

BREAKING STORY

some crimes should go unsolved



JOHN S ROSS

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chapter one

Saturday. 2.40pm. North Glasgow

Brian opened the shed door wide and stood in the doorway. He was dressed casually in jeans, Celtic football top and denim jacket. Exactly the way he needed to be dressed to blend in where he was going to go shortly.

He was a man with a plan and this was the final preparation for an operation he had planned.

He stood in the doorway for a few seconds silently and quickly scanning the interior of the shed for what he was looking for. He had never been in this shed before as it belonged to a friend of a friend whom he had never met until about half an hour ago.

The hut was fairly small at 15 by 6 feet and was almost full to capacity with all the various stuff you would expect to find in a family garden shed.

The left hand side of the shed was taken up with shelves holding hammers, saws, spanners, nuts, nails, screws etc.

The centre walkway had a mountain bike and a golf bag at the far end.

The right hand side had a waist height work bench that ran the full length of the shed from front to back and was partly covered in the middle by a semi rolled up piece of linoleum.

Brian picked up the linoleum to reveal what he was looking for. An abrasive wheel tool sharpener.

Brian rolled up the piece of linoleum and placed it on one of the shelves on the left hand side of the shed then he

approached the abrasive wheel.

Brian flicked the power switch on the side of the abrasive wheel and the tool sharpener came to life spinning at high speed ready to sharpen something.

Brian reached up his right sleeve with his left hand and took out a 12 inch steel knitting needle ready to be sharpened by the wheel. He paused for a second looking at the needle then he started to sharpen the needle on the wheel.

The needle didn't take long to sharpen and was ready in less than a minute.

When it looked like the needle was sharpened enough Brian switched off the abrasive wheel then tested the sharpness of the needle on his left index finger and it was sharp enough for purpose.

Brain reached into one of the front pockets in his jeans, took out a wine bottle cork and stuck it onto the end of the needle. The needle was now ready.

Brian slipped the needle and the cork up his right sleeve with the cork rubbing against his wrist then closed and locked the shed door and walked away.

Saturday. 3.12pm. North Glasgow

It had now been nearly three quarters of an hour since Brian sharpened the knitting needle with the abrasive wheel and he now found himself in the Craiglen area of North Glasgow standing across the road from the Craiglen Inn pub known locally as the Craigy Inn.

The Craigy Inn was a fairly average looking little pub made of brown bricks. It consisted of a bar and a lounge area, had steel bars over the windows and vitally no CCTV. anywhere.

In the past the pub had a bad reputation for violence and for a while the establishment was known as the flying tumbler because of the regular bar brawls it experienced. But for the last few years it had been pretty quiet with almost no trouble at all because it was now owned by a large and violent crime family from East Glasgow and they had made it known that anyone causing trouble in the pub would be dealt with severely.

It was the worst kept secret in Craiglen that the Craigy Inn was now mob owned.

On this particular Saturday afternoon the Craigy Inn was full to capacity with Celtic fans as Celtic were playing Aberdeen in the Scottish cup final. The outside of the pub was decorated with green and white scarfs, the colours of Glasgow Celtic F.C. also known as 'Celtic' also known as the 'Celts', also known as 'Celic', also known as the 'tic', also known as the 'bhoys', and also known as the 'hoops'. A half dozen different names for one football team.

Brian knew the guy he was looking for was an ardent Celtic fan and was going to be in this pub watching the game. He knew this because Brian had been effectively stalking this particular individual on social media and had been absorbing everything he could learn about him.

The guy he was looking for was called Mark Adam or Sparky to his friends and was a member of the street gang the Craighen Young Team or the CYT for short and he had been planning to meet some friends at the Craigy Inn to watch his beloved Celtic in the big football match.

He had good reason to worry about his personal safety but he would be with a dozen or so friends in the pub and there would be dozens of potential witnesses so he would be feeling safe.

Brian stood across the road from the Craigy Inn for a few seconds finalising in his head what was about to happen. There was no-one outside smoking as the game had just started at 3pm and everyone would be inside watching. And he knew there was no CCTV. in the area as he had already done an extensive check of the area because he knew the first thing the cops would do, after he had done what he had come here to do, would be to check all the CCTV. footage in the area.

Brian reached into the front of his denim jacket and took out a green and white Celtic skip hat, put it on, then started to cross the road towards the pub.

Brian opened the heavy wooden door to the Craigy Inn and entered the premises.

Inside the pub it was mobbed. Probably as many as 100 Celtic fans all dressed in green and white mostly in the bar area, with some others through the back in the pool area, all drinking and shouting at the giant TV. screen on the wall. Brian quickly scanned through the pub looking for Sparky taking care not to make eye contact with any of the drinkers in the pub. He had memorised a few pictures of Sparky from social media and he knew he was about 6 feet tall, medium build with short ginger hair.

After a few seconds Brian noticed Sparky in the middle of perhaps 50 drinkers standing in the centre of the pub in front of the giant TV. on the wall. He was wearing jeans and a Celtic football top and was drinking from a bottle of beer.

Brian decided to make his move. He slowly walked over towards the centre of the group of drinkers in front of the TV a few steps at a time. After a minute or so he found himself standing directly behind Sparky and he quickly glanced to his left and then to his right making sure everyone nearby was transfixed watching the match on the TV.

After another minute or so Brian held up his right arm to face height and took the cork off the sharpened needle up his sleeve. As lightly as he could he then placed his left hand on Sparky's back on his left shoulder blade with his fingers spread as wide as they would go. Then he very quickly took out the needle, lined it up at a right angle to Sparky's torso and with the tip placed between Brian's index and forefinger then violently slapped the end of the needle forcing it into Sparky.

Brian held the needle in place for a few seconds then turned it a quarter of a turn clockwise, held it again for a few seconds then in a single movement pulled the needle out of Sparky, placed the cork back on the needle and put the needle back up his sleeve.

The needle pierced through Sparky's back, through his heart and out of his chest. It happened so quickly that he hardly felt a thing apart from a stinging sensation on his chest. He held his hand up to the left hand side of his chest where a steadily growing bloodstain had appeared on his shirt.

Brian took a few steps away from Sparky and began to make his way to the door again making sure not to make eye contact with anyone.

Sparky touched the bloodstain on his shirt with his right hand then looked at the blood on his hand. His vision was getting blurry. He leaned a little to the left then staggered away to the right falling onto a table covered in drinks knocking the drinks over the people sitting at the table.

There were 2 men and 2 women sitting at the table. Both of the male drinkers sitting at the table stood up and shouted at Sparky clearly unaware that Sparky hadn't had too much to drink, he had in fact been fatally wounded.

"What the fuck?" shouted one.

"What are you doing?" shouted the other.

Brian had seen enough. He pushed open the heavy wooden door and left the pub. Another member of the CYT lay dead on the ground. His work here was done.

chapter two

Monday. 10.15am. Daily Post HQ. Glasgow.

It was 10.15am the Monday morning following the incident at the Craigy Inn and Sarah Gibb was sitting on a seat in the hallway outside the editor's office at the headquarters of the Daily Post newspaper in Glasgow where she had worked as a journalist since she graduated from University just over 6 years ago.

Random people walked past in a rush some carrying folders and paperwork and some were not. She didn't know why she was here, all she knew was that she received an email first thing this morning asking her to report to Bobby McCiver, the Editor's office at 10.15am.

She was dressed smartly as always in a trouser suit and 3 inch heeled shoes with her hair tied up in a bun and a small handbag sitting in her lap.

Between the years she spent at University in the city and her time employed at the Post she had lived in the city long enough to fully understand the local dialect but not long enough for her to lose her own South London accent.

Two smartly dressed men wearing visitor tags exited Bobby McCiver's office and walked past Sarah on their way along the hallway.

Bobby stepped out his office and spoke to Sarah.

"Sarah please come in," he said.

Sarah stood up and walked into Bobby's office.

Bobby's office was spacious and open with views over the Clyde river from all of its windows. Inside the office there

was a large leather swivel chair that Bobby would sit in with his back to the windows, a large wooden desk with a keyboard and computer monitor sitting on it, a pile of paper folders all packed full of documents and two smaller swivel chairs on the near side of the desk.

Bobby was a fairly small and balding man with a pot belly and a moustache. He was wearing a shirt and tie, was in his fifties and had worked at the paper since he left school, slowly working his way up the career ladder until he reached to top.

Bobby sat down in his seat.

“Please take a seat.” he said gesturing to Sarah with his hand.

Sarah sat down on one of the smaller swivel chairs on her side of the desk and placed her handbag on the floor.

“So Sarah what do you know about the McCulkin crime family?” he asked.

Sarah coughed gently into her hand to clear her throat before answering.

“The McCulkin crime family was a crime family based in the North and the East of Glasgow in the eighties, nineties and the early two thousands. Headed by Donald McCulkin known as Culk. They were involved in pretty much every type of criminal enterprise you can think of except heroin dealing. Culk saw smack as a dirty drug and wanted nothing to do with it.

He was widely viewed as the last of the old school of gentlemen gangsters because women, children and civilians were never targeted and he paid for the construction of football pitches and tennis courts and funding various local youth organisations in the areas of the city he operated in. He died in 2009 after a long battle with cancer and his crime network disbanded after his death with most

members joining other organised crime groups in the city. He left behind a wife and 3 sons. I wrote an article on his group for the University magazine when I was at Uni.” said Sarah.

“I know you did. I’ve read it and I thought it was a really good piece of journalism. That’s why I think you’ll be ideal for a special project I’m putting together.” said Bobby leaning back into his chair.

“What project is that?” inquired Sarah.

“The 2 men that you saw coming out of my office were Police Scotland CID. looking for some help from the paper with an ongoing situation.” offered Bobby.

“OK. What can I do to help?” replied Sarah.

“Have you ever heard of the Craiglen young team also known as the CYT?” asked Bobby.

“No.” said Sarah shaking her head slowly.

“They’re a street gang operating out of the Craiglen housing estate in the North of Glasgow and four members of their gang have been murdered in the last seven weeks,” said Bobby.

Bobby paused for a few seconds before continuing.

“The police are drawing a complete blank in their investigations. No-one seems to know anything and nobody is speaking to the cops.” explained Bobby.

