushing his rear against the cold wooden kitchen surface as he panted erratically, mewling loudly as he did. She squeezed his cock tightly as she massaged it, sucking on his testicles and running her tongue over his sensitive balls.

He exhaled sharply and cried out, as streams of semen spurted out of his cock to a loud cry of passionate lust, covering the hair of his unfaithful lover with his seed.

He panted and she looked up at him with a smile. "Love you," she mouthed at him. "Mean it!"

* * * * *

Margaret tucked the young infant into bed and put the colourful book on the bookcase, leaning over and kissing him on the forehead. "Night, poppet," she whispered and pulled the duvet over his torso.

She gave a sigh, watched him from the doorway for a few moments and closed the door, walking downstairs and rubbing her eyes as she sat down in the sofa. "Asleep?" She looked up to see the face of her father reading his newspaper and she nodded.

"Yeah ... three stories. He's getting demanding."

The older man laughed. "Es yer young man comin' to see you tonight?" Margaret shrugged and groaned.

"I dunno. He promised and ..." She looked at her watch and sighed. "... he's not used to being a father," she admitted.

Her father sighed as he turned over his paper. "Just lucky your mother is retired to look after little Eddie," he told her as he scanned the paper. "Be difficult without her."

"I know. I didn't plan to get pregnant," she told him firmly. "Throwing up after taking the ..."

"I dunnae want tae know," he barked and then put his paper down on his knees. "I wan' ya to be happy."

She shrugged and nodded. "Was thinkin' of movin' to the flat again. One 'bove the solicitor's."

Her father's eyes narrowed. "What and drive out here every morning with Eddie to go back and then come back and collect him and go back."

"I'd see more of Keith," she told him and he snorted. "He lives in town and he ..."

"He could stay here if he'd do an 'onest days work." She cocked her head and sighed wearily.

"He does! When there's work. It's not easy."

"You're a bright lass," her father told her. "University, law, takin' over solicitors' practice. He's got no future."

"Because he is the father of my child," Margaret said firmly, pre-empting the rest of the

lecture. "And that makes him very important to me Dad." Her father grunted derisively and she shook her head, picking up a case from the sofa; if she immersed herself in work, there could be no more discussion.

Chapter III

The police van sped down the small side street and the driver swung the vehicle into the corner, stopping abruptly. The back doors opened as half-a-dozen coppers leapt out.

The uniformed gentleman at the head of the six strong contingent ran into a small door, splintering the wooden panelling and leaving it hanging off it's hinges. "Police. Stay where you are." A voice cried and the men poured into the property.

There was a shout from upstairs as two men appeared in the landing, swore and then barricaded themselves into a bedroom. "Open up," two policemen cried and barged into the door. The suspects put a chair on their side of the wooden door and opened the window.

"Quick," the elder one cried and they looked into the bushes that lined their tiny front garden. The wiry man jumped into them, squeaking as he landed. And beckoned to his companion.

He scrambled to his feet and sprinted away as the elder man hit the greenery and they both tore away from the property. There were shouts behind them as two of the policemen gave chase.

"Split up," one of the men cried as they reached the end of the road and they hared off in different directions with the policemen taking a criminal each. The elder man hid in a garden and was easily found but the younger man ran for over two miles, desperately trying to put some distance between him and the tiring officers of the law, but he was soon joined by his colleagues and the man was stopped when a local shopkeeper tripped him up as he ran past.

"George Baynes. You're fuckin' nicked," the panting officer cried, and gave the illicit pornographer a punch for his trouble.

* * * * *

"Ah been thinkin'," Shona told her husband as she brought a drink into him. "Ahh want 'nother bairn." PC Iain Kennedy spluttered into his tea and he scowled at her.

"What?"

"Ah want 'nother bairn. One more."

"Yer got four bairns. Not got room fur many more." Shona's face twisted slightly as she thought and sighed.

"Ahhhh, but ah was one of six and yer were one of five. Ah thinkin' furs a bit small. I wannae 'nother one."

Iain shook his head as he looked into his lap. "Four cost enough," he moaned and Shona hummed in disappointment.

"Ahh our Annie up street has five and ah'm thinking a wee girl'll finish our family nicely." She waited for Iain to shake his head and she sat down next to him. "Just one more, please Iain."

He grunted. "How's boys been today?"

"Robert's got into ah fight with that Peter lad up street again," Shona told her husband. "And Graeme's out with Jamie in garden." Iain smiled and Shona looked at him. "So that bairn ..."

"Later," he said with a degree of finality. "We'll talk later."

Chapter IV

Margaret looked out from the window of the office; they had enough work for three of them but she had to make do with the single junior solicitor – which technically she was as well. She spent half her life filing and wondered whether she could afford, and manage to squeeze in, a receptionist-cum-secretary-cum office dogsbody.

It was gone 7pm and the cold Scottish winter had permeated the small first floor office and she pulled her cardigan closer to her body; she was freezing.

She caught a glimpse a bright red in the distance and her eyes narrowed, watching as her boyfriend crossed the road. He glanced around the street and held out his arms, embracing someone else.

Her heart skipped a beat and she gulped, grabbing her keys and striding out of the small office and bursting into the road, a few feet away from them. “Ah come on,” the pretender cooed at him and squeezed his hand. “Come back to my place.”

Margaret coughed loudly and the couple swung around to see the young solicitor leaning against the doorway with her arms crossed and glaring at them. “Ahh Maggie-moo,” the father of her child cried. “Ah didnae see ya there.”

“Evidently,” Margaret said coldly and raised her eyebrows. “Off ya go. She wants ya to go back to her place.” He screwed up his face and went to speak when Margaret shook her head. “Dumped Keith. Stay away for me.”

“But ...”

“You want her, you have her.”

“You can't stop me from seeing Eddie,” he shouted.

She shook her head. “I can get an injunction if you want. Stay 'way from me and from Eddie.”

* * * * *

George sat down on the small park and waited, watching the ducks fly over the grass and land on the pond with a splash. It was quiet as it had been raining earlier in the day but was now fairly pleasant for the time of year. He scanned the park again and stretched out, waiting for the person he wanted to see.

The wiry figure of Annabel Sprott soon homed in to view, walking up an adjacent path, pushing a red buggy in front of her, containing a baby – so wrapped up that its face was barely visible.

He took a second to admire her beauty – the radiant skin, soft curves that were wrapped under her coat and the smile – the wonderful smile, that seemed to light up every room she went into.

He leant over the back of the park bench and waved subtly at her. She looked at him and took the buggy off the footpath and across the muddy field. “George!” Annabel cried but George waved his hands in a downwards motion to tell her to be quieter. “What?”

Annabel sat down on the bench with him and hissed. "Quieter," he moaned and adjusted her top button on the blouse she was wearing. "How are ya?"

"I heard you'd been arrested?"

"Where from?"

"People," Annabel snapped. "So what 'appened?"

George shrugged. "Nothin'." Annabel glared at him and he took a deep breath. "Nothin' much. 'Onestly love, you dain't believe me."

"'Cause I know you've been up to something."

"They nicked me. They let me go."

She shook her head and he rubbed his hands. "That it?"

"They got me on bail," George snapped. "OK?"

"Oh babes, what ya been up to?"

