

WHO KILLED KENNEDY

The shocking secret linking
a Time Lord and a President

20th Anniversary Edition

by David Bishop & James Stevens

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The *Who Killed Kennedy* ebook, including an introduction and commentary by David Bishop, is available online, in both its original and 20th anniversary expanded editions, at: <http://nzdwfc.tetrap.com/archive/wkk/>

Project editor: Paul Scoones
Web developer: Alden Bates

www.doctorwho.org.nz

We suggest you read the entirety of *Who Killed Kennedy 20th Anniversary Edition* - the new introduction, the original novel, and the new ending - in the order presented. The new material is intended to be read in context with the complete novel; sampling the additions without reading all of *Who Killed Kennedy* will be a much less satisfactory experience.

INTRODUCTION

There are few things I find less appealing than creators who decide to go back in time and tinker with their earlier works. Most will say they are seeking to resolve flaws that have always bugged them, or to reverse editorial edicts that prevented their original vision being fulfilled. Some of them might even believe that. I have no such illusions.

Everything in this narrative is true - but some of it never happened. That may sound impossible, but my meaning will become clear if you read to the end. You might even learn something new along the way.

What follows is a tale of hubris and folly and more, presented as best I can. Farewell!

JAMES STEVENS
September 27, 2015

PREFACE

We will not prematurely, or unnecessarily, pursue the cause of worldwide nuclear war, in which even the fruits of victory would be ashes in our mouths.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy

22 January 1964, Washington DC, USA

President John Fitzgerald Kennedy stared at the hastily typed-out memo. It was difficult to read the words, his hands were shaking so much. The syntax was garbled, at least two words had letters transposed and the type was smeared with what seemed to be tears. Despite all this, the message contained on the single page of yellow paper was plain - the world stood on the brink of nuclear war.

Tens of thousands of troops were massing in East Germany ready to surge across Europe towards Great Britain. West Berlin had already fallen to the communist forces. In Eurasia, China was threatening to retaliate with a nuclear strike on Moscow unless Soviet troops withdrew in the next 72 hours from disputed border regions. The world's superpowers were at each other's throats and the United States of America was in the middle, its efforts to negotiate a truce frustrated and impotent.

For three days and nights the President, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and their advisers had been working without remission to prevent this moment arriving. Sleep was rare, taken in snatches; food merely an afterthought when the pangs of hunger became too debilitating to ignore; families forgotten as this handful of men and women tried to find some way forward, some way out of this crisis.

Through it all, the President had remained in the Oval Office, calling each of the world leaders personally, desperately trying to talk sense into the key players. He had thought if he spoke to them as one human being to another, then maybe the situation could be resolved. Instead the crisis only deepened.

John F. Kennedy swayed slowly back and forth in his beloved wooden rocking chair, looking to his younger brother as he asked a question. 'Jesus Christ, Bobby, are these figures accurate?'

The Attorney General nodded grimly, his face ashen. 'We could be at war any minute, Jack.'

The President crumpled the document in his left hand while the fingers of his right hand lightly touched the wound in his neck. It was still sore and stubbornly refused to heal, a constant reminder of the attempt on his life in Dallas, Texas just two months before.

The assassin had been unsuccessful in his bid to kill Kennedy, but the attempt itself had triggered this greater crisis. The gunman killed several Dallas police before turning his rifle on himself. Beneath his street clothes the assassin wore the uniform of a Russian soldier. Of course the Russians had denied any involvement or knowledge of the attempt to kill the President of the United States, but no-one believed them.

Since then international tension had escalated at an alarming rate. Now, the world was within minutes of destroying itself in a nuclear conflict no one could ever win, a holocaust of light and fury and radiation. Sometimes John Fitzgerald Kennedy wished the assassin had been successful, had killed him and escaped. Then maybe none of this would have happened...

‘Doesn’t Khrushchev understand that I can’t back down? Didn’t he learn anything from Cuba?’ The President pulled himself out of the rocking chair and began to pace the Oval Office. A camp bed had been set up to one side of the room for him to grab a few hours sleep. That would not be needed now. John F. Kennedy breathed deeply and coughed on the blue haze of tobacco smoke hanging in the air. Worse than the smell of old tobacco and stale sweat was the stench of despair, clinging to everyone and everything in the Oval Office.

The President stopped to rest a weary hand on his brother’s shoulder. Never a heavy sleeper because of his chronic back problems, the crisis of the past days had left John F. Kennedy hardly a moment’s rest. His gaze settled on the faces of two smiling infants in a framed photograph standing on his desk. ‘Bobby, if the worst happens, are the children safe?’

His brother managed a smile. ‘Yes. The families of all the White House staff and senior Government members are already down in the shelter. John Junior’s been asking after you, wanting to know when you’ll join him and Caroline.’

‘God knows what world they’ll have left to grow up in if--’

‘Mr President!’

All faces turned to the doorway as the Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, burst into the room. ‘Sir, we’ve got confirmation of missile launch. The birds are in the sky!’

‘How many?’ asked the President, hoping against hope it was a rogue attack - something that could be sustained without retaliation. Anything to avoid full-scale war.

‘Dozens of war birds already, maybe hundreds,’ replied McNamara, tears in his eyes. ‘Continental Army Command estimate four minutes to the first impact.’

The President sagged, his last reserves of will-power and strength leaving him. His brother led him over to the desk that served so many Presidents in times of crisis, but never one so grave as this. John F. Kennedy’s legs buckled beneath him as he slumped into his chair.

For nearly a minute he sat there, silent, staring at a black-framed photograph of his wife, Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy. She had died in his arms two months ago, murdered by an assassin’s bullet meant for him. More than ever, the President wished she was here now. Despite all the infidelities and the lies and the coldness between them, he still loved her like he had loved no other woman.

‘Mr. President? Mr. President, what’s our reply?’ asked McNamara.

Jackie, thought Kennedy, why did you have to die? It still seemed unreal, like watching a car accident - something happening to somebody else. Not to her.

He remembered he had been angry with her. It was a sultry day in Dallas, with the blazing sun turning early morning rain into stifling humidity. Several times in the motorcade's slow trip through the city the President had snarled at the First Lady to remove her sun-glasses, so that the throngs lining the sidewalks could see her smiling eyes: a husband berating his wife over something so trivial, all the while smiling falsely for the strangers surrounding them.

Then the shots started. The first sounded just like a firecracker going off, had hardly seemed real at all. Then something slapped Kennedy in the back of the neck and he found it hard to breath, to call out a warning. Then that fatal third shot and a blur of motion - Jackie's head exploding, the blood and bone and brain showering the President in a pink spray, his wife slumping slowly over into his lap.

They had rushed her to Parkland Memorial Hospital, but she was pronounced dead on arrival. The security alerts followed; a hurried trip back to Washington in case there were any further attempts on his life; not even time to wait for his wife's body to be loaded onto Air Force One, the Presidential jet.

Since the funeral John Fitzgerald Kennedy had been like a ghost himself, he now realised. He had let this conflict escalate as he mourned; ignored the warning signs; been too wrapped up in his own grief. But most of all, he had been wracked with guilt: about his philandering, about his lies to her; about how he had insisted she go on that trip to Texas to bolster his popularity in a Southern state that would be crucial in the following year's presidential elections. The Texas trip was the first time Jackie had accompanied him on a political visit anywhere within America since his election back in 1960. It was also her last.

'Jack? Jack! You've got to make a decision - now!'

The President snapped out of his reverie. He looked for McNamara before speaking, his voice firm and gruff. 'Get the Bagman in here.'

The Secretary of Defense stepped to the door, opened it and nodded. In stepped Ira Gearhart, a dark-suited Secret Service agent carrying a small suitcase with a device not unlike a safe dial attached to its locking mechanism. He strode to the desk and placed the suitcase by the President.

Kennedy nodded and Gearhart quickly flicked the dial through its complex combination sequence.

The suitcase sprung open and the President looked down at the electronic mechanism inside. With this piece of equipment he could call for a retaliatory nuclear strike, make sure that America did not burn alone. Or he could pause; refuse to retaliate; let his nation die to show the world why this should never happen again. If he did that, at least there might still be a world left after today. This was a decision Kennedy prayed each night he would never have to face. Now the decision was his, and his alone. 'How long?' he asked.

'Less than two minutes,' snapped McNamara. 'You must act now, or else our war birds will be dead in the silos. We'll be wiped out!'