“And the police think that the remaining gang members will talk to me?” said Sarah.

“Not you. To your new partner.” said Bobby.

“My new partner?” asked Sarah.

“We’ve been employing the youngest of Donald McCulkin’s sons, Calum, on a part time and freelance basis on true crime pieces for about a year now and I’m going to start him full time working with you on this.”

“I see.” said Sarah.

“The police know we employ him and they have explicitly requested we put him on this case but not to tell him he has been specifically requested. His methods may be a little unorthodox but his insights are razor sharp and he can delve further into the criminal underworld with a single phone call than we can do with six months of grooming an informant. He’s a walking encyclopaedia of crime in the West of Scotland and probably further afield.” said Bobby. “I see.” said Sarah again.

“You will be working together as a team. You will be the brains and Calum will be the brawn.” said Bobby.

As soon as Bobby stopped talking Calum tapped on the office door from outside.

“Come in.” said Bobby loud enough to be heard from the corridor outside.

Calum opened the office door and walked in. He was dressed smartly in a suit and white shirt with no tie with the top few buttons on his shirt unfastened and he had a few days stubble on his chin.

At six foot one he was a ruggedly handsome kind of guy. A type more akin to a rugby player than an Armani underwear model and Sarah was instantly attracted to him.

“Calum McCulkin this is Sarah Gibb. You are going to be working together.” said Bobby as he introduced the two to each other.

“Nice to meet you.” said Calum.

“You too.” replied Sarah.

“Am I late?” asked Calum.

“No. Not at all. You’re right on time,” said Bobby.

“Please take a seat.” he continued to Calum gesturing towards the empty seat beside Sarah.

Calum sat down on the empty chair.

“We were just talking about the Craiglen young team. What

do you know about them?" asked Bobby.

Calum took a deep breath before answering.

"They're a street gang of maybe thirty or forty guys in their late teens and early twenties from the Craighen estate in the North of Glasgow." said Calum.

"So you have heard of them?" asked Bobby.

"Aye. I've heard of them." replied Calum.

"I was just explaining to Sarah that four members of that gang have been murdered in the last seven weeks and the cops don't have the first clue who has been doing it so they've asked for our help." explained Bobby.

"What kind of help?" inquired Calum.

"They've asked for my best researcher, that's you Sarah, and my best true crime correspondent, that's you Calum, to work together to find out what is going on with these murders." said Bobby.

"I'm not sure that I'm the right guy for this job." said Calum.

"And why is that?" asked Bobby.

"These guys are street punks. They spray paint their names on walls and their idea of criminality is shoplifting and stealing car stereos. A different world from the one I know." explained Calum.

"Maybe so," said Bobby.

"But I'm hoping that they'll open up to you out of respect for your family name in a way they wouldn't do to the cops." he continued.

"Maybe." said Calum.

"Nobody seems to know anything about these killings. Are they an escalation of violence between rival street gangs? Have the gang members done something to provoke the wrath of someone further up the criminality food chain?" said Bobby.

“Or possibly some kind of serial killer targeting CYT gang members?” offered Calum.

The way Calum was thinking was that by far the group most commonly targeted by serial killers worldwide, were street prostitutes mostly because in a serial killers’ eyes they were dirty, disease spreading, disposable sub-humans. The second most commonly targeted group were usually the homeless because in a serial killers’ eyes they were dirty, often drug or alcohol addicted, wastes of space. The thing that the serial killers who target these groups all have in common is the belief that they were doing society a favour in getting rid of these people. A strong argument could be made that because street gangs contribute nothing to society other than crime, violence and general anti-social behaviour, in the areas they operate in, then they would at the very least register on a serial killer’s radar.

“The police aren’t ruling anything out at this point and neither are we,” said Bobby.

“Another worrying aspect of these killings is that they are becoming more brazen. The latest murder was in the Craighen Inn on Saturday. Including bar staff there were 86 people in the pub at the time of the murder and no-one saw anything.” Bobby continued.

“That doesn’t mean much. People get murdered all the time in Glasgow and no-one ever sees anything.” said Calum.

“This was different. I’ve just heard directly from the CID that there were 4 undercover drugs squad police officers in the pub at the time of the killing and even they didn’t see anything,” said Bobby.

Bobby paused for a moment again before continuing.

“Nobody seems to know anything and the cops are desperate to make progress in these murders and they are willing to bend the rules to breaking point to make it

happen.” said Bobby.

Bobby opened up the top drawer in his desk and took out and ID badge on a chain and placed it down on the table in front of Sarah.

“Anyway. This is how it’s going to work. Both of you will still work for the newspaper but Sarah you will also be employed by Police Scotland on a temporary basis as a civilian intelligence analyst and you will have access to all police files including records and intelligence files. You will be based in the Maryhill police station and you will be free to come and go as you please,” explained Bobby. Sarah picked up the ID badge from Bobby’s desk and looked at it.

“I can’t see this investigation lasting more than a week,” said Bobby as he leaned over the table and tapped on the small pile of folders sitting on the table near to where Sarah was sitting.

“These are the official police files on the four murders. No-one outside this room is to know that you have them. I suggest you study them before starting your investigation,” said Bobby.

Sarah picked up the folders and placed them on her lap.

“That’ll be all for now guys.” said Bobby.

Sarah and Calum stood up and took a few steps towards the door.

“And guys,” said Bobby, pausing for a moment.

“Good luck.”

Sarah and Calum exited Bobby’s office and started walking along the corridor with Sarah carrying the files.

“Do you need me to carry those?” asked Calum.

“No, I’m fine.” replied Sarah.

“We can take those files to my place to study. Better than having someone looking over your shoulder here.” offered

Calum.

“OK.” replied Sarah.

“Do you have a car?” asked Calum.

“No.” answered Sarah.

“That’s OK we’ll take mine.” said Calum.

A couple of minutes later the elevator door to the underground carpark at the Daily Post headquarters opened up and Sarah and Calum stepped out.

All around them were the cars of the newspaper’s employees ranging from very small Minis through to the very large Range Rovers and everything in-between.

Calum took his car keys out of his pocket as he walked along the pedestrian walkway through the carpark.

“This is us.” said Calum as he raised his key fob up to eye level and pressed the button to disarm the car alarm and unlock the doors.

The hazard lights from the front of Calum’s car, a red Porsche 911, flashed and the car alarm beeped to signal that it was now disarmed.

“Nice car.” remarked Sarah.

“Thanks.” replied Calum.

“911 Carrera?” asked Sarah.

“Sure is.” said Calum as he opened the passenger door for Sarah.

Sarah carefully got into the passenger seat in Calum’s car and put on the seat belt.

“You know your cars.” commented Calum as he got into the driving seat and started the ignition.

“I had three brothers growing up and they were all car nuts. I suppose some of it rubbed off onto me.” explained Sarah. Calum put his car into gear and drove away.

Monday. 1.15pm. West Glasgow.

Calum drove his car off the road and onto the spacious bricked driveway outside his house, a beautiful 4 bed and 2 bathroom detached sandstone 3 storey Victorian villa in an upmarket suburb of Western Glasgow.

In front of the house was a perfectly manicured patch of grass probably fifty by twenty feet with some kind of flowering tree in the centre of a circular section of turf dug out of the grassy area.

The grassy area was surrounded by an equally well manicured eight feet high hedge that ran all the way from the house to the road and along the side of the road from the corner of the garden to the driveway entrance giving some privacy from passing cars on the road outside.

That was about the extent of Calum's front garden. No flowers or decorative plants because Calum had no interest in gardening. He just paid the Polish guy that worked on most of the gardens in the area £40 every two weeks to take care of all the gardening needs. A fair price in Calum's opinion.

Calum got out of the car and quickly made his way around the front of the car to open Sarah's door for her.

"Thanks." said Sarah as she got out of the car with her handbag in one hand and the police files in the other.

Calum closed the car door behind Sarah and walked with her towards the front door to the house.

Sarah noticed the CCTV. cameras on the front and the side of Calum's house.

"This is a really nice house Calum. I'm impressed." she said as they both reached the half dozen stone steps leading up to the front door.

“Well it keeps the rain off my head.” remarked Calum as he put the key in the lock and opened the front door.

The burglar alarm in Calum’s house started beeping loudly so Calum quickly approached the alarm control panel on the left hand side wall and quickly typed in a six-digit security code to disarm the alarm. The alarm immediately stopped beeping.

“Come in, come in.” said Calum to Sarah.

Sarah followed Calum through the house towards the kitchen.

The interior décor of Calum’s house could be described as modern and minimalist with lots of neutral colours and lots of cream marble effect fittings. This was a house interior that had been designed and decorated by someone that knew exactly what they were doing. Probably not Calum. Probably an upmarket interior designer and decorator from the city.

Calum walked along the main corridor of his house, closely followed by Sarah, towards the kitchen. All the while Sarah looking left and right at the various decorations. But no flowers or flowerpots. This house was very definitely a man cave that could benefit from a feminine touch.

After a few seconds the pair reached the kitchen area, a large and fully equipped open-plan futuristic white marble effect area centred around a huge aluminium American style fridge freezer with a large island in the middle of the room. Calum switched on the main light as he entered the room.

“You can put the files there.” Calum gestured towards the kitchen island.

Sarah placed the files down on the island.

“Can I get you something to drink?” asked Calum.

“Tea? Coffee? Fruit juice? Mineral water?” he continued.

“No I’m fine thanks.” replied Sarah.

Calum opened up one of the doors and took out a small bottle of mineral water and removed the lid.

“Can I use your toilet?” asked Sarah.

“Of course you can.” replied Calum.

“Through that door. First door on the left.” he continued.

Sarah left the room as Calum sipped from the bottle of mineral water and approached the police files sitting on the kitchen island, picking one of them up and opening it.

Calum stood silently in the centre of his kitchen with a bottle of water in one hand and a police case file in another quickly reading through the typed documents and looking over the photograph images included in the file.

Sarah re-entered the room and stopped a few feet away from where Calum was standing.

“Before we get started I think we need to talk about the elephant in the room.” she stated.

Calum was puzzled.

“What elephant?” he replied.

“Your car and your house.” said Sarah.

“What about them?” asked Calum.