"Nothin'," George lied and ran his hands through his hair. "And what with Tony you shouldn't care 'bout the odd mucky film ..." Annabel interrupted with a snort and rose from the bench but George tugged at her trousers with an apology. "What's he been up to?"

"Nothin'," Annabel told him and he looked at her.

"Talk to me. I'm worried 'bout you and I know you're worried too."

Annabel sighed and looked into his eyes. "Oh I dunno what he's up to. But he always has blood on his shirt. I mean, that ain't a good sign, is it?"

George took a deep breath and licked his lips. "Nah, I mean, where was he last night?" Annabel's eyes narrowed and he looked at her. "I went to your 'ouse, I wanted to see ya but Tony got into his car as I came up the road, like. And I got scared when I saw him."

Annabel gulped and she rubbed her face. "Oh George. Ya can't come up to see me in Tony's house. He'll kill ya."

George shook his head. "Know that. But I want'd see ya babe. Been thinking. 'Bout us. Running away, but reckon that Tony could be a problem."

"Yeah, I know," Annabel snapped. "Look Georgie ..."

"Go to the Fuzz," he blurted out and closed his eyes. "Go to them. I'll go with you. You could help put him away and then we could ..."

"Are you crazy?" Annabel snapped. "Go to the Fuzz?" He nodded and she got up, ignoring his pleas for her to stay. "I ain't puttin' my daughter's life in that sort of danger. He's got friends in the Police," Annabel spat. "Hell he's half of the Flying Squad in his back pocket and on the payroll" She mocked him with a sneer. "Go to the Police, can't think of anything worse. Now I'm going ..."

She grabbed hold of the pram and despite George calling her, she was gone.

“Fuck,” George cried and held his head in his hands, pulling out the small recorder in his pocket. “Fuck, fuck, fuck!”

* * * * *

Tony darted back down behind the bush and swore, peeping out again with the binoculars for a third look. “Fuckin' pigs,” he muttered. “All over the fuckin' place.” His companion gulped and nodded, checking the deserted road at the top of the little hill for anyone before looking back at his boss. “How much stuff was there?”

The man gave a nervous expression. “All of the delivery, Tony. The one from Monday.”

“All of it? You fuckin' ...”

“Willie said the 'ouse in Barking's not safe no more, and we ain't got anything on the Newham Road or down South of the river. We're runnin' out of places.”

Tony rubbed his brow. “Some fuckin' cunt's shootin' their mouth off to the cops,” he cried and snatched at the binoculars. “I need speak to Willie. Tell 'im to meet me at the 'ouse.” Tony opened the car door to his sports car and started it, speeding off into the distance.

He knew that there was someone in his organisation leaking information to the Police – they had had six of their safe houses raided in the last eight weeks – and the one they had just watched be torn apart by several van loads of the local plod they had only secured a few days ago.

He had enough trouble finding property to use, and they didn't want to store all their drugs in one place. Their dealers needed somewhere safe to operate – as well as a monopoly – or else he would be out of business and he could hardly wander into the local estate agents and put a deposit down on a house for “storing the gear.” Everyone knew who he was, and he didn't want more whispers to reach the Old Bill.

In essence, he was reliant on the secrecy of his underlings, and one of them was talking to the wrong people. He needed to root out the loud-mouth and make him pay for his crimes.

Tony pulled up outside his house, noticing the twitching curtains opposite – he would have one of his henchmen to have a quiet, yet painfully effective, word with the teenage boy in number 23 later. He threw open the door, closing it with a bang and saw a startled Annabel run in from the kitchen holding a rolling pin. “Oh, it's you,” she cried and gave a relieved sigh. “Thought it was a burglar or something.”

Tony snorted. “Yeah, as if a burglar would rob this place. I'd have his fuckin' balls in a blender if he did.” Annabel nodded and gave a coy smile.

“I'm just feedin' Abigail, but then gonna put her in bed. You want a special one tonight?” She panted as she spoke but Tony shook his head.

“No. And when Willie comes I'll be in the Front Room. Fuck off when he comes. I dain't wanna be disturbed.” Annabel's smile disappeared and she nodded.

“Any problem, babe?”

He took a deep breath and waved his hands around in front of her. “What's with the fuckin' questions?” He pushed her on the shoulder and glared at her. “Eh?”

Annabel's face fell even further as he advanced on her and she spluttered an answer. "No ... I ..." Tony shook his head and pushed her away.

"Kitchen," he said with unnecessary firmness and watched as she retreated back through the door.

Tony walked into his lounge, pulled open his drinks cabinet and poured himself a large whisky, downing it one and then pouring another one; his empire was being poisoned and he wanted answers.

Willie arrived fifteen minutes later – a tall man with a sneer and Annabel showed him to the front room. She closed the door behind him. He walked over to the drinks cabinet, talking as he did. "Heard Police been raiding new place," he said as he poured some Scottish spirit into a clean glass.

"Yeah," Tony muttered, puffing on a newly lit cigarette. "I reckon we got a grass inside." Willie snorted and rubbed his mouth.

"Only about ten people knew 'bout that place," he told him. "And they got Mickey when they went in." Tony licked his lips; he would arrange for his cousin to be "busted" out of the nick but it was not good for his reputation to be having so many problems. Tony looked at Willie who sat down on the sofa and took a sip of the drink.

"Those tarts on the 'lgh Road," Tony started. "We always get same two," he said. "We talk business."

Willie sighed and took another sip of his drink, stretching as he did. "Ya reckon they shopped ya."

Tony nodded. "Either them, or one of the lads," he told him. "I want those girls dealt with 'fore we get any more drugs in."

Willie took a deep breath and looked up at the ceiling, downing his drink and standing up. "They clock off at eight. Shall we pick 'em up?"

Tony nodded. "I'll come with ya," he told him and opened the door to see Annabel outside holding Abigail. "What ya doin'? Listenin' in?"

"I wasn't," the teenage girl cried. "I wanted you to say good night to little Abigail," she started, clutching the one year old in her arms. "I wanted ..."

"Ya fuckin' liar. Ya been off to the cops?"

"No," Annabel wailed. "I just ..." She didn't get to finish as the older man grabbed hold of her by the throat and pushed her up against the hallway wall. Annabel screeched, clinging onto Abigail but Tony raised his hand, striking her across the face.

She gasped, turning her cheek away from him and clutching her child tightly. "Is that what ya been doin'?" Tony shouted and she shook her head, sniffing.

"I'd never do that," she weeped but Tony grabbed her by the throat pushing hard.

"Look at me," he barked and hit her across the face. "Look at me. If I find, ya been talking 'bout me to anyone ... I'll kill ya and ya fuckin' bitch, ya understand?" Annabel gulped and nodded, tears streaming down her cheeks and he released his grip on the sobbing girl,

striding out of the house.

Chapter V

"The girls are in there," Willie said solemnly and watched as his boss strode past him and flung open the door to the double bedroom.

The two naked girls were sat on the bed and got up as Tony entered. "Your friend said you wanted to play," the blonde girl cooed, and pushed her bosom out in front of her. "Said you had big needs." Tony grunted and closed the door behind him. "Said ..."

She started walking towards him, pushing her hips out as she walked when Tony stopped her with the a wave of his hand. "Stop, which one of you bitches has been blubbing to the cops 'bout me?" He asked waving the gun around. The brunette girl whimpered when she saw it and he pointed it at her.