The President looked to his brother. In a family of staunch Roman Catholic upbringing, Bobby Kennedy had always been the one of deepest beliefs and greatest faith. Jack frequently used his brother as a moral compass to guide his proper course of action in matters of the conscience. But now his brother's face was impassive. The decision had to be made and it had to be made by the President himself. It was time.

John F. Kennedy closed his eyes and tapped the secret code into the machine. The code was sent to the missile silos around the nation, where soldiers stood ready to launch the deadly payload they guarded. Within sixty seconds thousands of nuclear weapons would fly forth from the ground, carrying death through the sky.

The President sat back in his chair and felt curiously calm. Now the irrevocable decision had been taken, a weight had lifted from his shoulders. Perhaps this was how the suicidal felt as they fell through the air towards their deaths.

Kennedy looked at the faces of those around him. Many had tears rolling down their faces; others were firm and resolute; several were praying. The President realised they were expecting him to speak; to comfort and reassure them; say this was the only course; they had had no choice; that everything would be all right really.

Instead all his mind was wracked by one of those niggling, trivial questions that you know the answer to, but you just cannot remember it. What was it the director of the Manhattan Project, Doctor Robert Oppenheimer, had said when he witnessed the first explosion of an atom bomb? Something from a Hindu epic poem...

Kennedy almost smiled as he remembered the answer: 'I am become Death, the Destroyer of Worlds.' But that was not what the people in the Oval Office wanted to hear right now. Instead John Fitzgerald Kennedy bowed his head and whispered quietly as the world came to an end: 'May God have mercy on all our souls.'

* * *

22 January 1996

The incident just described never happened.

It was President John F. Kennedy who was assassinated on 22 November 1963, not his wife. The man who was arrested for Kennedy's murder, Lee Harvey Oswald, was found to have links to the Soviet Union but was himself murdered a few days later. There was no trial, and when new President Lyndon Johnson set up a tribunal to investigate the matter, the Warren Commission decided that Oswald had acted alone. America and the world lost much of its innocence that tragic day in Dallas. The world survived when Kennedy did not. But perhaps the world survived because Kennedy did not.

What if JFK had lived? What if the assassination had never taken place, or the bullets had only wounded the President? What effect would that have had on the world? I wrote a book published in 1971 which speculated about just such a situation. My book suggested Kennedy would have been re-elected for a second term and carved out a new era of prosperity for the Western World.

It is a measure of the world's cynicism today that a novel recently published speculated Kennedy would have simply become old, fat and discredited, and not the mythic figure he is now. Kennedy symbolised so much about this century and about America, that it is hard to imagine how history would view his achievements had he lived longer.

Consider this: if he had lived, John Fitzgerald Kennedy would be 79 years old when this book is published, going on 80. It's difficult to imagine JFK as a 79-year-old. While his contemporaries have withered and died, he remains forever young, preserved in our collective memory as the smiling faced man whose head was blown open by an assassin's bullet.

The killing of President Kennedy has had a profound effect on the entire world, and has changed the course of history. Every adult who was alive that day can remember what they were doing when they heard of Kennedy's death; it sent a shockwave around the world that reverberates to this day. But his death has had particular effect on my life.

It was my eighteenth birthday the day JFK was murdered. I had always wanted to become a cadet reporter and as a special pre-arranged birthday treat I was taken to spend the day on work experience at the offices of the *8 O'Clock*, a Saturday-evening newspaper in Auckland, New Zealand. Kennedy was assassinated just after midday on Friday 22 November in Dallas, Texas. (Because of the International Dateline, it was early on the morning of Saturday 23 November in New Zealand when JFK died.)

I never had an eighteenth birthday party; never marked my coming of age as many adults do. Instead I spent the day acting as copy-runner, coffee maker and library assistant at the *8 O'Clock* offices, helping put together a special memorial edition of the paper.

Traditionally, the *8 O'Clock* was a place to read reports and results from sports fixtures. It had a news section, but this was merely an adjunct of its parent paper, the *Auckland Star*. But for once, thanks to quirks of timing and international time differences, a story had fallen into the *8 O'Clock*'s lap - the biggest story of the decade. After that day, it was inevitable I would be a journalist - what other job could be that exciting?

The world lost its innocence that day and I left behind my childhood at the same time. More than three decades have passed since then, and every year we learn a little bit more about JFK: his womanising, his vanity, his human frailties. But still the myth of Camelot - a glorious time when the world was a better place - grows ever stronger.

After the death of John F. Kennedy, I became fascinated with the late, lamented president and began what has proved to be a lifetime of research into what really happened that day in Dallas. Meanwhile, the investigative skills I was developing in my spare time were paying off at work. I pursued a career in journalism: first as a cadet in the provinces, then a shift to the big metropolitan papers. There I learnt about writing and researching, making contacts and fostering friendships, sub-editing and betrayal and ambition. I also learnt about my past.

I was born on 23 November 1945, the illegitimate son of an American GI stationed in New Zealand on his way to the war in the Pacific. When my mother told him she was pregnant, he became furious with her, refused to acknowledge his responsibilities, and accused her of being a whore. My mother was only seventeen. The GI went off to war, leaving her with nothing. He died two weeks later, the victim of friendly fire.

To be an unmarried pregnant girl of seventeen in New Zealand during the Second World War made you as much of a social outcast as if you were a leper. The fact that my mother came from one of Auckland's wealthiest and most influential families just made her shame greater. Twice she tried to kill herself, without success. When I was born, I was immediately put up for adoption.

My foster parents told me on my 21st birthday that I had been adopted, but it came as little surprise. There had always been a barrier between myself and the rest of the family; now I knew the real reason why. I determined to find out all I could about my past so I could confront my natural mother - why she had abandoned me.

Eventually, when I had learnt all I could, I went to my natural mother's family home in Remuera, Auckland's richest residential area. The house was an immense wooden mansion with a carefully raked gravel driveway and a gardener trimming the high hedges which shielded the property from view of the road.

I pushed the front door bell and a cold-faced woman in her mid-forties answered it. Her greying hair was pulled back from her face and her eyes were dead inside. I turned and walked away, ignoring her questions. There was no love in her, yet she was richer than I could ever hope to become in New Zealand. It was time to move on.

Nearly five years after that fateful day in Dallas, I left for Britain with the ambition to work in Fleet Street - the home of newspaper journalism. I arrived in England in 1968. Across the Atlantic, Robert Kennedy was assassinated - shot down like his brother before him. The golden age of Camelot was long gone, and the world becoming ever more bitter and cynical: the escalating war in Vietnam; growing conflict between generations; and the gap between rich and poor always expanding. What had been a decade of idealism and the urge to change things for the better seemed to have turned sour.

I never really abandoned my fascination for the Kennedy family and its tragedies, but instead concentrated on my career, on myself. Looking back now, I realise I became as selfish and cynical and bitter as the rapidly approaching new decade. Of course I flourished, moving quickly from worthy provincial papers to the gutter press of Fleet Street, my rise taking months when most take years.

But my good training in New Zealand stood me in good stead and I soon landed a top job on the *Daily Chronicle*, then Fleet Street's best-selling 'quality' tabloid newspaper. The hours were long and gruelling, the competition from other hacks was cut-throat at its most pleasant, and the possession of a conscience was a definite handicap. I had no such impediment to my success. A series of exposés about the bizarre sexual habits of certain Government backbenchers brought me a juicy pay rise, and I soon owned an expensive apartment just off the King's Road in Chelsea.

About this time my activities brought me to the attention of the Establishment, who discovered that my immigration status was questionable at best. I needed an English wife and quickly. But rather than wed the nearest native, I decided to turn my escape from imminent deportation into another way of thumbing my nose at authority.

I set my sights on Natasha, the daughter of Lord Howarth. She was tall and willowy - as was fashionable at the time - with long blonde hair and a small, slightly crooked nose that endeared her to me greatly. I pursued and captured her heart just like the brash colonial her father accused me of being. We married in September 1969 at the Chelsea Registry Office, much to the chagrin of her family. It was one of the showbiz marriages of the year, and I even managed to get a Beatle along for the photo session on the steps of the registry office. That guaranteed front page coverage, just to add to the embarrassment of Natasha's family.