“I know what your car is worth and I have a pretty good idea what your house is worth and there is no way you are paying for them both with your income as a journalist.” said Sarah.

“I see,” said Calum as he placed the police file back down on the kitchen island.

“It’s not what you think. I’m not involved in anything illegal.” stated Calum.

“Aren’t you?”

“You know who my Dad was don’t you?” asked Calum.

“Yes I do.” said Sarah.

“And you know he was involved in all kinds of criminality

don't you" said Calum.

"Yes." said Sarah.

"What you probably don't know is that when he found out he had terminal cancer he spent the last 2 years of his life setting up legitimate businesses for his family, my family, so that they would have a comfortable life without needing to get involved in crime." said Calum.

Sarah started nodding her head in agreement.

"My family at the time consisted of my Mum, two brothers, Billy and Scott and me," Calum continued.

"My Mum died 4 years after my dad died. So Mum's legitimate business interests were split between me and my brothers. My oldest brother Billy was murdered 2 years after Mum died so his business interests were split between me and my other brother Scott. Scott died 3 years ago in a motorbike crash and I inherited all of his interests,"

Calum took a deep breath before continuing.

"Some of the legitimate businesses my Dad set up have weathered well over the years and some haven't. Right now I own 3 car dealerships, a carpet and laminate flooring warehouse and a restaurant,"

Calum paused for a moment to give Sarah a chance to take it all in before continuing.

"Financially speaking I don't need this job. I do it because I believe in it. I believe in confronting and exposing evil. Smack dealers and paedo gangs in particular. That's why I do this job." Calum finished.

There was a brief silence before Sarah spoke up.

"I'm sorry to hear about your Mum and your brothers. I didn't know," she said.

"I didn't mean to offend you by asking about your income," she continued.

"I just wanted to know what I'll be working with." she

finished.

“No offence taken.” said Calum before taking a swig out of his mineral water bottle.

“So that’s my story. What’s yours?” asked Calum.

“What do you want to know?” asked Sarah.

“Your accent for a start. South London if I’m not mistaken.” said Calum.

“Croydon. Born and bred.” stated Sarah.

“And how did you come to be working as a journalist in Glasgow?” asked Calum.

“My family used to holiday up here in Scotland when I was a child and I always loved it so when it was time to choose a university to go to Glasgow was always my first choice. I enjoyed my time at university so much and I made so many good friends that I decided to stay in the city and find a job here rather than go back to London.” stated Sarah.

“And how did you get picked to work on this special project?” asked Calum.

“I wrote an article years ago about your father for the university magazine. Our boss, Bobby, read it and I suppose he thought we could work well together.” said Sarah.

“Cool.” stated Calum before taking another swig from his water bottle.

There was a brief silence before Sarah spoke up.

“I suppose we should really make a start,” she said as she took a step closer to the kitchen island with the police files on it.

“But where to start?” she exhaled.

“We should start at the beginning,” said Calum.

“With the first murder.” he continued.

Sarah quickly looked through the folders in front of her, checking the dates attached to each file and picked the one

with the earliest opening date.

“That’ll be this guy here. Robert Campbell known as Bob. 24 years old,” said Sarah as she opened up the file and placed it on the kitchen island worktop so both she and Calum could both see the contents.

“It says here that he wasn’t even reported missing by anyone. His body was found in an abandoned warehouse after being brutally tortured before being doused in petrol and set on fire.” said Sarah.

Calum picked up a photo from the file and looked at it. The photo was of a corpse burned beyond recognition and chained to a metal chair.

“Someone wanted him to suffer.” he said almost too quietly for Sarah to hear.

“That’s an understatement. The pathologists report here says that he had been chained to a metal chair, he had holes drilled into at least 3 of his teeth mostly likely with an electric drill, he had 4 fingers on his right hand cut off and then he was doused in petrol and set on fire while still alive.” said Sarah.

“A hell of a way to go.” said Calum.

“That’s by far the most horrific thing I’ve ever heard of.” said Sarah.

“Never underestimate what people are capable of doing to each other.” said Calum as he placed the photo back into the file.

Sarah closed the file they were looking at and picked up another.

“Next up is Derek Swanson known as Swanny. 22 years old. He had his throat slit while out walking his dog,” said Sarah while handing a photo to Calum.

Calum looked at the photo of a young man lying on a footpath in a large pool of blood.

“There were no defensive injuries and no sign of a struggle. The pathologist suggests he was most likely attacked from behind and almost decapitated by a single injury inflicted by a large bladed instrument.” Sarah continued.

“A straightforward execution. No messing around.” said Calum as he placed the photograph back into the file. Sarah closed the file, picked up another, opened it and handed Calum a photograph from inside the file.

Calum studied the photograph. The photograph showed a man lying on the ground with no obvious injuries.

“The third murder victim was David Smith known as Smitty. He was 21 years old and he was strangled in the early hours walking home from a party. Again there was no defensive wounds and the pathologist suggested that he was attacked from behind and strangled with a very thin cord or cable leaving no forensic trace behind.” said Sarah.

“Another straightforward killing.” said Calum as he put the photograph back into the police file.

Sarah picked up the last of the 4 police files and opened it.

“And last but not least is Mark Adam known as Sparky. He was 25 years old and he spiked through the heart while watching a football match in the Craiglen Inn on Saturday. The spike was estimated to be around 10 millimetres wide and entered his body through his back slightly right of his left shoulder blade, passed directly through his heart and left a puncture wound on his chest. There were 86 people in the pub including bar staff and undercover cops and no-one saw anything” said Sarah.

Calum took the photo from the folder Sarah was holding and studied it. The picture was of Sparky lying on the floor of the Craigy Inn with a large bloodstain on the front of his Celtic shirt.

“A professional hit of the highest calibre. They all were.”

said Calum.

“A professional hit?” inquired Sarah.

“Don’t professionals use pistols with silencers?” she continued.

“Some do. Some don’t. A true professional can kill using just about anything,” explained Calum.

“These guys have all got 2 things in common. They were all members of the CYT and they were all killed by someone that knew exactly what they were doing.” continued Calum.

Both Calum and Sarah paused for a few seconds.

“So what do we do now?” asked Sarah.

“Now we go and speak to the CYT I need to make a couple of phone calls.” said Calum as he took his phone out of his pocket.

Monday. 2.35pm. North Glasgow

Calum and Sarah were in Calum's car driving towards the Craiglen housing estate in the North of Glasgow.

"So what do you know about this guy we're going to meet?" asked Sarah.

"I know his name is Stevie Ralston and he is known as Razzy. I know he is the son of Davie Ralston, a bouncer that used to do debt collection for my dad and I know that Razzy is currently the leader of the CYT" replied Calum.

"And do you think he'll open up to you?" asked Sarah.

"I suppose we're about to find out." replied Calum.

Calum and Sarah were about to delve into the world of gangs and gang members in Glasgow. It was a world that Calum had a pretty good working knowledge of but Sarah knew very little.

The gang culture in Glasgow could be traced back to the late 19th and early 20th century with the razor gangs of the East End and in its heyday in the 1970's almost every street or estate in Glasgow had its own gang with the gangs having names like the Tongs or the Toi. At that time Glasgow had more gangs than London despite London being more than 15 times the size of Glasgow.

It was a world of endless feuds between schemes, a scheme being a street or an estate and the gang members that inhabited them were known as schemes in Glasgow and weedgies or neds or weedgie neds in the rest of Scotland. The situation was that if you were from a certain street or estate you would automatically join the gang based there when you were old enough and you would automatically become sworn enemies of the rival gangs that your territory bordered with.

The feuds were not about drugs or controlling a certain area. They were mostly just about gang rivalry and also tit for tat revenge attacks for violent attacks on members of your own gang.

Even now in the 21st century the weapon of choice for gang members is a knife. Either a lock knife or a butterfly knife or a box cutter knife but occasionally something larger like a machete or a meat cleaver or even a sword.

The reason for this is that knives are very easy to get hold of compared to guns and the penalty for carrying a knife is a fraction of what you can expect for carrying a gun.

Acquiring a gun in Glasgow is a lot like acquiring a kilo of cocaine in the respect that if you really want one and you have the money to pay for it you can get one. You might have to go through 2 or 3 or 4 different people to get it but you can get it. And just like a kilo of cocaine if you get caught in possession of one you can expect to get 5 years in prison. Maybe more.

Gang members were generally in their early teens through to their mid-twenties and the endless wars they waged on each other went a long way towards Glasgow, at one point, being ranked by the World Health Organisation as the murder capital of Europe.

These days the gang scene in Glasgow is a slowly dying one with government funded initiatives like the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit (SVRU) having a real impact on knife crime and gang membership in the city. The scene is dying but is not dead. Not yet.

Gang members can quickly be identified by anyone travelling through a scheme as they usually hang around in groups outside corner shops or at children's swing parks. The gangs in Glasgow do not have gang colours unlike Los Angeles and other cities with problems with gangs. In

Glasgow gang members are all dressed the same in tracksuits and baseball caps with Lacoste and Burberry being the most in demand designer labels but pretty much any make will do.

Calum pulled his car over and parked outside a boarded up shop in Craighen and applied the handbrake.

“Now what?” asked Sarah.

“Now we wait.” replied Calum.

Sarah looked out the passenger window in Calum’s car and what she saw was bleak. Abandoned shops with their security shutters down and covered in spray painted graffiti. Lots of council owned houses, many of them with windows or doors boarded up with wood. Concrete everywhere with not a bit of greenery anywhere.

The Glaswegian comedian Billy Connolly joked that there were areas of Glasgow that would look exactly the same after a nuclear war. Craighen was definitely one of the areas he was talking about.

These kinds of deprived neighbourhoods just produced generation after generation of criminals with most never rising above the mediocre level of criminality but a few would go on to associate with the large crime families these kind of areas also produced.

The street gangs and crime families in these areas had a similar set up. They both thrived in deprived areas, were largely made up with violent young men who had absolutely no fear of going to prison because they had been in and out of prison and young offender institutions their entire lives. Both types of organisation had a very basic hierarchy with generally the most dangerous man calling the shots.

The Scottish crime gangs and families were nowhere near as sophisticated in their set up as the Russians, the Italians

or even the Irish. These organisations had various levels of involvement. Soldiers, captains, bosses, underbosses etc. There was none of that in the Scottish crime families and gangs.