"We ain't said nothing, Tony," she promised and the two girls looked at each other. "We ain't been saying nothing."

"I'm gonna kill both of ya 'less I hear some answers." He cocked the small revolver and took aim at the two girls in turn. "Which one of you cunts has been off to the Cop Shop?"

"We haven't ..." the girls cried in unison and the blonde girl burst into tears.

"We just work to pay our bills," she sobbed. "And please don't hurt me. I got two little kids."

He snorted and looked at the brunette, letting her see the gun. "I'm gonna kill someone 'less I find out." The tall, leggy brunette looked at her friend and nodded.

"Twas me," she told him with her eyes closed. "I did it." Tony sighed and he licked his lips involuntarily as his grip tightened on the weapon in his hand. "Let her go and I'll tell you everything."

Tony stared at the young blonde. "Fuckin' stay there," he warned and turned his attention back to the brunette. "Ya fuckin' tell me everything."

"Let her go," Tony was told but he ignored her and aimed his gun at her chest.

"What d'ya tell them."

She closed her eyes and took a deep breath. "Everything I could remember, plus they put in a tape recorder the last couple of times." Tony stood emotionless in front of her, lowered his weapon and squeezed the trigger, firing a bullet into the young prostitute just above her belly button. The room went silent for a second as the echo from the gun died out and then the blonde girl screamed.

Panic gripped her blood spattered face and she scrambled to her feet, panting quickly and her hands shaking. "You ... killed ... her."

Tony nodded and looked at the tearful girl – his favourite prostitute - and fired the gun into her chest. "Sorry. Can't have any witnesses," he told her as she fell onto the floor. "You understand, right?" He cackled nastily and sighed.

Tony surveyed the scene, and fired a bullet into the heads of both of the girls and opened the door. "Get that room cleaned up," Tony told Willie and gave him the "execution gun" back – now devoid of bullets. "And the fucking bitches told me. Twas them."

* * * * *

Annabel started the Ford Capri of her lover and waited for shouts or screams, but there was nothing: silence. Except for the gentle purr of the engine.

No one had seen her take Abigail, her belongings and the contents of Tony's drawer containing two expensive watches, almost five hundred pounds in cash and dozens of pieces of jewellery.

Annabel took a deep breath and slowly pulled out into the quiet street; her driving lessons she had had a year ago all seemed such a long time ago as she grated the gearbox and clipped a wing mirror on the way past. She swerved to the right as there was a bang and she then broke sharply as she went through a red light, parking up outside her friend's flat.

George hopped as she held Abigail on his doorstep. "I'm going," she said the moment he opened the door. "I got everything I need, I'm going. Come with me," she begged and he shook his head.

"Where?"

"The night. I dunno. Anywhere. I need out of London. Tony's lost it."

"I can't," he told her. "I will. But I can't yet."

"Why?" Annabel asked, tears streaking down her cheek. "Please George. He hit me with baby, and I'm scared. He's going to kill me. And he is going to kill little Abigail."

George squinted. "I can't love. Listen, he dain't know 'bout me. I got some stuff to tidy up and then I'll join ya."

She whimpered and cried out. "George," she sobbed. "Please." The illicit pornographer sighed at the hysterical teenager. "I need you. Abigail needs you." The baby started to stir in Annabel's arms but he stroked Annabel's wet hair back.

"I promise," he soothed. "Tell me where you are when you get there. Send me a letter. And I'll leave at the end of the week."

"You promise?" Annabel begged.

He smiled. "Yeah, 'course." He embraced the tearful mother and the infant. "I gotta sort some shit. Mickey owes me and ... ya know." She pursed her lips.

"I'll write. But I want ya to come."

"I'll come," he promised and kissed the tearful girl. She looked out of the window and down at the car. "I'll be with ya by the end of next week."

Getting back in the car, Annabel put little Abigail into the basket in the front with her and started the engine, heading north. She looked at the petrol gauge – it was nearly full – and began driving through the deserted streets of London. Annabel didn't have a license and didn't want to get stopped by the Police and knew if they saw a Ford Capri being driven at speed at the dead of the night they would definitely apprehend her, but she wanted to get out of London, and didn't want to get spotted by Tony and find him appear in the rear view mirror in a car.

She didn't know where she was going but followed a sign for "The North." Her mother had lived in Manchester for a while and it seemed far enough away to go to Lancashire or into Cumberland – or whatever it was now called. She felt a little sleepy but joined the new motorway; normally she would have been terrified but there were few cars on the road and her baby was fast asleep so she just tuned the radio into a music station and just sat back and drove.

Mostly she could not believe how she could have fallen for Tony and how much better George was, even if he was a little unreliable; why was she attracted to "dodgy geezers?" She had known George for years and knew that if she could get him out of East London then he would be all right. He just needed to be cut off from the murky world that they had inhabited.

Annabel drove past Birmingham, then the turnoffs for Manchester and Liverpool, and then Lancaster. George's idea of putting a tank of petrol between herself and Tony seemed to be a good one, and even though she felt sleepy, she wound the window down slightly and kept going.

Annabel turned off the main roads when she reached Scotland, driving through the little town of Gretna before finding "A" roads to take her away from the beaten track. Scotland was much as she imagined; it was cold and slightly wet and vast expanses of land opened up either side of her. By the time she had left Castle Douglas, some forty five miles from when she first hit the Scottish border the petrol light came on and Annabel decided she would stop in the next town.

She had been driving all night, and dawn had certainly broken. The sky was ablaze, and she drove the sports car through the Scottish countryside and entered a small town.

She had no real idea where she was, but she needed to sleep and she needed some food; her stomach grumbled and Abigail would be crying soon. With a wipe of her eyes, she drove slowly down the high street that was deserted except for one person – a woman walking with some milk in her hand.

Annabel pulled up alongside her and went to stop, but caught the accelerator as well, and mounted the kerb in front of the woman, hitting a bin.

"Ahh shit," Annabel cried as she got out the car and looked over at the woman, who had jumped out of the way. "Sorry," she mumbled. "But I've been driving all night."

The brown-haired woman looked at the dishevelled Annabel, the sports car and heard crying from the front seat. "All night?" She asked. "In that thing?"

Annabel nodded and gasped, the sight of a police constable was walking down the street, straight for her. "Ahhh shit," she muttered.

Chapter VI

"George," the female voice shouted as he closed the door. "Come back to bed."

The lothario smiled as he looked down the hallway to see two naked teenagers staring at him. "Sure."

"Who was that?"

"Some old girlfriend," he replied, dismissively. "She's leaving town."

"At this time of night?" the taller, blonde girl asked. "Is she in trouble?"

"You don't know the half of it," George grunted dismissively as he discarded his dressing gown and strode towards them. He grabbed the brunette by the waist and kissed her on the lips. "Now, I believe we were in the middle of a casting session. I can make you two girls famous and rich," he boasted.

The girls gave giggly laughs. "You've said that," the brunette told him and he put his hands on their bottoms as he led them back to the bedroom.

"Cracking bodies," he leered and smiled. "Any thought on names?" He looked at the brunette and gave a grin. "How about Kelly for you?" She blinked and he ran his hands down her body. "Just like Kelly off Charlie's what-not."