KIWI CAPTURES HEART OF HEIRESS, screamed the headlines in most of the tabloids, over pictures of us outside the Chelsea Town Hall. Much was made of Natasha's daring white mini-skirted wedding dress; I opted for a more traditional morning suit, although I did dispense with a top hat, vainly preferring to show off my fashionably long brown hair. It all seemed like a bit of fun - nothing serious.

Then one day, while I was busy researching a piece to run on the imminent sixth anniversary of Kennedy's death, I took a phone call that changed my life. Its effect on me was just as explosive as the bullet that blew apart President John F. Kennedy's head. Although I didn't realise it at the time, the two events would become inextricably inter-linked.

This book begins and ends with the assassination of JFK. That day changed the direction of my life, setting me on the path to becoming an investigative journalist. It changed the lives of others too.

My involvement with this investigation began with an incident in October 1969. That incident led to my investigating one of the best kept secrets of recent British history, a secret paramilitary organisation called UNIT. This organisation pretends to be an intelligence taskforce, when it is actually much more than that.

Who Killed Kennedy charts my investigation of that organisation and how discovering its true nature led me back to that day in Dallas more than thirty years ago. I tell this story in first person unashamedly - it is the only way to do justice to it.

When I trained as a journalist in New Zealand, we were bullied into making sure our names or our opinions never appeared in any factual articles. This was done to preserve objectivity, we were told. But objectivity also leads to alienation, and abdication of human responsibility. If you see a road accident, you try to help; a journalist stands back and takes notes while people die before them.

When I began my quest for the truth held in this volume, I believed in objectivity. Eventually I realised that objectivity is a cop-out, a way of avoiding involvement in real life. The best crusading journalists have not been afraid to become part of the story, no matter what the cost. And for me, the cost has been high.

Discovering the truths in this book has cost me my job, my career and my family. My life has been threatened, my phone calls tapped, my mail opened. The only person I ever truly loved was murdered in order to silence me. I have been a target for more than twenty years but now the truth can be told, thanks to two people.

The first is a soldier who believed in his country, believed what he was doing was right. Private Francis Cleary died on 5 April 1995. He was born in Liverpool into an Irish Catholic family, the oldest of seven sons. He joined the army because he wanted a skill, because he wanted to see the world and because he knew he had not been blessed with a great mind.

Cleary did not want to kill anyone. He believed in causes and morality. He believed in doing what was right and it cost him his life. Details about what happened to Cleary have been hushed up. Now his story can be told. Special thanks go to his family who have allowed me to publish his letters home from the barracks. They add a human dimension to this book that I could never have given it alone.

The second person I must thank is co-author David Bishop, a fellow expatriate New Zealander and journalist.

It is said that truth is stranger than fiction. I believe it is also infinitely more terrifying. With follows is my proof. Much of what you read in this book has been gleaned from interviews with people who could not talk on the record without risk to their lives. I salute their courage in talking to me at all.

That all-encompassing form of official censorship of the truth, the D-notice, has made compiling this investigation a nightmare. But even more difficult to overcome is people's failure to imagine possibilities beyond what they can perceive through their own five senses. It is as if we have created an entire nation of doubting Thomases.

There has been a campaign of lies and disinformation spread through the media for the past three decades, why should this book be any different? To many, the final chapters of this book will seem like science fiction. All I ask is that you suspend your disbelief and consider the facts I present. Less than fifty years ago, the idea of men walking on the moon was considered idle fantasy. But in 1969 - the year my investigation started - Neil Armstrong stepped down onto the moon's surface and Britain was preparing to send the latest Mars Probe up into space.

Can you prove what is written in this book is wrong? I doubt it. Even if you do not believe my conclusions, they may stir you to investigate further for your own peace of mind. I know who killed John Fitzgerald Kennedy on 22 November 1963, and it wasn't Lee Harvey Oswald. Read this book and you will discover the truth too.

But dare you believe it?

JAMES STEVENS
London, October 1995

PART ONE: BAD SCIENCE

The greatest enemy of the truth is very often not the lie - deliberate, contrived, and dishonest - but the myth, persistent, persuasive and unrealistic.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy

ONE

October 1969

In every office of every newspaper in every country around the world, there is a desk with a telephone on it specially reserved for phone calls from the public. Everyone has a different name for it, but generally it is called the 'crank phone' because of all the crank calls received on it. Calls from mothers wanting to know whether we want to take a photograph of their daughter who has just won a prize in some competition. Calls from residents complaining about neighbours that are too noisy, or too quiet or just too different. Calls from people who think they have seen something but they are not sure what it was. Calls from the collection of proud, crazed, caring, hateful people called the public.

Most newspaper offices use the crank phone to test the resolve of cadet reporters. A week spent taking calls on the crank phone will break most trained professionals, let alone those just starting in the job. I know: I served my time on the same posting when I was a cadet reporter in my native New Zealand.

So when I walked past the crank phone in the offices of the *Daily Chronicle* and heard it ringing, my first reaction was to look for someone - anyone but myself - to answer the telephone. The cadet assigned to the desk for the day had done her best to disappear, the copy-boy was conspicuous by his absence and nobody lower down the newsroom pecking-order was within shouting distance. It was still mid-morning and the newsroom of a morning paper only comes alive after lunch when the hacks start to stumble in, recovering from the night before. Despite this, the daily fog of cigarette smoke was already beginning to form around the fluorescent lights set into the low ceiling. A few battered manual typewriters were being worked in a desultory manner down in the business section, but only a handful of general news reporters were visible. Worse still, the chief reporter was lurking at his desk, watching me to see what I would do.

Just three days previously he had posted a memorandum on the notice board above the assignment book, commanding all staff to make sure the crank phone was always answered within four rings. The week before the *Chronicle* had missed out on a major scoop when a regular reader had been unable to get any response on our Newstip Line (as we grandly called the crank phone in print) and had called one of our rivals with the story instead. I felt the chief reporter's eyes burning into my back as I glanced around quickly one more time for assistance, without luck. There was nothing for it, I would have to answer the damn telephone. I dumped the armful of manila clippings folders marked KENNEDY, JOHN F. on the desk and picked up the heavy black receiver.

'Hello, *Daily Chronicle* Newstip Line, James Stevens speaking. How may I help you?' I said in my smoothest voice, all the while inwardly cursing the unknown caller.

'Is that the *Daily Chronicle*?' asked a male voice with a heavy Welsh accent.

‘Yes,’ I replied, trying not to let the grimace on my face communicate itself through my voice.

‘I understand you pay for stories,’ continued the caller.

‘Sometimes, if the stories are big enough. What’s this about?’

‘My name’s Mullins, see, and I’m a porter at the Ashbridge Cottage Hospital and there’s something strange going on here,’ he replied nervously, before explaining. I quickly found myself scrambling for a pen and paper to scratch down the details before he rung off. Grasping the details in my hand, I ran to the chief reporter’s desk.

‘I need a photographer and a news car now!’

The chief reporter arched an eyebrow at me. ‘Why?’ he asked, his voice heavy with disdain. A consummate professional, he lived, breathed and excreted his job 24 hours a day. Like most journalists he smoked far too much, liked a drink too often and had enough caffeine coursing through his system to keep entire countries awake for a week.

He was also a thorough-going bastard who delighted in torturing cadets, foreigners or anyone else he regarded with suspicion. I was convinced I was at the top of his hit-list, but nearly every reporter in the newsroom believed the same of themselves. When the chief reporter died of the inevitable heart attack, there would be a long line of journalists waiting to urinate on his grave.

‘We’ve just had a call, there’s something strange going on in the Epping area. Last night there was a heatwave across the whole region and a shower of meteorites came down in Oxley Woods. Apparently the whole area was cordoned off by the authorities – no one allowed in or out.’ I explained as quickly as I could.

‘Hardly news, we’ve already had a report in from our stringer in Essex,’ smiled the chief reporter, picking up a sheet from one of the copy-typists. His face was pale and lined, with dark rings beneath his eyes from too many late night deadlines and not enough sleep. His greying, wavy black hair was combed back from his forehead. Like all former police reporters, he wore a regulation-blue police detective’s shirt and dark blue tie to accompany his woollen suit. The jacket perpetually hung over the back of his swivel chair, from which he commanded his troops like a regimental sergeant major. He seemed to take a sadistic pleasure in trying to crush anyone who thought they knew something he did not. National Service had a lot to answer for, I thought.