The way it usually worked is that a member of a street gang would get jailed and meet up with an associate of one of the crime families also doing time and they would form a working relationship when they got out.

The crime family associate would offer some pretty basic work to the street gang members. Somebody was to get beat up or slashed or maybe someone's car or business premises were to be fire bombed.

If the street gang members could prove themselves then they would get offered better paying work. Usually drugs. Starting off with weed and speed and ecstasy then moving onto coke and ultimately heroin.

Sarah noticed a schemie crossing the road a little in front of where they were parked up. She knew he was a schemie by the way he was dressed, a white shell suit and a Burberry pattern skip cap.

The schemie kept looking around as he approached the car before he reached the driver side of the car.

He tapped on the driver side window.

Calum rolled down the window.

"Are you Calum?" asked the schemie.

"Aye" replied Calum.

"Razzy said he'll meet you along there at number 112," said the schemie as he pointed further along the road.

"First block of flats on the right. Just press the buzzer and they'll let you in." the schemie continued.

"OK" said Calum as he unfastened his seatbelt.

"Do you want to stay here or do you want to come with me?" Calum asked Sarah.

“I’ll come with you.” said Sarah as she quickly unfastened her seatbelt.

Two minutes later Calum and Sarah were outside the block of flats they were told to go to. The block of flats was 6 storeys high and looked reasonably well looked after.

Calum pressed the buzzer for 112.

A male voice spoke over the intercom system.

“Hello. Who is it?” the voice said.

Calum leaned in closer to the intercom microphone and pressed the speaker button.

“It’s Calum McCulkin. I’m here to speak to Razzy.” Calum said.

There was a loud buzzing sound and the entrance door to the flats opened and Calum and Sarah walked in and made a start on the 3 flights of concrete stairs to flat 112.

“When we get in here I’ll do all the talking.” said Calum as he stepped up the first of the stairs.

“OK” replied Sarah.

A minute later Calum and Sarah were standing outside flat 112 waiting to speak to Razzy the current leader of the CYT

The CYT was not a democratic organisation. No-one had voted Razzy to be the leader. He had earned the position by being the hardest guy in the gang at that time mostly because his dad, Davie Ralston, was a pretty good boxer in his day and he had introduced Razzy to boxing from as soon as he was big enough to put on the gloves.

Razzy became a pretty good boxer and had earned himself a reputation at the high school as being a really good fighter and not to be messed with. Then later when he got into the gang scene and started carrying a knife, he was known for slashing people in the blink of an eye.

The flat door was a fairly average white PVC door with a

single tiny spyhole in the middle of the door at eye height. Calum touched Sarah's arm to get her attention and pointed up to the top corner of the wall where a small CCTV camera had been fitted and pointed to exactly where they were standing. Calum also noticed that the doorbell was a Ring.com video doorbell that would be connected to someone inside the flat's phone or tablet. Possibly a few phones or tablets.

The flat they were visiting was in effect the headquarters or at the very least one of the headquarters of the CYT, a safe house, and they didn't take kindly to unwelcome guests like the police or rival gangs.

The intercom system at the main door offered a first line of defence while the CCTV camera and video doorbell offered another.

"Here we go," said Calum as he pressed the doorbell.

Almost immediately Welshy answered the door and the smell of weed being smoked filled the landing that Calum and Sarah were standing on.

Welshy was dressed in a blue tracksuit with a white skip cap. His head was tilted back, his eyes were nearly closed and he was holding a large joint in his right hand. He was very very stoned on weed.

"C'mon in troops," he said almost struggling to get the words out.

"Follow me," he continued.

Welshy walked slowly along the corridor towards the living room of the flat with Calum and Sarah following him and with the smell of weed being smoked getting stronger and stronger as they walked.

After a few seconds Welshy, Calum and Sarah reached the living room in the centre of the flat where they were greeted by Razzy and another 5 schemes sitting around the

living room smoking weed and drinking bottles of Buckfast wine, a favourite tippie of schemies in Glasgow.

The layout of the living room was pretty basic and consisted of a beat up old sofa, a couple of large armchairs and a glass table in the centre of the sitting area.

The armchairs didn't match each other or the sofa and all the furniture was probably picked up from the street when someone was throwing them out.

The glass coffee table was covered in half empty Buckfast bottles, joints in various stages of development and a green glass weed smoking bong.

Razzy was sitting in the middle of the sofa with Tony and Jimbo sitting on either side of him. Each of the 2 chairs were also occupied by Broon and Boab,. Lafferty was sitting on the floor in front of the coffee table and facing the sofa. He was joined by Welshy, the schemie that had just shown Calum and Sarah in.

Razzy and all the schemies were dressed exactly the way you would expect, they were all wearing tracksuits and baseball skip caps. They fitted the typical stereotype of Glasgow schemies perfectly.

Like most stereotypes, the majority of people probably don't fit the profile but a lot do, otherwise the stereotype wouldn't exist. And these schemies that Calum and Sarah were meeting certainly did.

In the living room of the flat the air was thick with weed smoke as Broon and Boab, Welshy and Razzy were all smoking joints.

Razzy was sitting in the middle of the couch and stood up when Calum and Sarah entered the room.

Razzy clicked his fingers and gestured to Broon who was sitting in one of the chairs.

"You. Fucking move," he barked.

“Give our guests a seat.” he continued.
Broon slowly got out of the chair and sat down on the floor next to Lafferty and Welshy.
“You too,” he said to Boab in the other chair.
Boab complied and got out of the chair and onto the floor.
“Take a seat guys.” Razzy said to Calum and Sarah.
Calum and Sarah sat down on the now unoccupied chairs.
Razzy picked up one of the Buckfast bottles from the table and took a big swig.
“You must be Calum.” said Razzy reaching across the table to shake Calum’s hand.
Calum shook Razzy’s hand.
“And you must be Razzy.” said Calum.
“Guilty as charged.” Razzy smiled.
Tony who was sitting on the right of Razzy passed him a joint and Razzy took a large inhalation, held it in for a while then exhaled.
“My Dad says that your Dad was the fucking man back in the day.” said Razzy.
“He had his moments.” replied Calum.
Razzy reached out to Calum with the joint in his hand offering it to him.
“No thanks.” said Calum gesturing a stop sign with his hand.
Razzy reached over to pass the joint to Sarah.
“Not for me either thanks.” said Sarah.
There was a brief pause before the conversation continued.
“So what can I do for... what newspaper is it you work for?” asked Razzy.
“The post. The Daily Post.” said Calum.
“Right. The Daily Post. What can I do for the Daily Post?” asked Razzy.
“We’re investigating the murders of 4 CYT members in the

last 7 weeks. We're interested in hearing an insider's view from the people that knew the victims the best." continued Calum.

"They were all good men." said Razzy.

"Anything else?" asked Calum.

"Like what?" asked Razzy.

"Like who might have wanted to kill them." stated Calum. Razzy inhaled then exhaled deeply before answering.

"Nobody springs to mind." said Razzy shaking his head as he spoke.

"No new tit for tat feuds with rival gangs? No unpaid drug debts? No moving in on someone else's turf?" asked Calum.

"No. None of that." said Razzy shaking his head again as he spoke.

"What about the first guy that got killed? The fella Campbell" said Calum.

"Bobby Campbell." said Sarah.

"Bob? What about him?" asked Razzy sounding a little surprised.

"He was the first guy targeted and he was the only one that was made to suffer. My gut tells me there's a reason for that. That there's something special about Bob's killing. That this whole situation is somehow connected to him or something that's he's done or been involved in." asked Calum.

Razzy looked over to the Tony on his left for a second, then looked at Broon, Welshy and Lafferty on the floor in front of him, then lastly to Jimbo on his right before answering.

"I have no knowledge of Bob Campbell ever being involved in anything like that." he said plainly.

"Are you sure?" asked Calum.

"I'm sure," replied Razzy.

“Just like I’m sure that we’re ready for whoever it is that’s hunting us.” said Razzy as he reached down the back of his tracksuit bottoms and took out a 10 inch hunting knife then placed it down on the table.

Jimbo on Razzy’s right reached into one of his socks and took out a 6 inch lock knife.

“We’re all pure ready for anything.” he said as he placed the knife down on the table.

“We all are.” said Broon on the floor on Razzy’s right as he placed a set of brass knuckles with a blade in the thumb position down on the coffee table.

All the schemies present, Boab, Lafferty and Tony on the floor also took out knives and placed them on the table.

“Whoever they are and whenever they come for us we’ll be ready for them.” said Razzy before taking another large swig from the Buckfast bottle sitting on the coffee table in front of him.

“Well I don’t think there’s anything else for us to talk about.” said Calum as he stood up, took his wallet out of his back pocket, took a business card out of his wallet and handed it to Razzy.

“If you can think of anything else that’s relevant to what we’ve been talking about get in touch. My phone number and email address are both on the card.” he continued.

“Will do.” said Razzy.

Sarah stood up.

“I’ll see you out,” said Welshy the schemie that let them into the flat as he stood up and started walking towards the door followed by Calum and Sarah.

“Nice to meet yous.” Welshy said as Calum and Sarah walked out the door.

“You too mate.” said Calum back.

A minute and a half later Calum and Sarah were back on

the street approaching Calum's car.

"He's fucking lying to me." spat out Calum as he unlocked the car with the key fob.

Calum and Sarah got into Calum's car and Calum started the ignition.

"Are you sure?" asked Sarah.

"Absolutely," said Calum as he started to drive away.

"I was maybe 90 percent sure going in there that the key to the whole thing was the death of the first guy killed, Bob Campbell. Now after Razzy's performance in there I'm 100 percent sure. There's a reason Bob was the first guy targeted and there's a reason he was the only one made to suffer. Either he had done something or was involved in something and that's why he was taken out." said Calum.

"So now what?" inquired Sarah.

"For now we look at this whole thing from a different angle. So far we've looked at it from the victim's point of view maybe we should look at it from the perpetrators point of view." said Calum.

"And how do we do that?" Sarah asked.

"If there have been 4 murders in 7 weeks in the same scheme in Glasgow then I know a guy that will probably know something about them or at least some of them." said Calum.