The blonde girl rubbed her nose and chose "Lizzie," as George gestured for the two girls to join him on the double bed.

"So, girls, this film has a lot of sex in it, but I know you're cool with that, but I need to see your talents ..." The girls laughed and "Kelly" leant into George's lap and took his inflating cock in her hand sliding her fingers all the way to the base. He gave a sigh as her mouth engulfed his erect manhood and gently sucked on the tip. His hands instantly fell onto her breasts and "Lizzie" came from behind him and kissed him on the neck.

He groaned and he openly touched both of the girls until he allowed them to push him back onto the bed. Lizzie ran her hands over his hairy chest, while Kelly straddled his cock as his legs lay over the bed. He groaned and watched as the naked girl rocked back on his dick, her breasts moving up and down as she bucked on his manhood.

She smiled at him and made exaggerated sounds of feminine arousal. She pulled her naked friend towards her and kissed her on the lips. George's eyes widened and she slid up his body to kiss him on the lips. "Wanna see me and Lizzie get it on?"

He gulped and she sat back upright, her pussy still impaled on his cock. She grunted and pushed forward causing George to squeal; Kelly gestured for Lizzie to sit astride George and slowly the blonde girl lowered herself onto George's face.

He squealed as the hirsute genitals pressed down on his mouth and slowly prodded it with his tongue. Kelly and Lizzie were smiling at each other, as they slowly rocked back and forth on the pornographer's body. Kelly grinned and made fake noises that made Lizzie grin; Kelly's fake orgasms were easy to spot but they clearly wanted to stroke George's ego.

Kelly leant back and pushed her hands underneath George's manhood, squeezing his

balls. He cried into Lizzie's muff but Kelly pretended not to hear him. "You like it rough," she asked loudly, as she increased her speed, pushing against the young man with increasing vigour.

He grunted and groaned and tensed, she could feel his body shaking and convulsing, filling her entrance with his seed. He snorted but Lizzie smiled at her friend and bucked her body on his face, waiting. "Come on," she hissed. She forced the pornographer to probe her folds for a few seconds more until climbing off him with a grin.

"Big sister says you like it a bit kinky," Kelly told him and he adjusted himself. "You know her very well."

He gulped and nodded. "Yes, well, it's been a good audition," he found himself saying. "I'll be in touch."

Lizzie cocked her head towards him. "We better be in ya bloody film," she warned him and he simpered. "I ain't for givin' out favours for nuttin'. I'll tell m' big brother if I dain't get the part."

George smiled back. "Sure," he cried; he had promised the three parts in the film to another nine girls – all of whom had given their bodies to him for the same reason. "Of course," he promised with a raffish smile. "Absolutely."

* * * * *

"I was driving," Margaret told him. "And you can test me for ..."

Iain sighed. "Yer were-nae a drivin'." His eyes focused on the solicitor as she stood akimbo. "And yer not insured."

"My insurance says I can drive any other car with the owner's permission. This is, this young lady's car, I was ..."

"What-ser name?" Iain snapped and focused on her.

"I dunno. Never asked."

"Missy, yer arrested." Iain told her, turning to face the ashen face of Annabel.

"Do we have to go through it again? You arrest someone, I go to the station and make you look silly?" Iain puffed out and she raised her eyebrows. "I can do it again. You know I can."

"Aye, it's an offence to drive without ..."

"I am a solicitor," Margaret told him firmly. "I know the law. Better than you."

Annabel looked at both of them and then back to Margaret. "I ..." She stammered and Iain looked expectantly at her.

"My client will not be answering any of your questions," Margaret told him in a lofty voice. "Now, is there anything else?"

The police officer glared at her, tucked his shirt into his black trousers and grunted. "Ah got mi eye on you," he told her firmly and pointed at the worried Annabel. "Ah'll be watchin'

you.”

Margaret snorted, went to speak but thought better of it. She waited until Iain was out of sight – and earshot – and turned to Annabel. “Yer better come back with me,” she told her. “And yer better tell me everything if yer in trouble.”

“But ...”

“He’s the new copper,” she told her. “Bloody useless. Now come on. Margaret,” she said and held out her hand.

“Annabel,” came the response and she picked up her baby from the car. “Is there anywhere I can change Abigail. I’ve not changed her for ... hours.” Margaret’s scowl deepened a little and Annabel squirmed. “I’ve been driving since London. Just kept on drivin’ and it’s not easy.”

Margaret nodded and waited for Annabel to lock the car and crossed the road to her office, above a small shop. “It’s small,” Margaret told her and gave her a key. “There’s a flat upstairs. It’s got a bathroom and you can get cleaned up. I’ll put the kettle on.”

Chapter VII

"I want that bitch found," Tony shouted and threw a cup against the wall. "My bloody car. When ya find her, I want her naked, tied up and a chain saw to cut the cunt up. I'm gonna ..." He exploded again and kicked the table over.

Willie shook his head, looking out of the window and down the street. "Heard she stopped off at an old friend's 'ouse," he told him. "Word on the street is she went to see Georgie Baynes." Tony's eyes narrowed. "We've got a crew out looking for him."

Tony straightened his jacket. "Take 'im to the docks," Willie was told. "I want him ready for some justice."

Willie nodded and then took a deep breath. "There's a rumour," he started and then winced. "Some guys are saying that her kid is ... well he's Georgie's."

Tony's eyes narrowed and he stared at the wall. "Nah," He spat. "Anyone saying that and I'll cut their tongue out," he warned. "And I want that cunt in the docks by tomorrow." Willie nodded. "And don't just nod your fucking head. Yer not a dog. Find the cunts."

* * * * *

Margaret brought the young mother some lunch and sat down on the bed. "What time is it?" Annabel asked.

"Three in the afternoon," Margaret replied.

"Oh, it's getting dark out."

"It does that in Scotland," the solicitor said with a smile and looked at Annabel curled up with Abigail. The little girl was still fast asleep in the double bed and Annabel gently slid out of the covers. Annabel took one of the two sandwiches and left rest on the plate on the table.

"I'll wake Abigail up in a minute," Annabel said as she bit into the ham sandwich and walked out of the room with Margaret. "Thanks. If I owe you ..."

Margaret gave her a wave of her hand and pointed to the small sofa. "You seem to be the only person in this town with more problems than me." Annabel shrugged non-committally and ran her tongue over her discoloured teeth. "You can talk, y'know."

Annabel paused and Margaret pointed to a box on the floor containing a pink baby plate, cutlery and a few pieces of fruit and tinned food. "Thanks."

Margaret waited and inhaled deeply. "Look, Anabel, I need to know who you are running from. I can't help to protect you if I don't know ..."

"You can't protect me from him. Nobody can."

Margaret touched the bridge of her nose. "I can, now if it's the Police, I have a great record 'gainst the Police and if it's ..."

"How about London gangsters?" Anabel interrupted and pushed her hair back as Margaret waited for an answer. "I have some money but I need a new life for me somewhere. I need

a job that I can work around my baby and I need somewhere to stay.” She paused and waited for Margaret to digest what the girl had told her. “And I hope my friend will be joining me. George,” she told the solicitor.

“OK,” Margaret muttered and rubbed her eyes. “Any chance of a full story?”