The piece about the meteor shower had obviously been phoned in direct to the newsroom by the stringer. At this time many national newspapers still retained district offices in other parts of the country. But in areas where they had no office, the dailies relied on freelance journalists - stringers - to keep abreast of local news, and phone in reports of anything interesting or bizarre that happened in their area. Equally, papers expected their stringers to be available 24 hours a day to cover any story they might come up on their patch. Stringers got paid per story published, making for a precarious existence, so it was hardly surprising the Essex stringer had been quick off the mark.

‘But we just got a tip-off that the authorities found an injured man in the woods where the meteors fell. He’s been taken to the Ashbridge Cottage Hospital,’ I ventured, reeling the chief reporter in.

‘Could be anything, some tramp or poacher - hardly big news,’ he sneered back, starting to turn away, as though dismissing my presence.

‘You’re probably right,’ I agreed, before delivering the knockout. ‘But apparently there’s something very strange about this injured man - he hasn’t got human blood.’

That got the chief reporter’s attention. Five minutes later I was inside one of the *Chronicle*’s news cars, barrelling through the streets of London, heading east into Essex. The madman at the wheel was Ross ‘Tubbs’ Tubberty, one of the paper’s best lensmen. He was overweight, with blotchy pink skin and a penchant for wearing black berets, with striped white-and-blue shirts with brown suede shoes. It was obvious that he didn’t spend his clothing allowance at fashion boutiques on the King’s Road like I did.

Like all newspaper photographers, Tubbs was an aspiring grand prix racer whose main goal in life was trying to scare reporters with his white-knuckle driving. I did my best to look nonchalant as I navigated us to the Ashbridge Cottage Hospital.

The porter Mullins had told me about overhearing a phone conversation between two doctors at the hospital. One physician said the man found in the woods apparently did not have human blood and there was something very strange about his X-rays. If we got to the hospital quickly with sufficient cash, Mullins guaranteed us first crack at Doctor Henderson who was treating the injured man. There might even be a photo opportunity of the mystery man himself.

As we sped through the dormitory suburbs of east of London, I looked disdainfully at the rabbit hutches being built either side of the road. Mortgage traps and false hopes of owning your own home - just another way of enslaving the population. You would not catch me living in one of these dumps with a wife and two point four brats to drag me down.

Soon suburbia was replaced with the green of Epping Forest and we arrived at Ashbridge Cottage Hospital to find it swarming with reporters, photographers and camera crews. ‘So much for our scoop,’ hissed Tubbs as he unloaded his camera bag from the back of the car. ‘You find that porter and I’ll help you lynch him myself.’

‘Oh no you don’t, he’s all mine,’ I replied, pausing outside the hospital’s old red-brick main building to look around. Amidst the sea of news cars sprawled across the beautifully manicured green lawns were several army jeeps. One had a peculiar insignia on its driver’s door, a circle of black mesh with four letters running around it - U.N.I.T. Obviously an acronym of some sort, but for what?

Tubbs noticed my interest. ‘Something’s up - UNIT’s here.’

‘UNIT?’ I asked as we walked into the hospital.

‘Yeah, the United Nations Intelligence Taskforce. Some hush-hush military thing. It was formed after that nerve gas attack on the Tube a couple of years ago,’ said the photographer.

‘Before my time--’ I stopped speaking as we entered the lobby of the hospital and a dozen cameras turned to face us. Realising we were just another pair of journalists, the throng collectively groaned and turned away again. ‘Good grief.’

Tubbs already had his camera out of the bulky padded bag slung over his shoulder and was taking pictures of the chaotic scenes. Realising I would be hard pressed to claim an exclusive I decided to look around to see if I could add any colour to the piece I would have to write. Now we were inside, I realised the hospital was actually a converted manor house from some former country estate. Cottage hospital indeed! The oak-panelled walls and luxurious gold fittings were hardly the stuff of cottages, at least not from where I came.

After a few minutes of restive questioning of hospital staff, a soldier emerged from a set of double doors to address the media rabble. His uniform was a light shade of mushroom-brown and his insignia of rank marked him as a captain. The round UNIT logo was emblazoned around the badge on his beret. The soldier looked angry and harassed, as if he was having a very bad day. It was about to get worse.

The questions came in a torrent but the captain held up a hand for silence before answering any of them. ‘My name is Captain Munro and I am here to give you a short statement. There was a fall of space debris into Oxley Woods last night and the area has been sealed off to protect the public until we have determined it is safe. An unconscious adult male was found in the woods and was brought here for medical treatment. That is all I have to say.’

The questions came again, shouted and screamed by red-faced reporters desperate for more information, for something extra to justify their day trip into the countryside. After a minute the barrage settled down enough for individual questions to be heard.

‘Why can’t we see him?’

‘He’s under medical care,’ replied Munro.

‘Is that the real reason?’

‘What are your chaps doing here?’

The captain looked weary. ‘I’m sorry, I can’t answer questions.’

‘Is there a security risk?’

‘Is it to do with the meteorites that came down last night?’

‘I’m sorry, there’s simply nothing I can tell you,’ replied Munro before nodding to the hospital porter standing beside him. The porter began a feeble attempt to push the

journalists and cameramen back towards the exit, before all attention turned to the entranceway.

A stiff-backed man in the uniform of a brigadier had entered the reception area to be confronted by the barrage of cameras and questions. Like Captain Munro, he was clad in a neatly pressed mushroom-brown uniform with UNIT insignia prominent on his beret and upper sleeves. The brigadier carried a chestnut wood swagger stick and his black moustache bristled with anger at this media ambush.

‘Can you tell us anything sir?’ asked one reporter.

‘What about?’

‘Is it true there’s a man from space in there?’

The brigadier snorted disdainfully. ‘Nonsense. I don’t know where you get these stories.’

‘Is there something odd about him?’

‘I know nothing about a man from space,’ he replied evenly.

I decided it was time I got a question in. ‘Then why are you here?’

The brigadier swivelled to size me up, hesitating just a moment before answering. ‘Training exercise.’ He shoved his way through the sea of hacks, followed by a young woman who slipped her way through the crowd almost unnoticed. She wore a brown and tan jacket with matching mini skirt, and her brown hair was pulled into a tight bun atop her head. An assistant, I wondered, or perhaps the brigadier’s personal secretary? Yet her eyes were piercing and gleamed with intelligence - this was no mere office typist.

The brigadier dodged a few more questions before slipping through the double doors to go into the hospital itself. The assembled media were left scrabbling around in reception, trading ideas and trying to talk the story up into something significant. Favoured theory was that the mystery man had found one of the meteorites and either been injured by it or else was refusing to reveal its whereabouts to UNIT. Either way, the man with inhuman blood from outer space angle was going to be hard to back up without any solid proof.

Twenty minutes later I spotted the brigadier - identified by a fellow hack as somebody Lethbridge-Stewart - escaping our attentions via a side door and into his staff car, which quickly sped away. It was time to phone the office and report our progress, or lack of it. But the hospital lines were jammed with other reporters, so Tubbs drove me to the nearest pub to use their phone instead. There the bar was full of talk about lay-offs at the nearby plastics factory and how automation was killing British industry. I jammed a finger in my spare ear as I tried to get through to the *Chronicle*. The chief reporter called us back to the office - much of the story had already been splashed across the front of one of London’s afternoon papers, the *Evening Standard*. Unless I

could come up with a new angle, my piece was likely to be buried down the news pages.

A grimy old duffer smelling of liquor and game shuffled up to me in the pub as I finished my phone call. 'Me name's Seeley, Sam Seeley. You after one of them thunderballs?'

'You know something about the meteorites?'

'Maybe, maybe not. I seen 'em coming down in the woods. 'Course there's soldiers all over now. I even saw two of 'em guarding a police box in the middle of the woods, I did.' He slurred his words, breathing cheap whiskey all over me.

'Good for you, pops,' I said, slipping a pound note into his big sweaty palm. 'You see anything else interesting, you give me a call. My name's Stevens, at the *Daily Chronicle*.'

'Right you are...' he mumbled and headed for the bar. I grabbed my notebook and headed for the parking lot, where Tubbs was waiting impatiently. I persuaded him to try a quick drive to Oxley Woods but we were turned back by more UNIT soldiers. There was nothing more to be found here - it was time to head back to the office and file my copy.

With some careful massaging of what information was available and 'beefing up' a few facts from the clippings files to make them more spectacular, I managed to turn the story into a sexy eighteen-paragraph tale of deadly debris from space and sinister cover-up scare-mongering. All perfectly justified by my personal motto: 'Never let the facts get in the way of a good story.'