Calum took his phone out of his jacket pocket and placed it onto the phone cradle fitted to the dashboard of the car.

"I need to make a phone call." said Calum.

Monday. 4pm. Glasgow city centre.

About an hour after Calum and Sarah met with the CYT in the Craiglen estate they were now in an upmarket bar in central Glasgow.

Calum had deliberately picked a bar with an extensive CCTV network, so the guy they were going to meet would feel safe, and also a table in the corner as the guy would want to keep his back to the wall and to keep an eye on anyone approaching them. The guy they were waiting to meet was more than a little bit paranoid because over the years he had crossed pretty much every crime family and street gang in the city and all of them were capable of extracting revenge.

All around the bar drinkers and diners were enjoying a meal or an afternoon drink or both. There were approximately 60 customers in the bar at this time with about 40 of them sitting in pairs or small groups at numbered tables enjoying a meal and the rest either standing at the bar or through the back of the bar at the pool table.

Calum and Sarah had positioned in a corner booth with Calum's back to the wall so he could see anyone entering the bar with Sarah sitting across the table from him.

"So who is this guy that we are going to meet?" asked Sarah.

Calum leaned across the table to speak quietly to Sarah.

"His name is Malky. You don't need to know his surname. He was an enforcer for my Dad a while back and when my Dad's gang disbanded Malky decided he was going to be a freelance agent for enforcers all over the city and further afield too. He arranges violence for a living. Beatings, slashings, kneecappings even murders. He's originally from the North of Glasgow so it's highly unlikely that all these

murders could take place in his own backyard and him to know nothing about any of them.” Calum said quietly.

Calum leaned back into his seat.

“Don’t be surprised when you meet him. He’s not going to be what you think. He’s just a wee guy. But as the old saying goes it’s not the size of the dog in the fight that matters.” started Calum.

“It’s the size of the fight in the dog.” Sarah continued.

Malky entered the pub by the main entrance surrounded by smoke from the smokers smoking outside and the vape fumes from the vapers also vaping outside.

Calum was right. Malky did not look like what she thought a gangland enforcer looked like. He was not a 6 foot 4 and 25 stone silverback gorilla. He was more like 5 foot 8 and maybe 12 stone and with his red Stone Island parka jacket and his Timberland boots he was dressed more like a twenty something football hooligan than a fiftyish businessman.

Maybe he started off as a hooligan many years ago as all violent professionals had to be introduced to violence somehow.

“Here we go.” said Calum as he stood up to get Malky’s attention.

Malky noticed Calum in the corner of the pub and started walking towards him. Calum started walking towards Malky and they met in the centre of the pub.

Calum reached out to shake Malky’s hand and Malky shook his hand.

“It’s been a while Calum.” Malky said.

“Aye. It’s been nearly 6 years.” replied Calum.

Calum pointed over to the table Sarah was sitting at.

“I’ve got us a table in the corner. Just the way I know you like it.” said Calum.

Calum and Malky made their way over to the table and introduced Malky and Sarah to each other.

“Sarah this is Malky. Malky this is Sarah.” said Calum as he sat down next to Sarah so Malky could have his back to the wall.

“Nice to meet you Malky.” said Sarah.

“Nice to meet you too Sarah.” said Malky as he slowly sat down at the table.

Malky paused for a second before speaking.

“I didn’t know this was going to be a ménage à trois.” said Malky.

“Sarah’s cool. You can trust her. I wouldn’t have brought her along if you couldn’t.” explained Calum.

Malky paused for a second again before speaking.

“So what can I do for the youngest of the McCulkin brothers?” Malky asked.

“I’m working as a journalist now and I’m investigating 4 murders in the Craighlen area over the last couple of months.” said Calum.

“I’ve heard about them” said Malky nodding his head as he spoke.

”What have you heard?” asked Calum.

“I’ve heard that 4 members of the CYT have been killed in the last 2 months. I’ve heard that the first guy killed was tortured then set on fire. Nasty.” said Malky.

“What else have you heard?” said Calum.

“Not a lot. I’ve just heard that another 2 CYT members were killed on the street a week or 2 apart then the latest guy got stabbed to death in the Craigy Inn on Saturday.” explained Malky.

“Nothing else?” inquired Calum.

“That’s about it.” said Malky.

“No theories on who might be behind any of these

killings?” asked Calum.

Malky shook his head as he answered.

“Nope. Nothing,” said Malky.

“You’re not the first guy to come to me asking about these killings.” Malky continued.

“Who else has been asking around about this?” asked Calum.

“The first guy that got killed was from a family I know well. The Campbells from Craiglen. I know his uncles well, we used to be close back in the day and they’ve been at me looking for info. I told them exactly what I’m telling you and that is that I know nothing about these killings.

Absolutely nothing. Whoever is setting these killings up and whoever is committing them is someone I don’t know,” said Malky.

There was a brief pause before Malky continued.

“Have you considered it might just be an escalation of a feud between rival gangs?” asked Malky.

“Both of us know members of these schemie gangs always carry knives. Maybe it’s just them killing each other.”

Malky continued.

“No. I don’t think so. These murders were committed by someone that knew exactly what they were doing.

Especially the last murder in the Craigy Inn.” said Calum.

“The guy that got stabbed watching the football?” asked Malky.

“Aye. He was killed by a single injury that no-one saw being inflicted.” said Calum.

“That’s always the way though isn’t it? People get stabbed to death all the time in Glasgow and no-one ever sees anything.” said Malky.

“This time it was different. There were 4 undercover drug squad officers in the pub at the time of the murder.

Professional observers watching everything and everyone and even they didn't see anything." said Calum.

"I didn't know about the cops being there. That changes things. Maybe it was someone that knew what they were doing that killed that guy." said Malky.

"Is there nothing you can tell us or no-one you can send us to speak to about this?" asked Calum.

Malky paused before answering.

"There's a guy, Ricky Sloane, that used to work for me that I washed my hands of when I found out he was on the gear." started Malky.

"Heroin?" said Sarah.

"Aye. Heroin. He used to be good at what he did until he picked up a heroin habit, the last time he got locked up. Then he started getting sloppy so I ended our working relationship," said Malky.

"I was going to take him out myself as a precaution in case he started to blab about the work he used to do for me but his best mate pleaded with me not to. He said that if Ricky ever looked like he was going to talk then he would take him out for me." Malky continued.

"And you think he might be involved in these killings?" asked Calum.

"I think it's a possibility. He's experienced and he always uses a knife these days ever since he was blacklisted by all the gun guys in the city because of his habit. And importantly, he'll work for smack money. A few hundred quid here and a few hundred quid there. He's at the bottom of the food chain these days." replied Malky.

"And how do I get in touch with this guy?" asked Calum.

"You'll need to go through the guy he works for now. His handler. A nasty piece of work from the drum called Davie Dundas." replied Malky.

“The drum? You mean Drumchapel?” asked Sarah.

“That’s right. Drumchapel.” replied Malky.

“Tell me about this guy Ricky works for now.” asked Calum.

“Davie Dundas will be in his early fifties now and his main income is from dealing £20 bags of smack and arranging the occasional beating or slashing, always committed by one of his junkie customers.” said Malky

“Like this guy Ricky Sloane you were talking about.” inquired Calum.

“Exactly like Ricky Sloane.” replied Malky nodding his head as he spoke.

“Davie Dundas is pretty near the bottom of the food chain himself. He doesn’t have any quality guys working for him.” Malky continued.

“So how do I make contact with this Davie Dundas character?” asked Calum.

“He operates out of the pool room in the Clachan bar in Drumchapel from opening time to closing time all day every day.” said Malky.

“And how will I know him?” asked Calum.

“He’s in his early fifties, about 6 foot 2, fairly skinny built, blondie brown shoulder length hair slicked back into a mullet, he’s usually clean shaven, he always wears a full length leather trench coat and he’s always accompanied by 2 henchmen wherever he goes.” detailed Malky.

“That’s good info. Anything else I need to know?” asked Calum.

“Try not to piss him off. Don’t try to bully or harass him. The henchmen that shadow him wherever he goes are not hired for their sparkling personalities. They’re there because they’re extremely violent and they are always armed with something like a machete or an axe. They are

usually junkies or psychopaths that don't give a fuck about the consequences of things and they wouldn't give a fuck what your family name is." explained Malky.

"Got it." said Calum.

Malky paused for a few seconds before continuing.

"Is there anything else I can help you with?" asked Malky.

"No. That's about it mate." replied Calum.

Malky stood up and reached across the table to shake Calum's hand. Calum also stood up and shook Malky's hand.

"Good to see you again Calum." said Malky.

"And you too mate." replied Calum.

"It was nice to meet you Sarah." said Malky.

"And it was nice to meet you Malky." replied Sarah.

Malky stepped to his right away from the table and walked towards the entrance/exit of the bar.

"Now what?" asked Sarah.

Calum looked at his watch before answering.

"Now we call it a day. I'll drop you off and I'll pick you up tomorrow afternoon at about 1 o'clock and we'll pay this Davie Dundas character a visit." replied Calum as he stepped away from the table.

"Sounds like a plan." continued Sarah as she also stepped away from the table.

Monday. 5.20pm. South Glasgow

Calum was driving his car through the Shawlands area in the South of Glasgow towards Sarah's home. Sarah sat beside him in the passenger seat.

"Take the next left." said Sarah pointing to a turning in the road coming up.

Calum turned his car down to the left towards some upmarket looking "yuppie" flats.

"This is me just down here." said Sarah pointing to a block of flats coming up on the right.

Calum pulled his car over and stopped.

"That looks like quite a cool wee bachelorette pad you've got there." said Calum.

"Thanks," replied Sarah.

"It's not just mine. I've got a flatmate that stays with me. A friend from uni." she continued.

"Cool." said Calum.

"Do you want to pop in for a coffee?" asked Sarah.

"No thanks." said Calum.

"Some other time though." he continued.

"Sure." said Sarah.

"So I'll pick you up here at 1 o'clock tomorrow afternoon and we'll go and meet up with this Dundas guy." said Calum.

"Ok" said Sarah as she started to open the door to get out.

"There is just one thing I need from you." said Calum.

"Name it." said Sarah.