Annabel looked behind her and gripped the tea in her hand, slouching in the chair. She picked up a small parish magazine on the table and looked at her host. “Is that where I am, Kirk-cud-bright?”

“It’s pronounced Kir-koo-brie,” Margaret corrected her. “And yes.”

“Far from London?”

“Fairly,” Margaret summarised. “Past Birmingham, Manchester, Lancaster, Carlisle and Dumfries.”

“So that’s a hundred miles?” Annabel asked.

“Try five hundred,” the solicitor impatiently replied and Annabel sighed.

“OK. It might be safe to tell,” she murmured and in a low voice, began to explain about the previous two years to a near total stranger.

Chapter VIII

The bundled figure of George was tied to the chair and a sack was removed from his head. "Ya know who I am?" Tony asked him, standing akimbo in front of him.

George nodded. "Tony Ratcliff," he muttered.

"Good. Where's Annabel?" George didn't respond, just looked at the angry London gangster.

"I dunno."

Tony laughed and picked up a knife inspecting the blade in front of the terrified man. "Pigs know a lot 'bout what I do," he told him. "And night she fucked off, she went t'ya flat." Tony walked away and then snorted. "Heard ya been arrested and let go, no charges. I reckon ya did a deal."

George gulped. "I dain't know ..."

Tony clicked his fingers and a shower of blows rained down on the immobile man, who cried out in pain as his face, ears, chest, legs and groin were pummelled. "Where the fuck is she?"

"I was asked," George finally confessed, groaning as he spoke. "P'lice said. If I get Annabel to them and talk I go free. But I dain't ask and she ran away. I didn't wanna be tied up and beaten up for grassin' ya up."

"Where is she?"

"I dunno," George told them honestly as rivers of blood streaked across his face, but Tony smashed his fist into his bloody mess, causing him to cry out in pain.

"I said, where?"

"I dunno," George repeated with blood dripping from his nose. "I just dunno. She said she'd write, but she ain't done."

Tony shook his head and picked up a gun from the table and pointed at him. "I wanna know," he yelled. "Or I'll kill ya." He gulped and looked around the deserted warehouse. He heard a car engine outside and he nodded towards an armed henchmen on the door. "Kill 'em or get rid of 'em," he ordered and turned his attention back towards the tied up man in the chair. "I wanna know where the little cunt is with my baby?"

"She ain't yours," George shouted and watched as Tony lowered his weapon struck him on the mouth with it.

"Ya fuckin' liar," Tony spat and took a deep breath, aiming the gun at Annabel's lover. George closed his eyes, waiting for the inevitable bang that would signify the end of his life.

A big bang echoed throughout the warehouse, not from Tony's gun but the shutters over the warehouse garaged door. The gangster spun around to see a JCB draw thirty feet away and a handful of armed policemen move in behind it. Tony fired towards the onrushing coppers, hitting one of them, before running away from the Police and towards

the back of the warehouse.

He reached the metal stairs to go up to the office and the roof and fired a volley of bullets towards the advancing officers, hitting George in his lap and scampering up the iron staircase.

It was clear from the view that it was a big operation; there were blue flashing lights making their way towards his warehouse and he had twenty seconds – at most – to get off the roof. Tony felt himself being blown about by the wind, but he ran headlong into it, to reach the edge, and as the first officer poked his head out of the staircase and onto the roof, Tony leapt the twenty feet from the corrugated iron and into a skip of cardboard and papers before scampering clear.

Annabel was with the Police, and she would die for her treachery.

* * * * *

Dear Georgie,

Please come up. I did as you said, took his car and went as far as I could on the petrol that was in it. I am in a little village called Kirkcudbright in Scotland. It's quiet here and Tony will never find me.

He will never find us.

I miss you. I love you. Please come. It's the perfect place to have kids and for us.

Lots of love,

Your Annabel and Abigail

Chapter IX

Margaret pushed open the door to the church hall, allowing the excited din of a dozen children and babies to blast down the small path. "Come in," she ordered the nervous Annabel. "Ahh come on."

Annabel slowly put her head around the door that Margaret was holding open to see groups of mothers sitting on the floor with their babies or sat on chairs as toddlers ran around, playing with a small assortment of toys.

A tall mousy-haired lady waved at Margaret from the floor and the young solicitor strode over. "Hey, this is ... er ... this is Annabel. She's just come up from London."

Annabel gulped as the three women sized her up, holding her baby on her hip. "Hi," she muttered.

"Hey, sit down," Margaret told her and then introduced Lucy, Pauline and Edith."

"Is that your sports car?" the mousy-haired Lucy asked and Annabel giggled.

"Umm ... sort of. It's my boyfriend's. Well ex-boyfriend's. He'll want it back I'm sure." The ladies looked at each other for a moment. "He hit me so I ... umm ... well I sort of took it to get away from ... him."

"In London?" Lucy asked and Annabel nodded.

"He ... umm ... well I prefer up here."

The ladies gently probed Annabel and she let her baby, the young Abigail, crawl off to play with the other babies as she talked. She was brought a cup of tea and turned around to see Margaret leaving, promising to see her later.

Annabel was a little guarded on her answers although the ladies were left in no doubt that her boyfriend was up to no good, but she did not mention the fact he was a dangerous gangster. She did confess to having some of his money to tide her over but she wanted a job and the three suggested various employers who might be interested.

"Where ya stayin'?" Lucy asked as midday came and the mothers started to pack up. Abigail had crawled over and cried for awhile until Annabel had fed her some banana but she was tired and needed a sleep.

"Above solicitor's ... for a week. Margaret said I could stay there for awhile but I need somewhere to stay as well."

The mother grinned as she scooped up her toddler. "Ah got some old books," she promised. "Ah'll drop 'em off later for ya."

"Cheers," Annabel muttered; she was not a big reader but she was without a television and had been bored when Margaret had gone home to her family the night before.

* * * * *

Willie passed his partner-in-crime a piece of paper in the damp, run-down flat. "Only thing left in 'is 'ouse now. We torched the rest." Tony snatched it and his eyes widened as he

read the text.

"Fuckin' bitch. Were the fuck is Kirk-cud-bright?"

Willie licked his lips. "Scotland. We know where she is and she ain't goin' nowhere. We got all of our dealers being nicked and 'Arry's movin' on to our patch up Walthamstow way. It ain't good."

"Now would be good time to run off to Spain," a third voice added and Tony snorted, picking up a knife and advancing on him.

"Spain? You think I should run away like a fuckin' deer?" The young man gulped and watched as Tony got closer and closer. "You think I ain't got no balls?" Tony asked the retreating man as he came up against the wall. "I'll show you no fucking balls."

"Nah ... I ..."

"I ain't runnin' away. There's trouble comin' and that Annabel gonna be six feet under with her bastard when I've finished with 'er." He waved his knife at Willie. "I'm gonna slice that two-timing cunt," Tony muttered and looked at Willie. "And I want 'Arry's bitch, his sons and daughters somewhere in the country for Saturday. I'm gonna skin them alive. Teach that fucker."

Willie gulped and nodded as Tony's eyes narrowed looking at the half-dozen men that made up his gang. "We know somewhere Cheshunt way," Willie promised and Tony nodded.

He pointed the knife at the quivering young man and glared at him. "And if he wets himself, ya kill 'im." Tony grabbed his car keys from the table and walked towards the door. "And if any of you cunts see a copper, kill the fucker."