The piece was finished by 7 p.m. and by rights I should have gone home, but I couldn't face the prospect of another night listening to Natasha complaining how we never went out any more, how I was working too hard, and how I cared more about the paper than I did about her. I went out drinking with some *Chronicle* hacks instead and stumbled in around midnight. An attempt at affection was firmly rebuffed so I spent the night alone on the couch.

* * *

Next morning I dragged myself into the office to admire my article on the front page, adorned with the headline MYSTERY MAN MAIMED BY METEORS. As always, the subs had gone overboard in stretching the few facts contained in my story and blowing them up even further to create a more enticing story. Alas, Tubbs had not been able to come up with anything to excite the picture desk so my article was buried at the foot of the front page. Respectable but not outstanding, although it did still carry my by-line.

I quickly scanned through the copy and was surprised to find all mentions of UNIT has been excised and replaced with the phrase 'the authorities'. I asked one of the day sub-editors who had been on the subs bench the night before, what had happened to my story. He said the copy had been rewritten by the *Chronicle*'s editor after the first

edition went to press. Apparently the editor had gone down to the compositing room and relaid the text himself, subbing it on the stone just after midnight. I was baffled by this unprecedented piece of senior editorial interference but shrugged it off.

The tabloids had a field day with the story, most picking up the official line that the ‘inhuman’ test results were the product of a junior medical prank gone wrong. ‘ALIEN’ MAN METEOR HOAX screamed the *Daily Mirror*, and the other tabloids were no better. Several illustrated their articles with artists’ impressions of what a man with inhuman blood could look like, just to add a surreal note to proceedings.

I was settling down to sort out the mess on my desk which I had abandoned the night before, when the phone rang. I picked it up to hear a rich, deep male voice, tinged with a vaguely European accent that just eluded identification.

‘Mr Stevens? Mr James Stevens?’ asked the voice.

‘Speaking.’

‘I must congratulate you on your article in this morning’s paper. Easily the best written, if a trifle liberal with its use of the facts,’ continued the voice smoothly.

‘Who’s speaking?’

‘Such a pity you missed out on the whole story. After all the media left I understand there were shots fired at the hospital. Somebody tried to abduct the famous mystery man. I thought you might be interested.’

‘What? Who is this?’ I demanded, hastily scrawling a transcript of the conversation in the spider-like scrawl of my erratic shorthand.

‘Just a friend. We’ll talk again very soon, I’m sure,’ replied the caller and hung up. I was already running for the chief reporter’s desk. To my amazement, he refused to sign me out a news car.

‘I’m not sending you out for another day in the countryside. Most of the facts in your story you could have got by just using the telephone. Bring me something more and I might reconsider. Until then, use this,’ he smirked, extending a single finger up into the air at me.

Biting my tongue I returned to my desk and worked the phone for the next three hours, calling the Ashbridge Cottage Hospital, trying all the different departments, even calling some of the hospital staff at their homes using criss-cross street directories and electoral roles to track them down. By chance I caught a nurse as she was leaving for her shift. She had seen something but was not sure exactly what.

‘I was touring my ward when I heard some shots outside. I looked out the window to see two of those soldiers chasing an ambulance. I think they were the ones who fired the shots but I can’t be sure. I know some other nurses saw something but they were told to keep quiet or else,’ she said nervously.

‘You couldn’t tell me their names could you?’ I pleaded.

‘I’m sorry, I really shouldn’t have said anything. I’ve got to go now,’ she replied and hung up abruptly.

A phone call to the nearby Ashbridge Police Station gave no reports of any shooting in the area. ‘Oh no, no shooting round here, sir. The odd poacher might let off a bang every now and then, but that’s only natural, isn’t it sir?’ said the local constable cheerfully. His voice conjured up the image of a burly but kind-faced bobby, all *Dixon of Dock Green* and no remission. I almost expected to hear ‘The Laughing Policeman’ playing in the background. ‘We did have a car stolen from the hospital, sir--’

‘Yes?’

‘But I’m sure it will turn up soon. Probably just some youngsters having a lark, sir.’

The only response - official or otherwise - I could get from the hospital itself was that the mystery patient had discharged himself the previous day and no, they did not have a forwarding address or even a name for him. I slammed the phone down in disgust just as Tubbs wandered up carrying a ten by eight black-and-white photograph.

‘No luck with the maimed meteor mystery man then I gather?’ he asked wryly and got a hard stare in return. ‘Sorry I asked. Anyway, here’s one of the pictures I took yesterday. I particularly like the look of this dolly bird who was travelling with the brigadier...’

I grabbed up the print Tubbs had placed on my desk and stared at it. Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart was pictured standing uncomfortably in the hospital reception area, surrounded by reporters and camera lenses, with his female assistant behind him.

I realised I had been approaching my follow-up story from the wrong angle. The story should not be about the mystery patient, it should be about UNIT. What was this shadowy organisation that everyone knew so little about doing investigating a meteor shower? What powers did UNIT have to cordon areas of public woodland? On whose authority was UNIT apparently able to detain individuals? I muttered my thanks to Tubbs and headed for the reference library to see if I could discover answers to some of these questions.

* * *

The reference library is an invaluable resource in any newspaper if run well. Its staff go through each day’s papers cutting out stories for filing into manila folders, which are themselves then filed in towering metal cabinets. The same is done with each and every photograph ever published, gradually building up into a library of facts and pictures.

Reference libraries come into their own in stories involving deaths, disasters or famous people. When a famous actor dies, you just have to go to the clippings and pull the file on the dead person to obtain a complete background while hardly lifting a

finger. New technology and the advent of the microfiche were slowly turning reference libraries into cold, stark places, but the reference library at the *Daily Chronicle* was still staffed by a half-dozen women who suffered fools badly.

My talent for ingratiating myself with people stood me in good stead with the librarians so I walked into their domain without the quaking fear many younger male reporters might feel upon entering such an utterly female-dominated section of the building.

I arrived to find the early morning cut and paste session still in progress, so I ventured into the stacks to find the files on UNIT and Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart for myself. In the centre of the L-shaped room the librarians were conducting one of their terrifying bitching sessions, as they rated the male staff reporters' sexual magnetism on a scale of one to ten. The chief reporter was a man much loathed in this area and rated a minus two. I hoped I would not still be in the room when they got around to dissecting my sexuality.

After a few minutes searching I uncovered a manila folder marked UNIT, but discovered it was empty. Trying to avoid calling for assistance too soon, I went into the biog. files and pulled all the folders marked LETHBRIDGE-STEWART. There were three in all, the first two relating to minor Scottish dignitaries.

The third folder was labelled LETHBRIDGE-STEWART, ALISTAIR GORDON, yet it contained nothing bar a hand-written note: 'See picture files'. This was becoming too involved for me, so it was time to call in the experts. I emerged from the stacks and approached the librarians. They each sat at a large wooden desk turned in to face each other, which created a rectangle of empty space in the middle.

'Catherine? Catherine, could you help me with something?'

'Yes, James, what is it now?' answered Catherine with mock weariness. There had always been an easy friendship between us because Catherine was also from New Zealand. But more than that, there was a spark of sexual tension there as well, as between two people who know they are attracted to each other but circumstances prevent any possibility of consummating that passion.

'Sorry to be unduly stupid, but why would we have two properly labelled files with nothing actually in them?' I asked.

'Probably because we're currently pasting up something to go into those files. What are they called?'

'“UNIT” and “Lethbridge-Stewart, Alistair Gordon”.'

The librarians all made a quick check of the files they were working on that day, but none of them had either in their stacks. 'Perhaps we haven't had any clippings about either of those topics?' suggested Catherine hopefully.

'Then why have the folders at all? There was this note in the Lethbridge-Stewart folder,' I ventured, handing it to her. She read it and stood up with an exasperated

huff. Catherine suffered from rheumatoid arthritis which made long periods of walking difficult, hence her mostly desk-bound job in the reference library.

‘Well, let’s see what’s in the picture files, shall we?’ she winced and led me into the darkest recesses of the library where tens of thousands of photographs were stored in ageing metal filing cabinets. With practised ease she quickly found the file in question and opened it to discover - nothing. It was just as empty as the other two folders. ‘Now that’s just bizarre.’