"I need you to print me off a photograph of a child that has been badly hurt with lots of bruising and possibly an arm or a leg in a plaster cast. It can be a boy or a girl and preferably aged 10 to 12 years old." said Calum.

Sarah was baffled.

"Why?" she asked.

“For motivation.” replied Calum.

Sarah was still baffled.

“Motivation?” she asked.

“Trust me. Everything will make sense tomorrow.” said Calum.

“Ok then.” said Sarah as she stepped out the car and closed the car door.

Calum drove off into the distance.

Sarah crossed the road towards her flat and made her way up a flight of steps towards her flat.

Sarah opened the door to her flat and stepped inside. She picked up some mail sitting on a small table on the left hand side of the door and walked along the short corridor that led towards the living room.

The corridor décor was pretty plain with laminated flooring and whitewashed walls with a picture hanging on the left hand side about halfway along.

Sarah opened the door to the living room and sat down on one of the two leather couches in the room while looking through the mail. It was mostly junk mail. Nothing of any real interest.

The living room was nicely decorated with white walls, a tasteful painting hanging on one of the walls and a large mirror hanging on the another of the walls, 2 leather couches, large TV in the corner and a large glass coffee table with a vase full of flowers in the centre of the room.

Sarah leaned back into the sofa, closed her eyes and took a deep breath in through her nose and out through her mouth. When she opened her eyes her flatmate Lorna was standing in front of her wearing just a large towel around her chest and another around her head.

“I never heard you come in,” said Lorna.

“I was just having a quick shower before dinner.” she

continued.

Sarah and Lorna had been friends since their first year at University where Sarah was studying journalism and Lorna was studying accountancy.

When it came time to buy a home it was always going to be a place and a mortgage that they could share.

They were more like sisters than best friends and they told each other everything that was going on in their lives. The good the bad and the ugly.

"I'm just in a minute ago." replied Sarah.

Lorna took the towel off her head and started to dry her hair whilst looking into the mirror.

"So how was your day?" Lorna asked.

Sarah paused for a second before answering.

"Interesting. Eventful." Sarah replied.

"Really?" asked Lorna.

"Do tell." she continued while still drying her hair.

"Have you ever heard of Donald McCulkin?" asked Sarah.

"Of course," said Lorna.

"The former Glasgow criminal godfather. Died about 15 years back." she continued.

"I've been paired up with his youngest son Calum at work investigating a group of murders in the North of the city. It's all very hush hush." said Sarah.

Lorna stopped drying her hair and quickly wrapped her hair back up into the towel.

"Stop right there," she said to Sarah.

"I'll get the wine." she continued as she made her way through to the kitchen where she came back a few seconds later with a bottle of wine and 2 glasses and sat them down on the table.

"It's a little bit early for wine don't you think?" asked Sarah.

“It’s always wine o’clock with me, you should know that by now,” replied Lorna.

“Now tell me all about it.” said Lorna as she poured some wine into the 2 glasses on the coffee table.

Sarah took a small sip from one of the glasses in front of her before starting to talk. She knew Lorna would be fascinated by what she was doing with Calum as she loved true crime documentaries and crime dramas and this situation could be classed as both.

“Start from the beginning.” said Lorna.

“It all started first thing this morning when I received an email telling me to report to my editor’s office at 10.15, which I did,” started Sarah.

Lorna took a sip from her wine glass.

“When I get there he invites me into his office and asks me what I know about the McCulkin crime family and I told him what I knew. Then he tells me the newspaper is working closely with Police Scotland on a group of unsolved murders in the North of Glasgow and he wants me to work closely with Calum McCulkin, the youngest son of Donald McCulkin. Apparently Calum has been doing some freelance work for the paper for some time and now he was being taken on full time to investigate these murders,” said Sarah before taking a sip of wine.

“Then Calum tapped on my editor’s door and my editor let him in.” Sarah continued.

“What was your first impression of Calum? Does he have a bad boy vibe going on?” inquired Lorna.

Sarah paused for a few seconds before answering.

“I wouldn’t say he has a bad boy vibe but I must admit I thought he was very handsome,” replied Sarah.

“Very masculine. Not a boy. Definitely a man.” she continued.

“Then what happened?” asked Lorna.

“Then he asked Calum if he had heard of the CYT.” said Sarah.

“The CYT?” asked Lorna.

“The Craighen Young Team. A street gang operating out of the Craighen area in the North of Glasgow.”

“Never heard of them.” said Lorna.

“Me neither,” said Sarah.

“But Calum had and apparently four of its members have been murdered in the last seven weeks and the cops don’t have the first clue who’s been doing it. So in desperation the cops have approached the newspaper for help asking that they put Calum on the story because he has a lot of contacts in the underworld and his family name is still very highly respected and crooks and gang members would be more likely to open up to him,” said Sarah.

Sarah took another sip from her wine glass before continuing.

“My editor, Bobby, says the cops are willing to bend the rules to breaking point to stop the killings and he wants me to be the brains to Calum’s brawn. The cops have issued me with a Civilian Intelligence Analyst pass that will give me access to all the police files I need to see.” said Sarah.

“Fascinating,” said Lorna engrossed in the story.

“And then what happened?” asked Lorna.

“And then we got in his car and he drove us to his house to look at some paperwork and to plan our next move.” answered Sarah.

“What kind of car does he drive?” asked Lorna.

“A red Porsche 911 Carrera.” answered Sarah.

“He drives a Porsche?” said Lorna excitedly.

“Yes. He does.” said Sarah.

“And what is his house like?” asked Lorna.

“He’s got a big place in the West End. Detached. Victorian. At least three quarter of a million quids worth. Maybe more.” said Sarah.

“And what’s it like inside?” asked Lorna.

“It’s really nice. Modern. Minimalist. Could probably use a women’s touch.” replied Sarah.

“How the hell can he afford that car and that house on a journalist’s salary?” asked Lorna.

“I asked him that exact question.” said Sarah.

“And what did he say?” asked Lorna.

“He explained to me that for the last couple of years of his life, when he knew he was dying, his dad set up legitimate businesses for his family. For Calum, his 2 brothers and his mum so they could live a comfortable life without getting involved in crime. And as the last living member of his family, Calum inherited all of the businesses that still exist. That’s 3 car dealerships, a carpet and laminate flooring warehouse and a restaurant. He told me he doesn’t need the journalist’s salary. He said that he does the job because he believes in it especially when he can expose paedo gangs and smack dealers.” said Sarah.

Sarah took another sip of her wine.

“So what happened next at his house?” inquired Lorna.

“After we looked through the paperwork we decided we needed to talk to the CYT directly so Calum made a couple of phone calls and we were on our way to Craiglen to talk to leader of the CYT A guy called Razzy.” said Sarah.

“And then what?” Lorna asked.

“We arrived in Craiglen and were told to go to a flat and ask for Razzy on the intercom which we did. The flat we were directed to was just a shell of a building with a beat up old couch and a couple of beat up old chairs in the living room. There were probably about 8 gang members in the

flat including Razzy all dressed the same and all drinking Buckfast and smoking weed.” said Sarah.

“What was Razzy like?” asked Lorna.

“He was in his mid-twenties, average height and build and a bit pasty faced. He looked like he could do with seeing some sunlight.” replied Sarah.

“And then what?” asked Lorna again.

“Razzy claimed he had no idea who was killing his friends or why, but Calum doesn’t believe him.” said Sarah.

“Doesn’t he?” asked Lorna.

“No he doesn’t,” replied Sarah.

“So next we went to speak to a guy called Malky that Calum knows who used to be a gangland enforcer but now arranges violence freelance for gangs and families all over the city and further afield. Calum thought Malky might know something because all of the killings happened basically in his back yard in the North of Glasgow. But he didn’t know anything. All he could do is offer us the name of a guy that might be involved, a hitman that is now a junkie and will work for smack money.” continued Sarah.

“This is all fascinating stuff.” said Lorna totally engrossed in what she was hearing.

“And it will be another interesting day tomorrow as we’re visiting a drug dealer so we can get contact information on the junkie hitman and then we’ll be visiting the hitman to try and work out if he is involved in the killings.” said Sarah.

“Cool” said Lorna as she took another drink from her wineglass.

“Is he married?” asked Lorna.

“I don’t think so,” replied Sarah.

“He doesn’t wear a wedding ring.” she continued.

“Girlfriend?” asked Lorna.

“I have no idea,” replied Sarah again.

“If he does have a girlfriend I don’t think she stays with him. His home is very much a man cave. Definitely missing a woman’s touch.” Sarah continued.

There was a short pause before Lorna spoke up.

“So I suppose the burning question that needs to be asked is are you going to shag him?” asked Lorna.

“No!” snapped Sarah.

“No no no,” she continued as she lay back into the sofa and took another drink from her wineglass and smiled mischievously.

“Well maybe.” Sarah almost laughing out loud as she said it.

“I knew it!” said Lorna.

“I knew it.” Lorna said again laughing.

After a few seconds the laughing calmed down.

“Calum did say one thing or I should say asked one thing that puzzled me though.” said Sarah.

“And what was that?” asked Lorna.

“He asked me to print off a photograph of a child preferably aged 10 to 12 that had been badly bruised and with at least one arm or one leg in a plaster cast.” said Sarah.

“Why?” asked Lorna.

“He said it’s for motivation but I don’t see how it would motivate me or him.” said Sarah.

“Weird” said Lorna.

“I have to trust that he knows what he’s doing. This is his world not mine.” said Sarah.

Monday. 8pm. West Glasgow

Calum stepped into the bedroom in his house that he had converted into a gym for his almost daily workout. His home gym consisted of a running machine treadmill, a static exercise bike, a weights bench, a rowing machine and an abdominal board. He worked out every day Monday to Saturday and he rested on a Sunday.

He was dressed in dark tracksuit bottoms and a loose fitting white T-shirt ready to do some sweating.

It was a Monday and that meant he would start off with a 10km run on the running machine treadmill. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays he would start off with a 10km run on the running machine while on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays he would start off with a 12km cycle on the exercise bike.

Calum stepped onto the treadmill and switched it on. The treadmill started up fairly slowly at first with Calum walking fast to keep up. After a minute or so Calum turned the speed up on the treadmill so he had to jog to keep up. After another minute or so Calum turned the speed up again so he then had to run to keep up.