Tony strode out onto the twelfth floor of the high-rise tower block and shut the door behind him. He looked at the graffiti-strewn mess of concrete around him and strode towards the stairs; Annabel was in deep trouble.

There was the sound of a dozen boots coming up the stairs and he looked down, seeing hands on the rails no more than two floors below. He ran back towards the flat and thought about banging on the door but stopped at the last moment. If they were coming to raid his old flat, and where he just was, then it made no sense for him to warn the occupants. He needed them to occupy the Police; it would enable him to get to Scotland.

He ran to the end of the gangway, and darted down an alleyway, before going up another flight of stairs. The estate was a warren and he knew the Police didn't know it as well as he did; he grew up in the concrete jungle and sprinted to the very end of the walkway. There were no Police on this staircase and he made his way down, quietly and slowly.

He heard the bang from two floors away as the Police burst into his old flat and he increased his speed. It wouldn't take them long to work out that he wasn't there and come looking for him; if he had been observed going into the flat, then it was possible he was watched leaving it as well.

Tony's heart was pounding, he knew he was seconds away from being arrested and he reached the bottom of the stairs, seeing a Police car a few feet away.

He turned around and walked down the alleyway and towards the wasteland that lined the

estate, and then sprinted away. The Police would not be fooled for very long and within a few yards of the entrance to the estate was a car parked in someone's driveway.

Tony didn't need very long to break in and get it started; it was a skill he had had since he was ten, but he knew Annabel was behind the Police's trip to see him. The flat was where he used to live and it was where him and Annabel lived for a few months when they first met. Only Annabel, Willie and him knew that he still owned it, and only Annabel would betray him.

Annabel was going to die and Tony was on his way.

Chapter X

Annabel passed a small envelope to Margaret and she turned it over in her hand. "It's a small favour," Annabel asked and licked her lips. "If Tony ever finds me he'll kill me," she said matter-of-factly and took a deep breath. "It's for Abigail when she gets to 21, if he finds me. It explains everything."

Margaret scowled. "Don't be silly, lassie," the solicitor told her. "Yer all-right up here, and why would he do that?"

"No, please," Annabel said with a determination. "You don't know him, he's ... evil." She spoke in a low voice and rubbed her face. A few tears formed and she took her glass of water. "I told you, he runs all of London's East End. He'd come home with blood on his cuffs and everyone was scared of him and scared of me. I mean, I would take the bus into town and everyone would look the other way, and if there were no seats, I'd get one. It was weird and ..." Her voice trailed off and she stared at the glass. "I know he thinks I grassed him up to the cops. I dain't, I swear. I was too scared to do so. I mean, I know he killed people and he'd kill me. Which is why I just drove and drove 'til the petrol light came on."

Margaret listened and put her hand on Annabel's knee. "S'ok love. Start afresh up here."

Annabel sniffed. "I ain't got George. He promised me and he ain't come. Mum's in and out of clinic. I don't have a choice. I just gotta get rid of the car."

"If it's stolen ..."

"I nicked it from Tony. 'E owns it but it ain't mine."

Margaret snorted. "Well then if he reports it as stolen, he will know where it is found. You better take it somewhere."

"Off a cliff?"

"Was thinking Glasgae or Carlisle. Leave it outside a Police Station with the keys in."

Annabel gave a giggle at the thought of this. "Could just leave it on Council Estate?" Annabel got pleasure at the thought of a young tearaway joyriding Tony's pride and joy and then crashing it and Margaret could see that would be a problem. "I'll get rid of it as soon as I can," the young mother promised.

"Just do," Margaret warned. "I gotta go. Ah got some filing to do. I'm in court tomorrow." Annabel gulped and nodded; she was clearly enjoying the company Margaret afforded her. "Need to get it done while Dad's got Eddie."

Margaret sighed at the rude book on the little table that Annabel picked up as the solicitor went to leave. "T'was a gift. Not bad," the London girl muttered as she saw the disapproving look.

Margaret smiled. "S'fine. I'll be a couple of hours. Dad said he'd have dinner for five so if I come up for half four. You join us?" Annabel hesitated but Margaret just smiled. "Yes?"

"Yes," Annabel conceded. "And thanks."

* * * * *

Annabel fell backwards as Tony slapped her across the face and advanced into the room. "You bitch," he shouted and hit her in the stomach, pushing her over the sofa. "I loved you."

"You hit me and Abigail," the young mother shouted in return and scrambled to her feet, only to be knocked over by the London gangster again.

"You grassed me up to the P'lice."

"I didn't," Annabel cried out. "I didn't. People wanted me to but I'd never have done that to you. I'd have done anything for you."

"Like steal my car and lie to me," Tony replied coldly. "I know you coughed to the Pigs."

"I dain't," Annabel cried. "I never saw them." There was a cry from the other room and Annabel's expression changed. He advanced on the single bedroom and the young woman scrambled to her feet and tried to drag the murderer back but he pushed her away so she hit her head on the wall and stood over baby Abigail in the cot. He sneered at her.

"The baby," he cried and dragged her to her feet. "Ya goin' to London. I got unfinished business."

"Am not," Annabel spat back and he struck her in the mouth.

"Ya think I'm jokin? You forgotten who I am? Ya going to London."

Annabel sniffed and the brunette shook her head. "I like it here."

"I don't care," he told her and pulled out a gun, aiming it at the nineteen year old. "Get downstairs," he barked and she hesitated. He took aim at the window and fired, the echo of the bullet discharging sounding off the walls. "I ain't messin'"

She gasped as the sound tore through the room and the glass shattered, falling onto the pavement below. An icy wind swept into the room and he shouted at her. "Get downstairs," he shouted and grabbed hold of her arm. "Get your bitch," he cried and pointed the gun at the infant.

"Leave her alone."

"I said take her, you're both goin' to London."

The girl grabbed hold of the awakened baby, crying from the gunshot and Tony bundled her out of the little flat and pushed her down the stairs. She lost her footing, but was able to stop herself falling by using the handrail.

Margaret looked out of her office as Annabel reached the first floor. "Annabel, are you OK?"

Annabel shook her head, but was cut off as Tony appeared and pushed Annabel back down the stairs. "Annabel?" Margaret cried. "You better not be Tony."

"Why?" Tony asked the solicitor. "What if I am?"

"You leave Annabel alone," Margaret thundered. "She belongs here."

“And you going to make me.”

“I’ll call the Police,” she said firmly, bringing herself up to her full height.

“Bit hard to do that love, when ya pushing up daisies.” She blinked and Tony reached into his pocket for his gun. Margaret whimpered and threw herself into her small office just the first bullet left the weapon.

It hit the painted white frame of the door and Annabel howled at her ex-lover. She pushed his hand away, only to get hit in the mouth for her trouble. He fired two more shots at the door of the office. “Fuckin’ call the Pigs,” he yelled. “They’ll be too late. We’re going.”

Chapter XI

Margaret pulled herself to her feet and scampered over to the window, her heart pounding in her chest. She saw the figure of Tony bundle Annabel into the back seat of his Ford Capri and ran over to the phone; it was dead.

“Ahh shit,” she cried loudly and picked up her car keys from her desk. It was stupid, she knew that, but she ran out into the street and unlocked her car just as Tony's Ford Capri turned down the end of the road, skidding in the icy weather.