Catherine consulted with the head librarian but none of the staff could offer a credible explanation, beyond someone having removed the contents of all three files from the archives and never returned them. ‘Tell you what, I’m having lunch today with some of the librarians from the *Mirror* at the Stab in the Back. Why don’t I get them to check their files for you, maybe they can turn something up?’ offered Catherine. ‘The Stab in the Back’ was the hacks’ nickname for the pub where all the neighbouring *Daily Mirror* staff congregated at lunchtime.

‘Thanks - I owe you a drink,’ I murmured and headed back to my desk in the newsroom. There were other stories to do today and wild-goose chases were getting me nowhere. I had almost forgotten all about the missing files when Catherine approached my desk the next morning.

‘Look, James, I’m sorry but I’ve tried nearly every reference library on the Street and nobody has anything on UNIT or this Lethbridge-Stewart you’re after,’ she admitted ruefully.

‘What, nothing at all or empty files like we’ve got?’

‘Both. But nobody has got anything of any use on either item. Sorry.’ She shrugged. ‘And by the way, my drink is a double gin and tonic.’ It was all forgotten within 36 hours when one of the most infamous terrorist incidents of the 1960s took place.

* * *

Black Thursday began with a series of dawn raids by terrorists across Southern England: power supplies were cut to much of Central London; police stations and army barracks were attacked; radio and television networks partially disabled. The perpetrators operated in secret through a series of lightning-fast attacks on frankly unprepared targets.

Dozens of early-rising London citizens were killed or injured in the dawn attacks. Because of the sweeping nature of the raids and the blackout of all communications they brought, details available at the time were very sketchy. It was only days later that the full magnitude of what nearly happened really began to sink in to those in authority. If the attacks had not ceased only an hour after they began, the attempted coup d’état could have succeeded on the same day.

I awoke late on Black Thursday to discover the radio-alarm clock was not working and the power seemed to have been cut off. I managed a grab a shave in the insipid

early light of an autumn morning and set off for work in my car. By the time I left the flat the emergency was effectively over, but the streets were still in chaos.

The army centre on the King's Road looked as if a bomb had hit it and as I drove past I could see what appeared to be the bodies of two dead soldiers beneath tarpaulins. Parliament Square was blocked off by armed soldiers toting sub-machine guns, standing behind barricades. I finally got into the office just in time to be sent back out again.

'Stevens! Thank Christ you made it in at least!' shouted the chief reporter, for once happy to see me. 'You've got a car, haven't you? Good. Grab Tubbs and get out to Epping - you should know the way after your little trip in the countryside the other day. We've just heard they've nabbed the terrorists!'

'What terrorists? What the hell's going on?' I demanded. The chief reporter just threw me a walkie-talkie radio and pointed to the lift.

'Get moving, we'll fill you in on the way!' he barked. We were already five miles from the office when the call to come back crackled through on the walkie-talkie from the office. Apparently the terrorists behind the attacks had been holed up at a plastics factory in the Ashbridge area. But we were called back to the office when the authorities announced no media were being allowed within two miles of the plastics factory. I tried calling some of the local residents to get the inside story but phone lines were down in the area, as they were across much of Greater London. There had apparently been a shoot-out with a team of squaddies who stumbled across the terrorists. Several soldiers were killed, but they managed to rout the terrorists. It was believed the ringleader had managed to escape.

That was the official story, and D-notices were slapped on anyone who tried to publish anything to the contrary. A series of officially approved photographs of the dead terrorists were released and a BBC film crew was allowed to film in certain, carefully designated areas of the plastics factory. Heavy hints were dropped that the Irish Republican Army was thought to be involved, that the Troubles from Northern Ireland were crossing the Irish Sea, bringing a new campaign of terror to the streets of London.

As a cynical hack I never ceased to be amazed at the absolute belief which still existed that everything the Government said must be true. The officially sanctioned story about the terrorists did not hold water but nobody questioned it. Only a dozen bodies were brought out of the plastics factory yet nearly a hundred terrorist attacks had taken place across Southern England within minutes of each other. Where did the other terrorists go? How could such a large-scale operation be planned and carried out without the authorities having any warning?

The actions taken by the so-called terrorists were the classic objectives of any invasion force: cut the power supplies and lines of communications; disable or destroy all pockets of armed resistance in surprise dawn raids; spread fear and chaos in the shortest time possible. Who had tried to invade Britain and why? How was the invasion stopped so quickly?

None of these questions were ever answered or even asked. Instead the official version of events was swallowed whole by a population who did not want its cosy world-view shattered by the brutal realities of what had so nearly taken place.

Meanwhile the media sated the public with stories about plucky Brits bearing up under a crisis, the spirit of Dunkirk, and the Blitz revived quarter of a century on. The papers were filled with stirring human-interest tales of people coming together to help each other out in the time of trouble. Plus there were the usual quirky space fillers about strange happenings in the midst of the carnage. An entire display of mannequins disappeared overnight from Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum, while some patrons claimed they had seen one of the dummies come alive!

At the *Chronicle* we received at least twenty phone calls on the crank phone from people saying they had seen shop window dummies coming alive. At least six people claimed to have been attacked by the dummies. We published these claims under the heading BLACK THURSDAY BRINGS MASS HYSTERIA, dismissing what these people said as part of a group hallucination brought about by stress. Meanwhile, the leak that the IRA might be responsible was quietly dropped by the authorities and never mentioned again.

In Parliament the usual right-wing rent-a-quote MPs shouted long and hard from the backbenches about reinstating the death penalty for acts of terrorism. The police, the army, and the intelligence ministry C19 promised a full and thorough investigation into what had happened and how normal security systems had broken down. But it would be another eighteen months before anyone was arrested or charged in connection with Black Thursday.

TWO

November 1969

At the *Chronicle* it was back to normal service for me. After a particularly dull assignment reporting on the first woman to be allowed to underwrite at Lloyds (but only through an agent), I decided it was time for a change. Handing in my piece to mark the sixth anniversary of JFK's death (THE GHOST OF JFK - HOW HIS DEATH STILL HAUNTS US), I proposed an idea for an exciting new series of articles to the features editor. I was desperate to get away from the chief reporter, and a shift upstairs to Features seemed like the perfect solution. Plus it would pave my way from the daily grind of newspapers to the more sedate and better-paid world of magazine journalism.

Britain had been at the forefront in many areas of scientific research for decades, particularly medicine and aeronautics. But in the last five years the nation seemed to have achieved a massive leap forward in the field of microchip technology, which was having a positive overlap into other areas like space exploration.

The British Space Centre had suddenly leapt ahead of the Soviet Union and America in the space race, thanks to the rapid advances in computer technology brought by the microchip. A new launching in the Mars Probe series of flights was due in the next few months and I was determined to get the scoop on what it could mean for Britain. It seemed perverse that such a small and increasingly irrelevant nation on the world stage should be sending men to Mars when most homes only had a black-and-white television set and some still had an outhouse.

I proposed calling the series of features 'Frontier Science', to make the link between glamorous scientific pursuits like the Mars Probe and other, more conventional fields like the search for renewable energy resources and the rapid expansion of research into genetic and psychological engineering programmes. The series got a typically enthusiastic go-ahead from the features editor, Michael Dobbyn.

My first call was at the newly established Ministry of Science, to get the official Government line on this research explosion. There had been much talk from politicians about the white heat of technology, so what would they call this new interest in the sciences? As with all Government departments, getting an interview with anyone significant proved difficult. I built up a lot of good contacts that would prove useful later, but getting anyone to say anything for the record was another matter. Finally some severe string-pulling got me an appointment with the Right Honourable Frederick Masters, Permanent Under-Secretary for the Minister of Science - in two weeks time. I decided to use the delay fruitfully, getting on with my other interviews for the series.

I began with a trip to the British Space Centre in Hertfordshire. According to the *Chronicle's* archives, the centre had grown out of the old British Rocket Group. After a series of controversial orbital flights in the 1950s, many of its staff had moved on to other projects while others had taken early retirement. A skeleton staff remained until the recent arrival of Professor Ralph Cornish.

By all reports he brought a new enthusiasm to the BRG. He had it renamed the British Space Centre to bring its moniker in line with its new function, making Britain a force in the space race. Few believed it was possible with the limited resources and budget available but Cornish refused to accept defeat. He badgered politicians, put up a bravura performance before a fundings select committee in Parliament and begged or borrowed the equipment he needed.