As the blood started pumping fast through Calum's veins his mind started to race.

Why was Bob Campbell the only victim made to suffer?

Why were other victims basically executed with no fuss?

Why was Razzy and the CYT lying to him?

What was the connection between all the victims?

If they were all killed by professionals who is paying for the killings and why?

These questions swirled around and around in Calum's head with no obvious answer to any of them.

Before he knew it the alarm on the running machine went off telling him that he had completed the 10km run so he moved onto the rowing machine and started on that. Rowing and rowing again starting off reasonably slow then speeding up as the adrenaline coursed through his veins. Again the questions plagued him.

Why was Bob Campbell the only victim made to suffer?
Why were other victims basically executed with no fuss?
Why was Razzy and the CYT lying to him?
What was the connection between all the victims?
If they were all killed by professionals who is paying for the killings and why?

After 15 minutes or so on the rowing machine he moved onto the abdominal board.

By now he was sweating profusely with the throat area down to the centre area of his chest and the armpits area of his T-shirt were soaked in sweat but Calum wasn't finished yet. He still had 3 groups of 50 sit ups to do.

He sat down on the abdominal workout board and lowered himself back with all of his fingers touching the sides of his head and pulled himself up using just his abdominal muscles exhaling loudly as he did so.

Again and again he lowered himself down and pulled himself back up exhaling loudly every time. And every time he exercised he kept thinking about the questions surrounding the killings.

Why was Bob Campbell the only victim made to suffer?
Why were other victims basically executed with no fuss?
Why was Razzy and the CYT lying to him?
What was the connection between all the victims?
If they were all killed by professionals who is paying for the killings and why?

After a few minutes Calum finished his sit ups and moved onto the weights bench.

On this particular occasion Calum decided to just do a few butterfly repetitions to work on his pecs and not to do any leg curls or bench presses. He decided that 3 groups of 50 reps would be enough this time. He lay flat on the weights bench and placed his arms behind the pads on the hinged butterfly weights bars on either side of him.

Calum quickly made his way through the first set of 50 reps and stopped for a minute or so to rest and to catch his breath before starting again. The second of the 3 groups of butterfly repetitions took slightly longer than the first as Calum was getting tired. Again Calum stopped for a minute or so to rest and to catch his breath before starting the final set of butterfly reps all the time thinking about the killings. Eventually Calum finished the third set of butterfly reps and sat up on the weights bench panting for breath. His workout was over. Time for a shower.

5 minutes later Calum was in a steaming hot shower. His eyes were closed and the water was spraying onto his face.

He was deep in thought thinking about the killings.

Why was Bob Campbell the only victim made to suffer?

Why were other victims basically executed with no fuss?

Why was Razzy and the CYT lying to him?

What was the connection between all the victims?

If they were all killed by professionals who is paying for the killings and why?

10 minutes later Calum was out the shower and drying himself off in the bathroom with one towel wrapped around his waist and another getting used to dry his upper body.

He wiped the condensation away from the large mirror above the sink and stared at himself.

He was getting obsessed with these killings and he knew it.

chapter three

1pm. Tuesday. South Glasgow

It was a typical rainy Tuesday afternoon in the Shawlands area of South Glasgow and Sarah was sheltering in a bus stop waiting for Calum to come and pick her up. She was dressed smartly in a trouser suit and trench coat as she always was for work.

All around the area traffic flowed to the left and to the right. Cars, buses and lorries all making their way to their destinations regardless of the weather and all splashing water onto any pedestrians unlucky enough to be walking on the pavement close to a pothole puddle on the road. After a couple of minutes Calum pulled his car over to the bus stop allowing Sarah room to open the door and to get in.

Sarah opened the car passenger side door and got in.

“Nice weather.” said Calum.

“Lovely.” replied Sarah.

Calum was dressed casually in a pair of jeans, a white polo shirt and a black leather jacket.

Calum put the car in gear and began to drive away.

“Did you get me that photo I asked you to get?” asked Calum.

“Sure did.” said Sarah as she reached into her jacket inside pocket and took out an A4 sized photograph and showed Calum.

Calum quickly looked at the photo of a young girl with her upper body severely bruised, her jaw wired up and her right

in arm in a plaster cast.

“I got it from a plastic surgery website. Apparently this little girl got trampled by a horse freaking out inside a stable.” Sarah continued.

“That’ll do.” quipped Calum.

“I really want to know why you need this photo Calum. I can’t see how it will motivate me or you to do anything.” said Sarah assertively.

“It’s not to motivate you or me. It’s to motivate this Davie Dundas character we’re going to meet.” Calum explained.

“I still don’t get it.” said Sarah.

“If we can’t bully or harass him into talking maybe we can manipulate him.” Calum further explained then waited for a reply from Sarah.

No reply from Sarah.

“The first rule in trying to locate a criminal in Glasgow is this. If you tell people the guy you are looking for robbed a bank or killed somebody nobody will want anything to do with it but if you tell people that the guy you are looking for hurt a child then people will be a lot more willing to open up to you.” said Calum tapping on the photo still in Sarah’s hand.

“Got it now.” remarked Sarah as she now fully understood the situation.

Calum continued driving his car towards Drumchapel aka the Drum.

“I’ve been thinking quite a lot about this whole situation in general and the guy we’re trying to locate in particular. Actually I’ve thought about nothing else all night.” remarked Calum.

“And?” asked Sarah.

“I don’t think this is the guy who did these killings at all. I think we’re barking up the wrong tree.” said Calum.

“Why?” asked Sarah.

“I just don’t think it’s him. All of the killings especially the one in the Craigy Inn were committed by a pro or pros, not some desperate junkie. The guy or guys that committed these killings knew exactly what they were doing and were professional enough not to get seen or to leave behind any witnesses or forensic material.” said Calum.

“So why are we going to interview him?” asked Sarah.

“Because he might know something. Maybe he was offered one or more of the jobs or maybe he might know what the link between all the dead gang members is.” said Calum.

“Possibly.” remarked Sarah.

1.35pm. Tuesday. North West Glasgow

Calum had been driving his car for around half an hour towards the Clachan bar in Drumchapel when he spotted it further along the road.

“That’s the place.” he said pointing at the pub further along the road on the right hand side.

The bar itself was a fairly run down little pub with bars on the windows, a large name sign above the entrance that had seen better days and a car park on the side of the pub.

Calum drove his car into the car park attached to the pub and parked up.

The car park was probably big enough for 10 cars but there were only 3 cars in the car park including Calum’s. The other 2 cars were a silver Vauxhall Insignia and a black Ford Mondeo.

Calum and Sarah got out of Calum’s car and started walking towards the entrance. It was still raining so they moved quickly to get inside the pub and out of the rain.

“When we get in here I’ll do all the talking,” Calum said.

“I know what makes these people tick. I know how they think.” he continued.

“Ok.” replied Sarah.

“Give me the photo.” said Calum with his open hand reaching towards Sarah.

Sarah passed the photo to Calum who slipped it into his inside jacket pocket.

Calum and Sarah reached the entrance to the Clachan pub and walked past a couple of smokers standing in the doorway sheltering from the rain.

One of the smokers was an elderly man in his sixties dressed smartly in a shirt and tie under a jersey and smoking a roll up cigarette and the other smoker looked like a junkie in his twenties dressed in jeans and a denim

jacket and smoking a joint.

Calum thought the junkie, if he was a junkie, might be a lookout for Davie Dundas inside the pub keeping an eye out for the cops for him.

Calum and Sarah entered the pub.

Inside the pub there were maybe half a dozen elderly drinkers dressed similarly as the guy at the front door and they were all sitting at small round tables with most of them drinking pints of beer. One of the drinkers was reading from a newspaper outstretched over the table in front of him while another sat at the bar talking to the barman.

The barman himself was a fairly rough looking character in his early fifties with black curly hair and a big scar down the left hand side of his face.

“Can I help you?” asked the barman.

“We’re looking for the pool room.” replied Calum.

The barman silently pointed to a door at the end of the bar. Calum and Sarah walked towards the door to the pool room.

“Thanks.” said Calum to the barman.

Calum and then Sarah walked through the doorway to the pub pool room.

Inside the pool room Davie Dundas was playing pool with Kermit, a young man in his twenties from the local area and both were being watched by Davie’s two henchmen.

Davie Dundas was exactly as Malky had described him. He was in his early fifties, about 6 foot 2, fairly skinny built, blonde brown shoulder length hair slicked back into a mullet, he was clean shaven and he was wearing a full length leather trench coat.

Kermit was about 5 foot 8 and was fairly smartly dressed in Armani jeans, Burberry jersey and Timberland boots. A bit

too nicely dressed for a junkie so he probably wasn't a junkie. Maybe he was just an acquaintance of Davie Dundas.

One of Davie Dundas's henchmen sat on a stool in the far corner of the room sipping a pint of beer and watching the pool match. He was in his thirties and was dressed in denim jeans and jacket. He had a dead look in his eyes like there was nothing going on at all in his head. He had the thousand yard stare look normally reserved for ex-military personnel that had seen a lot of action.

Calum remembered that Malky had said that Davie Dundas only hires junkies or psychopaths to watch his back. This guy was probably a psychopath as he didn't look like a junkie.

The second of Davie Dundas's henchmen stood in the other corner behind the pool table and was different from the first. He was dressed in jeans, a black bubble jacket and beat up old nike trainers.

This guy might be a junkie as he had the tell-tale sucked in cheeks that many junkies have and he was constantly scratching himself. His throat, his head, his arms etc.

Davie was about to take a shot at pool when Calum spoke up.

"Davie Dundas?" asked Calum.

"Who wants to know?" replied Davie as he took his shot on the pool table.

"Calum McCulkin." said Calum.

"You probably knew my Dad, Donald." Calum continued.

"Culk?" asked Davie.

"Aye. Culk." said Calum.

Davie stood up straight and smiled.

"Well well well," said Davie.

“If I knew I was going to be meeting criminal royalty today I’d have worn a tie.” he continued.

Kermit leaned across the table to take his turn at pool.

“So tell me what I can do for the son of Culk?” asked Davie.

“We’re interested in speaking to a guy you know. A guy that works for you now and again.” explained Calum.

“Exactly who is looking for this guy I might know and why are you looking for him?” asked Davie.