Margaret's ten year old Vauxhall Viva started at the second attempt and her wheels skidded as she dropped the clutch and her car moved off. She swore at the vehicle, turning right to follow the red car as it moved South out of the town.

She expected to have more gunshots fired at her, and kept her distance; she knew she needed to summon help but couldn't let Annabel and her baby leave her sight. It was a dilemma.

Margaret felt an adrenaline rush as her car slid on a patch of ice and she gripped the steering wheel to right her vehicle. She kept the car on the road and the red Capri started to leave the town as it shot past the small hospital. She saw a figure walking on the pavement.

Margaret slowed her car, skidding and leant across the front seats to wind down the window as the figure jumped out of the way. Her tyre hit the kerb and she slammed the brake on. “Police. Call the Police,” she shouted as the figure peered into the car.

“Ahh what dya want. Other than tryin' to kill me.”

Margaret focused on the man – PC Iain Kennedy – and she shrieked. “Get in.”

“What dya want?”

“Get in,” she yelled. “He's got Annabel.”

“Ahh ... who?”

Margaret hit the horn. “Get in, Christ's sake. I've been shot at.”

Iain opened the door and he had barely put a foot inside when she accelerated fiercely, causing him to swear at her. “What's goin' on?”

Margaret watched the open road, sniffing. “Annabel ... she's been kidnapped and I've been shot at.” She didn't wait for a response as her car took the racing line in the ice at over 70mph.

“Careful,” Iain cried. “Ya gonna get us killed.”

Margaret didn't listen and sped along the riverside road that followed the land around to the coast, telling him the story of the previous 24 hours. Her car bounced dramatically as the suspension was not used to such speeds and Iain grabbed hold of the seat as Margaret used all of the road, and a bit of the kerb, around the bends.

They could see the red Capri also struggling with the snow and ice that lined the road and

Margaret was gaining on them. "This ain't The Sweeney, love," he told her. "Aye calm it down."

"Shut up," Margaret cried. "If you'd done ya job 'e wouldnae be on the street."

He was thrown against the door as she swung the car into a right turn. "If ya didnae keep getting the bastards out when we catch 'em," he started telling her and then was thrown back against the car door with a cry.

The Capri came up against a sharp left turn to stay on the road and lurched to the left before going down a side road on the right that lead down to the estuary. "Wheres'ee going?" Margaret cried as her car followed Tony and Annabel.

"Ya better not be kiddin' me," Iain moaned as their car hit a small track. The snow covered the road and he glanced out over the beach that was down a small embankment and led to the water's edge. "Careful down 'ere."

"Es getting away," Margaret cried as she accelerated further. The Ford Capri turned a gentle corner, lurched to the right, hit the embankment, sliding down it and skidding over the sand.

"Stop 'ere," Iain told her and Margaret slammed on the brakes. Her car skidded, hitting the hedges on the other side of the track, but came to rest with a crunching sound. Iain opened the door onto the road and got out, staring out over the estuary. The Ford Capri was lit up in the twilight and he started running across the sand.

* * * * *

Tony felt his head and looked over the dark beach. "I'll do it here," he told her. "Is she mine?" He asked and Annabel sniffed. "Is she?"

She rolled her head around, her face bloody and tears streaking down her face. "Please Tony," she cried through tears. "Leave me aloon." He picked up the gun and pointed it to her eyes. "Let me go. I got a baby."

"Is she mine?"

She gasped. "Yes," Annabel sobbed and he gave a hollow laugh.

"Lying bitch," he told her. "I know, Annabel. Fuckin' know. See ya in hell." He grinned and squeezed the trigger. For a moment, Annabel's face was frozen – a mixture of shock and fear as the bullet ripped into her brain and she was thrown against the back seat of the car.

The baby Abigail screamed as her mother's grip no longer held her and the infant slipped forward into the footwell behind the murderer. Tony reloaded his gun and snorted. "Fuckin' bitch." He opened the door to his car and stepped out, pointing his weapon towards the back seat when a figure knocked his hand away and the bullet hit the gearstick with a loud ping.

Tony gave a shout and hit the flailing figure of Iain Kennedy in the face. "Fuckin' Scottish cunt," he yelled as Iain slipped on the sand and Tony pummelled him in the chest. "Tis London business." He raised the gun and aimed it at the shape in the half-light when he felt a huge blow to the back of his head and a falling sensation against the car.

Iain scrambled to his feet to see Margaret standing over him with a branch in her hand and he frantically removed the gun to put handcuffs on the London gangster.

Margaret cried when she looked into the car, slumped against the back window was the unmistakable sight of a blood-stained Annabel and a blood-stained baby's blanket.

Margaret looked up at the sky and yelled as if in pain before reaching down and kicking the prostrate figure of Tony. "Gimme the gun," she panted. "Gimme it."

"Margaret," Iain cried as he took out the bullets out of the weapon. "No," he yelled.

"'Es killed her," she wailed. "Little Annabel. 'Es killed her." Iain saw the blood spatters on the car windows and rubbed his face. She reached for the gun a few feet away, and held it out, aiming it for the unconscious London gangster.

Iain shouted, but Margaret, aimed and fired. There was a click – it needed reloading – and Iain snatched it from her. "Ya lea'e it aloon."

Margaret gulped; the silence was broken by the crying of Abigail and Margaret reached in and took the distraught baby in her arms, sitting down on the front seat. She cradled the young Abigail, pulling her towards her bosom. "Oh Annabel," she sniffed as she looked at the dead woman. "Ah'm so sorry," she muttered and Iain touched her on the hand.

"Ah let's get her safe. And get some help," he told her but she shook her head.

"Ah cannae leave her." She looked at the dead teenager on the back seat. "Ah just can't."

"Go," Iain cried and Margaret looked at the slumped figure of Annabel. "Abigail needs ya now."

"We'll look after yer bairn," she promised to the dead girl. "We all will. We promise." Margaret stood up and cuddled the infant in her arms and slowly walked up to her Viva with Iain. Her car stared first time and she passed the swaddled Abigail to the police officer as she reversed up the side track and drove slowly back to the town.

"Thanks," he told her as she wiped her eyes for the umpteenth time. "'E was gonna kill me."

She gulped. "'E was gonna kill Abigail," she muttered quietly. "Dunnae care 'bout you."

"Ah ... err ... ah wasnae going to put that ya tried to kill 'im in the report," he told her. "Ah didnae see that. Ah saw ya throw the weapon but that's it, OK?"

Margaret hummed. "She's only a bairn." She sniffed and shook her head. "Was nineteen. Only nineteen."

Chapter XII

Margaret sat in Iain's front room and took a gulp of the whisky Shona gave her. "I'll look after it," Shona offered. "Til your ready."

Margaret downed the two shots and panted. "I can manage."

"Ah know," Shona sniffed. "Ahh but ya've been through a lot," she was told. "Shock. Yer've had a big shock." Shona looked up at the solicitor. "Please." Margaret's eyes dropped and looked at the baby in her arms. "Ah want another bairn but Iain says no. Ah, for one night."