The breakthrough for turning Cornish's vision into a reality came with the collapse of International Electromatics. IE and its charismatic founder Tobias Vaughn appeared from nowhere in the mid-1960s to claim eighty per cent of the global electronics market in just three years with its revolutionary new microchip technology.

But tragedy struck when Vaughn died in an explosion at his IE factory just outside London. Without his guidance IE collapsed and it was Ralph Cornish who stepped in to help Vaughn's associate Ashley Chapel sort out the mess. In return he got access to much of the cutting-edge technology Vaughn was still developing at the time of his death. With this new edge, the British Space Centre was truly revitalized.

Now the BSC was on countdown to another launch. It had just signed a precedent-setting contract with the BBC, granting the corporation exclusive broadcast rights to all future space flights. It was believed that the BBC hoped to launch its third television channel with full colour coverage of the next Mars flight.

Thanks to a drive for new funding to set up a space recovery programme, Cornish was willing to grant a few, selected interviews. I made sure I was among those invited. So I came to be driven through the security gates at the centre on a chilly November morning. After a series of elaborate security checks I was finally ushered into an office empty of everything, bar one desk, two chairs and a filing cabinet. The desk drawers were empty and the filing cabinet was locked - I know, I tried them all.

'Welcome to the British Space Centre. How can I help you, Mr...?'

I swivelled to look at the person addressing me. I recognized the tall, rangy man standing in the doorway as Cornish from the photos we held on file at the *Chronicle*. He was dressed in a smart, single-breasted grey suit with highly polished black leather shoes and a crisply knotted tie over his white shirt. His hair was immaculately groomed and his eyes were slate grey, but not too cold. His appearance was clean, upright and direct. Only a slight weariness about the eyes hinted at the almost legendary long hours he worked here. I stood up to shake his hand.

'Stevens, James Stevens. I'm from the *Daily Chronicle*. Perhaps you can start by telling me about the problems with *Mars Probe 7*.'

Cornish moved around the desk and sat opposite me. He explained for what must have been the thousandth time how *Mars Probe 7* had landed safely on Mars but then communications links were lost. Shortly afterwards, the craft had lifted off from the surface of Mars manually and was now on its slow return journey to Earth.

'We need to set up this recovery programme in case the astronauts need help getting back home. We can't simply abandon them!' His voice grew louder as the passion in

his words increased. This was a man devoted to his work to the exclusion of all else, a quality with which I could well identify.

‘What about your links with the late Tobias Vaughn and International Electromatics? How much have they helped you in getting the Mars Probe series back on track?’ I asked innocently.

Cornish’s eyes flashed angrily. ‘I’m sorry, under the terms of the Official Secrets Act I am not permitted to discuss what happened to Tobias Vaughn, IE or Ashley Chapel. This interview is terminated.’ He got up and was already walking out of the room by the time I could raise a word of protest. He paused at the door to look back at me. ‘I’m sorry, but in this matter I am powerless. You’ll have to take it up with UNIT.’

Then he was gone, leaving me gasping for breath. What the hell did UNIT have to do with IE or the British Space Centre for that matter? What was the significance of Ashley Chapel? Several times I had approached the elusive Mr Chapel for an interview and been firmly rebuffed. I almost thought I saw a look of fear in Cornish’s eyes before he left the room. What could a prominent professor have to fear from the likes of Chapel or UNIT? Why had Cornish even mentioned UNIT to me - was he deliberately trying to make some connection for me? Or was this an elaborate trap?

One thing was obvious: the United Nations Intelligence Taskforce and its links to scientific research in Britain had just become part of my series of features.

* * *

Next on my list to interview was Professor Jeremiah P. Kettlewell, of the radical science research forum, Think Tank. Partially funded by the Government, Think Tank was established by the new Ministry of Science to encourage and develop new ideas. By keeping it within the Government’s ambit, it was hoped this would prevent the ‘brain drain’ of major scientists to research centres in America.

Kettlewell was an expert in robotics, but was best known outside science circles for his visionary - or ‘crackpot’, as the tabloids liked to describe them - opinions about the future of energy resources. Twice he had made the headlines after presenting radical papers at international conferences calling for the banning of fossil fuel consumption, with all cars to be powered by electricity generated from natural, renewable resources like wind power.

Kettlewell had been dismissed as an utter nutter both times but was slowly being recognized as a forward thinker on pressing environmental issues. After my limited success with Professor Cornish, I was hopeful Kettlewell would be more helpful. I had my doubts as soon as we met.

No wonder people think he’s a mad scientist, he looks just like one, I thought to myself as I shook the professor’s hand. He was short and rotund, with wild, uncontrolled hair that seemed to explode from his head like bolts of lightning. Clad in a white laboratory coat, he shuffled around in a permanent stoop, trying to focus on objects directly in front of him through the pebble-thin circular glasses perched on his nose.

Rather than spending another week getting security clearance to enter Think Tank where the professor worked, I had arranged to meet him at home. A long drive into countryside finally brought me to his small cottage, which was dwarfed by the huge workshop building behind it. Kettlewell gave me a tour of his laboratory before settling down in a book-lined study for the interview proper.

Kettlewell was a fascinating speaker, once he got over his own nervousness and began to relax a bit more. He warmed to his topic about the need to pioneer new energy resources and also warned against building up a reliance on too much technology.

‘But, Professor, your own field of expertise is robotics. Surely what you’re saying is in contradiction to your life’s work?’ I challenged him.

‘Perhaps, but I can’t help feel that no good can come out of robotics. Already we are seeing massive rises in the levels of unemployment due to increased automation, which in turn is leading to increases in violence and crime. There is no such thing as a utopian society based around robots doing all the work, only a dystopian society!’

* * *

The day finally arrived for my interview with Frederick Masters at the Ministry of Science. I took a taxi to Whitehall to avoid the notorious lack of parking in the area and finished my journey on foot. To my immense irritation I arrived to discover that Masters had been urgently called away, for reasons that became clear less than 24 hours later.

The next day I was already at my desk in the Features Department when one of the police reporters ran past on his way to the Editor’s office. ‘What’s happening?’ I shouted after him.

‘It’s just come over the radio scanner. The police have sealed off Waterloo Station and have called in the army and a fleet of ambulances. People are dropping like flies - could be another nerve gas attack!’ he shouted back over his shoulder. One of the duties of the police reporters was to monitor all radio traffic over the police frequencies. This was just about legal, as long as we did not run a story lifted directly from police transmissions. Plus it kept us right up to date with any good emergencies.

Anticipating the need for background information, I pulled the reference library’s files on previous nerve gas attacks in London. The first came nearly three years before when the entire London Underground network had to be sealed off after a hallucinogenic gas was accidentally released into the air vents. Dozens of people died and hundreds reported seeing strange creatures in the tunnels.

The crisis spread above ground with Central London being evacuated after the nerve gas clotted into a heavy fog that hung close to the ground like some massive spider’s web. Eventually the fog dissipated of its own accord, with no one able to give a conclusive explanation.

The second incident came more recently but was equally inconclusive. Thousands of people in major cities around the world reported fainting spells, dizziness, and loss of memory. The scientific theory put forward at the time was that the Earth had passed through a comet's tail, showering the world with an unidentified form of radiation causing this global illness. This was roundly dismissed but never bettered.

The new attack seemed much more localized, centred around Waterloo railway station. Already the closure and quarantining of the area was bringing chaos to London's transport system. London Underground was at a virtual standstill, the railways were debilitated and the quarantine seemed to be spreading.

Fresh reports flooded in of more people collapsing at office blocks and on street corners, and at Gatwick and Heathrow airports. Chaos was engulfing London and it was spreading across the capital fast. Suddenly, I realized what was really going on.

'This isn't some nerve gas attack - it's a killer virus, some sort of plague, and it's spreading like wildfire,' I told the chief reporter. He nodded his agreement and began deploying his 'troops', as he liked to call the hacks in times of crisis. The *Daily Chronicle* might have been a staid, conservative paper but it covered disasters and tragedies better than any other daily on Fleet Street. The secret was a machine gun technique, throwing so many reporters and photographers at a story that the resulting coverage was easily the most comprehensive available.

Thanks to my timely intervention, the drive for news had a new focus, one which quickly proved accurate. I was seconded back from Features for the day to work the phones and drum up some official reaction to the crisis. I was seated at my old desk in the newsroom when a call came through to my phone.

'Mr Stevens, I hope you're keeping well in the midst of all this unpleasantness,' purred a deep, rich male voice. I recognized it instantly as the mystery caller from the previous month.