“It’s me and my colleague here Sarah that are looking for him. We’re journalists and we believe he might be involved in an ongoing crime story we’re working on.” explained Calum.

“I see.” replied Davie before playing another shot at the pool table.

After Davie played his shot he stood up straight again to speak to Calum.

“And what is this guy’s name?” asked Davie.

“Richard Sloane known as Ricky.” stated Calum.

“Ricky Sloane?” asked Davie.

“That’s right.” replied Calum.

Davie paused for a few seconds before answering.

“I don’t remember ever meeting anyone called Ricky Sloane.” Davie eventually replied before leaning over the pool table to take his turn.

Calum took a step closer to the pool table and reached into his inside jacket pocket.

“I’ve got something here that might refresh your memory.” he said as he reached into the jacket pocket with his right hand.

Both of Davie’s henchmen suddenly sprung to life each taking a couple of steps towards the pool table with both of them reaching into their own inside jacket pockets ready to

produce a weapon of some type.

“Relax guys it’s just a photograph.” said Calum as he slowly pulled out the photograph that Sarah had just given him.

Davie’s henchmen both stepped back into their earlier positions as soon as they saw it was just a photo in Calum’s hand.

Calum reached across the table and handed the photo to Davie.

Davie took the photo from Calum.

“What am I looking at?” asked Davie.

“You are looking at Ricky Sloane’s handiwork. Allegedly.” said Calum.

Davie stared at the photo.

Kermit walked over for a quick look and walked away slowly shaking his head slowly in disapproval.

“Ricky did this?” asked Davie.

“Allegedly.” said Calum.

Davie paused for a few seconds before speaking.

“You’re right he does work for me on and off but I’ve been unable to get hold of him for the last 2 weeks,” said Davie.

“His phone number just jumps straight to voicemail and doesn’t even ring. He’s probably sold his phone for smack money.” Davie continued.

“Is there some other way we can reach him?” asked Calum.

Davie stared intensely at Calum before replying.

“Have you got a pen?” Davie asked.

“Sure.” said Calum before slowly reaching into his inside jacket again and pulling out a Bic pen and handing it to Davie.

Davie placed the photograph onto the pool table ready to write some information out onto the blank side.

Davie began to write.

“You tell him from me that he’s a worthless unreliable junkie fuck up and that he should just lose my phone number if he hasn’t already because I want nothing more to do with him.” Davie spat out as he handed the photograph and the pen back to Calum.

Calum looked down at the information written on the back of the photograph.

“Is this his current address?” asked Calum.

“It was 3 weeks ago the last time I saw him.” replied Davie.

“Thanks for your help Davie.” said Calum as he started to walk away.

“Anytime.” replied Davie.

Calum and Sarah walked out of the pub and round the corner towards Calum’s parked car.

Calum looked down at the information written on the photograph.

“I know this block of flats, it’s about 10 minutes away.” said Calum.

Calum opened his car with the remote key and both Calum and Sarah got into his car. Calum reversed his car in a semi-circle then drove forwards out of the pub car park.

2.10 pm. Tuesday. North West Glasgow

Calum parked his car in the car park outside a large block of flats and got out the car followed by Sarah.

Both of them looked up at the large building of more than 10 storeys.

“What number does this guy live in?” asked Sarah.

Calum quickly glanced at the photo with the writing on it.

“Fourteen,” said Calum.

“There’s 2 addresses to each floor so our guy will be on the 7th floor.” he continued.

Calum and Sarah walked over to the entrance to the flats, a solid steel door with an intercom system on the right hand side.

Calum pressed the button for flat 14 and the intercom system started making long beeping sounds alerting the occupant of flat 14 that there was somebody wanting to speak to him at the main door to the building.

After 30 seconds or so the intercom stopped beeping.

Calum pressed the button again and again the intercom system started making long beeping sounds and again no-one answered the intercom alert.

“Now what?” asked Sarah.

“Now we wait,” said Calum.

“Sooner or later someone is going to open this door and we’ll just slip in.” he continued.

“You seem fairly eager to speak to this guy considering you are sure this isn’t the guy that we’re looking for.” said Sarah.

“I don’t think he did any of these murders but I think he might know who did at least one of them or who was looking to get these guys done in. It’s worth a try.” replied Calum.

Calum and Sarah didn't have to wait long for someone to let them into the block of flats as Calum noticed a young woman, maybe 25 years old, making her way down the stairs towards the main entrance where Calum and Sarah were standing.

The young woman was dressed in matching denim jeans and jacket and her hair was tied back tightly into a ponytail and she was carrying 2 large empty shopping bags. She was clearly going out on a shopping run.

The young woman reached the doors on the inside and pressed the button on the inside to open the doors.

There was a loud buzzing sound and the entrance doors in front of Calum and Sarah swung open.

The young woman exited the building and Calum and Sarah slipped in behind her before the doors could close. Calum and Sarah looked around the ground floor of the flats they now found themselves in and found it to be a lot cleaner than they thought it was going to be. There was no smell of cheap alcohol or urine and there were no burnt pieces of aluminium foil or broken crack pipes or syringes anywhere.

This flat complex was clearly better looked after than other flat complexes of similar size in other deprived areas of Glasgow.

In the centre of the ground floor area of the flats there was a set of stairs leading up and an elevator on the right hand side.

"Should we take the elevator?" asked Calum.

"Absolutely." replied Sarah.

Both Calum and Sarah got into the elevator and Calum pressed the button for floor 7.

Less than a minute later the elevator doors slid open and Calum and Sarah were on the 7th floor of the flat complex.

In the centre of the floor there were concrete steps leading up and down to the other floors.

On the right was a door marked 13 with a large chrome door knocker positioned in the centre of the top third of the door.

On the left there was a standard white PVC door with the number 14 on the letterbox.

“This is the place.” stated Calum pointing at the door.

Calum and Sarah walked over to the door.

“Here we go.” said Calum as he chapped on the door loudly a few times.

Calum and Sarah waited for 30 seconds or so before Calum chapped the door again louder than before.

After another 30 seconds had passed Calum put his ear up against the door.

“I can hear the television,” said Calum.

“He’s definitely in.” Calum continued.

Calum got down on his knees on front of the door and opened the letterbox and spoke into it loudly.

“Ricky. My name is Calum and I’m an acquaintance of Davie Dundas. I need to speak to you about something. If you let us in it’ll only take us a couple of minutes.” he said.

After speaking into the letterbox Calum stopped for a few seconds then sniffed deeply a couple of times.

Calum immediately let go of the letterbox flap and held his hand up to his mouth, almost vomiting.

“I know that smell” he said stepping away from the door.

“What is it?” asked Sarah.

Calum didn’t answer Sarah he just took out his phone and quickly dialled a number.

“Hello. I want to report a dead body.” said Calum into the phone.

3.00 pm. Tuesday. North West Glasgow

About 45 minutes after Calum made the phone call reporting a dead body both he and Sarah were sitting on the steps outside Ricky's front door being interviewed by a uniformed police officer.

Two paramedics wearing dust masks pushed a trolley with a black body bag on it past Calum, Sarah and the cop towards the elevator.

Sarah crossed herself as they walked past with the body in a body bag and on a trolley as she was a Catholic. She was not a devout Catholic as it had been many years since she last attended mass or confession but she still identified as being a Catholic.

One of the paramedics, the one at the front pushed the button for the elevator.

The officer interviewing Calum and Sarah was male and roughly the same age as Calum and he was just going over the statements both Calum and Sarah had given him.

The cop was reading information off a notebook he had previously jotted down all the relevant information on.

"So you arrived at this address at approximately 2.15pm looking to speak to Mr Sloane about something." the cop started.

"That's right." Calum said.

"You wanted to speak to him about an ongoing true crime piece you are both working on as you are both journalists." the cop continued.

"Yes" said Calum.

Sarah paused for a second before answering. She seemed distracted.

"Yes we are." said Sarah.

“And after you chapped the door and got no answer you spoke into the letterbox and that’s when you smelled the odour of a dead body and called 999.” the cop continued again.

“Yes.” said Calum.

“I’m curious,” the cop started.

“How did you know it was a dead body causing the stench?” he asked.

“When I was younger, when I was a teenager, I used to go on fishing trips with my friends often away in the middle of nowhere and a lot of the time we had to walk through farmer’s fields to get to where we were going,” started Calum taking a deep breath before continuing.

“Every once in a while we would come across a dead and decaying farm animal like a sheep or a cow. I remember the stench was awful and you could smell it from 50 yards away. It’s a smell that you don’t forget. The smell of rotting flesh.” Calum explained.

“I see.” said the cop.

Calum and Sarah briefly made eye contact and the expression on Calum’s face told Sarah that the fishing story wasn’t the truth. Calum knew the stench of death from somewhere else. Sarah didn’t want to think about what the truth was.

The elevator doors opened and the 2 paramedics with the trolley entered the elevator and the doors closed behind them.

“Well whatever this ongoing crime story you’re working on is, I can tell you that Mr Sloane has not been a part of it for at least 2 maybe as much as 3 weeks judging by the level of decomposition.” said the cop.

“How did he die?” asked Sarah.

“We can’t be sure until the post-mortem has been done but it looks like an overdose.” replied the cop.

“We did hear he was on smack.” offered Calum.

“Well he was found sitting in his armchair in his living room with a cord wrapped around one of his arms with a discarded syringe lying on the floor and there was no sign of a struggle of any kind so I’d be very surprised if it turns out to be anything other than an accidental overdose.” said the cop.

There was a pause for a few seconds where no one said anything then Calum spoke up.

“So are we free to go then?” Calum asked the cop.

“Of course.” the cop replied.

Calum and Sarah both stood up then took a few steps towards the downwards stairs.

“Good luck with the crime story you’re working on guys.” said the cop as Calum and Sarah walked past him towards the downwards stairs.

“Thanks.” said Calum.

“Thank you.” said Sarah.

Calum and Sarah made their way down the stairs until they reached the ground level.

Calum pressed the button to open the main entrance door.

“Now what?” asked Sarah.

“Now we put your police researcher credentials to the test starting tomorrow. I’ll take you home now and pick you up in the morning to take you to Maryhill police station.” replied Calum.

“OK” said Sarah.