Margaret nodded and held the baby tightly in her arms. "You be good," she told the infant, peeping back at her with soft eyes. A tear rolled down the young solicitor's face and she wiped away. "I promised yar mummy we'd look after you. And we will." She gulped and focused on her hand for a moment and sniffed. "The whole town will. 'Cause you ain't had it easy and yer such a sweet thing."

She slowly passed the young child to Shona who cooed as it reached her grip. "Ahh, she's a bonnie bairn." Margaret looked out of the window and rubbed her eyes.

"Was only nineteen," she muttered and began to recount the story Annabel had told her over the previous few days. She was interrupted by the soft sound of feet on the stairs and spun around to look at a small infant standing in the doorway.

"Ma," she cried and held out a limp teddy bear.

"Why aren't yar asleep?" Shona asked. "Back to bed, Moira."

"It's noisy," the girl complained and saw the bundle of blankets that housed Annabel in her mother's arms. "Baby?"

Shona nodded. "Aye, she's stayin' with us for a bit. Day or two, mebbe more." The girl screwed up her face. "Little sister."

"I dunnae want a sister," Moira shouted. "Ah want a kitten."

Shona sighed. "Yer not havin' a kitten," the mother said firmly. "Go sleep," she barked and Margaret got up to take the objectionable infant back to her bed.

"But I wan' a kitten," Moira said firmly as she was escorted up the stairs.

* * * * *

Tony sat opposite the Detective in the London interview room and blinked. "I said prove it."

The Detective smiled and looked up at the ceiling. "We got you for the Annabel Sprott murder and the George Baynes attempted murder," he said matter-of-factly. "We'll get you on more."

Tony spluttered and sneered. "Ya ain't got nuttin' on me. That Copper bloke killed Annabel and I ain't heard of no George Baynes."

"George Baynes. Otherwise known as Runo Garbelli, a blue movie star ..."

"...although with his injuries he ain't gonna be in many more blue movies," the junior Detective quipped and Tony forced a smile.

"Ya ain't got nothin'," Tony spat and the Detective shook his head.

"I got Willie." Tony's expression changed. "Ya see, Willie's been working for us for months. We got a lot," the Detective promised and watched as Tony rubbed the bridge of his nose. "We'll break for lunch," he said firmly and leant across the table. "I got enough to put you away for a very long time," he told him and called in two uniformed police officers into the room. They escorted the gangster into his cell, leaving him to stew while his dinner was brought to him.

A tall lady, dressed in a canteen uniform, arrived pushing a trolley and opened the first hatch, pushing the tray into the room, followed by the second and the third. When she got to Tony's cell, she pulled out a gun, opened the hatch and fired into the room, hitting the gangster squarely in the chest. "That's from my daughter," she cried and fired it again and again. Two police officers bundled the mother of Annabel Sprott to the ground, smashing her head against the floor and killing the assassin instantly.

"Ambulance," they cried out. "We need two of them." But it was already too late for both of them.

* * * * *

Margaret wiped her eyes as she walked up the road to the church dressed in black. Although Annabel was barely known in the small town, there had been a sombre tone all week as the accounts of the encounter with Tony had been told and retold in hushed whispers.

She had found it difficult to talk about what had happened and had been to see Abigail every day. The young girl seemed extraordinary resilient – taking her first steps the day after the shooting and looked almost bemused as the women of the village sat on the chairs, paying attention to her, and sobbing no matter what the little girl did; she seemed to like the attention!

Shona was waiting for her outside the church with her four children and Abigail – all dressed predominantly in black. Margaret had left Abigail with the Kennedys and was happy she had settled in. Shona had reminded her that a permanent solution to her long-term future would need to be agreed and Margaret didn't disagree, but it was a discussion for another day.

Although she wanted Abigail to live with her, she was only recently separated and while her father would not mind – the large manor house was big enough – the community would certainly prefer her to be with the pillars of society that were PC Iain Kennedy and his wife; he was a decorated military hero and the local Police officer.

Margaret arrived at the church as most of the town descended on the small building and a hearse drew up alongside. She had expected masses of cameras but they were absent: the story of a London gangster shooting dead his ex-mistress would be worth covering if the town involved was within three hours of Fleet Street. Kirkcudbright was just too far away; a fact that most of the town would have been sincerely grateful for.

The coffin of Annabel was carried by six mourners from the hearse – one of which being PC Iain Kennedy who nodded towards the tearful solicitor watching the coffin enter the

church.

A solitary set of bagpipes started with Amazing Grace and Margaret opted to sit near the back. The vicar gave a warm and uplifting service; he was no doubt happy to see his church fuller than it had ever been, but Annabel was spoken of kindly and with affection.

She had only been in the village for two weeks but no-one had a bad word to say about her and the fact she now had an orphaned daughter was mentioned more than once.

Margaret cried throughout the service and as the vicar read a prayer at the graveside, she stopped to watch the mourners each pay their respect, waiting for the crowds to leave so she could put the biggest bunch of flowers on the grave. "Sorry," she muttered. "I'm really sorry."

Epilogue

“Aye, Ah'm not sure 'bout thees,” Iain cried as he unbuttoned his jacket. “Adopt 'er?”

“Why not?” Margaret asked. “She is happy here, and you two would sail through the process. I'll help you with the forms.”

He winced and looked at the expectant face of his wife. “Ah'm sure she should be with her family.”

“She has no family,” Margaret said firmly. “She has no-one. I've done my research. Father killed in jail, mother killed by father, Grandmother killed when killing the father. Grandfather dead. No anties, uncles or anything. The only chance she has is you.”

“Aye, and what about yoo?” Iain asked her in his pronounced Scottish accent.

Margaret licked her lips. “Wish I could, but it ain't fair bringing a kid into a broken home. And mi Dad wouldn't allow it.” She lied and glanced at the floor, and then smiled warmly at the sleeping baby. “Mean, I'd like to, but I'd struggle on the list. They like families.”

“Like oos,” Shona said proudly and Margaret nodded. “Ahh, a sister for Moira. Just think Iain.” He held his head in his hands for a moment. “And she can wear all of Moira's old clothes,” Margaret added causing Iain to snort.

“Ahh, it's a big thing,” Iain told his wife. “She's fur life.” Shona bit her lip and looked at the sleeping baby with a cursory smile. “Ah got asked today 'boot her. Social Services sending someone 'round,” he told his wife and she took a deep breath.

“Ahh, please Iain,” she begged. “Fur me.”

“For Abigail,” Margaret told him. “Local Policeman, saving the life of the orphan who he then adopts. You'll be a hero.”

He snorted. “Ah dunnae wan' tae be a hero. Ah wan' ...” His voice trailed off and puffed. “Ah if we dae this, what chance we get'er. I dunnae wan' tae get let down at th' end.”

Margaret gulped. “Never any promises but you're local hero,” she said dismissively. “I'll work night and day on it for ya.”

He took a deep breath and nodded. “Aye, we'll do it.” His voice trailed off a bit as Shona squawked and held the baby tight to her chest. “Ah, but I dunnae want the lassie to find out. Whole village 'as to agree, what's gone on is forgotten, right?”

Margaret nodded. “They'll not be many people talking 'bout it,” she promised.

He shrugged and looked down at his wife. “Ah, and I got some news,” he muttered when Shona had gone quiet again. “Ah been nominated for a bravery 'ward.” He gulped and Margaret just smiled.

“Ah, ya'll sail through adoption,” she promised.