'Very well thanks, which is better than can be said for the poor sods who were at Waterloo Station this morning. Who is this?'

'A friend. I've phoned to help you with a little information that might be useful. Are you interested?'

'I didn't get much change out of your last tip-off,' I noted curtly.

'That's because you just didn't dig hard enough. I understand you were due to meet with the Right Honourable Frederick Masters yesterday,' ventured my mystery caller.

'How the hell did you know that? Have you been following me?' This guy was making me deeply paranoid. I even looked around the office to see if this was a crank call from someone internal. Nothing.

'I hardly have time for that. No, I think it would interest you to know that Mr Masters is now the late Mr Masters. He was one of the first to die from this plague. Indeed, it

was he who brought it into Waterloo. Are you familiar with the name Wenley Moor?' asked the voice, a note of mockery in its velvet tones.

'Should I be?'

'You will be. That's where the late Mr Masters had to rush off to yesterday, which is why he missed your appointment. Masters is the key - follow him and you'll find the source of this plague. Do you have a pen and paper?'

'Yes,' I replied, trying to keep the exasperation out of my voice.

'No need to get tetchy, Mr Stevens. Write down this telephone number - it may help you in the quest for information. Good luck,' added the mystery caller before hanging up.

I held the telephone number in my hand for a moment, contemplating my next course of action. The last time this extravagantly secret source had called, the tip-off failed to pan out. But perhaps he was right, perhaps I hadn't pushed hard enough? I dialled the phone number he had given me and waited while it rang: once, twice, three –

'Lethbridge-Stewart here,' snapped a voice.

'Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart?' I asked, hardly able to believe what I was hearing.

'Yes, who's this speaking?'

'This is James Stevens of the *Daily Chronicle*. I wanted to ask you a few questions about –'

'The *Daily* what!' Lethbridge-Stewart exploded. 'How did you get this number?' he demanded, then slammed the phone down before waiting for an answer. I swore under my breath and quickly re-dialled the number, only to find it permanently engaged for the next thirty minutes. The brigadier had obviously taken the phone off the hook. I had missed a golden opportunity. There was nothing for it - I would have to grind this story out the hard way.

Back to phone I went, making call after call to dozens of contacts in the Ministry of Science before I finally managed to make a breakthrough. One of my friends in the funding side was able to give me a lead on the name Wenley Moor.

'That thing! God, it's been costing us a fortune. Wenley Moor's an underground nuclear research centre; they're doing some very hush-hush involving a cyclotron. New work into finding cheap and easy ways of generating electricity. But it's all been going horribly wrong, dear.'

'How so?' I said, trying to suppress my habit of involuntarily imitating the vocal mannerisms of others. It was a useful talent as a journalist, and had gained me access to information that a reporter's usual bullying and blustering would have put off limits. But using it on reliable sources only put their backs up, so I tried to keep my accent and speech patterns as normal as possible.

‘Well, they had all sorts of problems just tunnelling the place out - too close to some old caves or something. Then they’ve had problems with power losses and the staff aren’t very happy either. Can’t say I blame them - you wouldn’t catch me going down some dark dirty hole in the ground, if you know what I mean. Not on my own, anyway...’

Another source confirmed Masters had been rushed off to Wenley Moor by the Minister, charged with the task of finding whether the whole project should be scrapped and how it could best be hushed up. Apparently Masters and the research centre’s director, Doctor Lawrence, were old friends from school.

It was time to brief the chief reporter on what I had found out. He quickly absorbed the details and immediately ordered three cadets to start ringing around the Wenley Moor area: the first to keep trying the centre itself on the number I had been given by my anonymous caller; the second to call round the local hospitals to see if there had been any plague outbreaks in the district; and the third to call the residents for their reaction to having ‘an atomic bomb under their bloody gardens’, as the chief reporter put it.

While he was giving orders, further updates were brought over from the radio scanner. The police had just confirmed that the Right Honourable Frederick Masters was now counted among the victims of the plague. His body had just been identified by his secretary. ‘And she should know his body,’ winked the chief reporter maliciously.

By this time it was nearly 7 p.m. - time to start sending some copy down to the compositors for setting. I was assigned to write the story, pulling together all the threads into one easily read article. It was a mammoth task, but, as always, the hardest task was finding the right opening sentence, or ‘intro’, to start the story. This was a guaranteed front-page lead and I wanted to make it a stunner.

In the days before new technology, we typed our copy onto three blank sheets of rectangular newsprint paper, each separated by a sheet of black carbon paper. Top left was reserved for the names of the reporters working on the story. Top centre was the date of writing, and top right was a single, unique word to identify the story from all others in the paper that day, along with a page number. I threaded my carbons between the three sheets of paper and typed in:

STEVENS ET AL

22/11/69

plague 1

After a full five minutes staring at the blank remainder of the page, I did what I always did when I could not think of an intro. I went to the toilet. It was a source of much ribbing in the newsroom that my best stories had their foundations in the toilets, but it never failed. One minute spent in quiet contemplation with my trousers around my ankles always brought forth the required result, and so it was that day. When I returned to my desk, the intro was easy:

More than xxx people yesterday died of a mystery plague sweeping London which is believed to have come from a

secret Government-funded nuclear research centre - and a junior minister may have been the plague carrier.

From here the story flowed out of my typewriter, with certain key facts left as XXX to allow the latest data to be inserted as close to press-time as possible. As I was writing, cadets came over to hand me insert-copy to be dropped into my main piece where appropriate. The inserts included news that the first international plague victim had just died at Paris Airport, that nearly sixty people had died on one platform at Waterloo Station, that the Government was appealing for calm in the face of this crisis, that a vaccine to this mystery plague was even now being prepared and chemists were standing by to produce hundreds of thousands of gallons of the vaccine for mass inoculations once it was ready.

The fourth paragraph was left open for a statement from the Government on the claims made in my article. I delayed making the phone call as long as possible so that our revelations could not be leaked to other newspapers once they had been safely dealt with. The Editor even made a rare appearance on the newsroom floor to consult with the chief reporter and the news editor about which edition the story should appear in first.

A morning daily can run as many as four or more different editions of each day's paper as new stories come in and spoilers are written to cancel out exclusives in first editions of opposition papers. The first two or three editions are generally for outlying provincial areas, while metropolitan areas get the final edition of the night.

The chief reporter wanted our plague scoop in as soon as possible, so we could get the maximum impact, while the news editor preferred to go with the final edition of the night. It would still get maximum impact in areas where it mattered most and it would not tip our hand to the rest of the Street, he pointed out. The news editor was a wily old soak who was as well loved as the chief reporter was much hated. Every summer the news editor was sent away to dry out, and every winter he reverted to pickling himself in single malt from the insides out.

The Editor even deigned to ask my opinion, which left me nearly speechless. I mumbled something about keeping our powder dry for as long as possible and the Editor nodded sagely.

'Final edition it is then,' he announced, before turning back to me a final time. 'You'd better get busy then - you'll have to rewrite the top of that piece to hide our scoop, and do it fast. We've only got seven minutes till press-time.'

I was still tweaking my copy for the full version of our plague story when the *Chronicle* building began its distinctive 10 p.m. vibrations. The printing presses in the basement were running up to speed for the first edition. Soon a cadet was wandering around the newsroom, distributing copies of the paper on desks, his hands grubby with ink. Wearily I cast an eye across my copy and noticed a few minor alterations that needed making - the death toll had risen by another thirteen in the past hour.

Finally, just before midnight, it was over. I separated all my pieces of newsprint into three neat, sequential piles and pushed a pin through each on them. The top copy went

into the news editor's basket - 'Christ, Stevens, what do you think you're writing, a bloody novel?' he taunted me with a sly wink. Second copy went to the chief reporter, who just grunted, while I retained the bottom copy for future reference, ramming it down on a big paper-spike atop my desk. I definitely needed a drink.

Two hours later the news editor appeared clutching copies of the final edition in the pub around the corner, sliding past the landlord's malevolent gaze with practised ease. 'Bloody good story, m'boy, bloody good story,' he said before collapsing into a triple measure of single malt.

I finally stumbled into the flat about dawn to find Natasha tear-stained and stricken with grief, convinced I must have been one of the plague victims. When she discovered I had been out drinking all night and not even bothered to call her to say I was all right, she went ballistic.

'You care more about that bloody paper than you do about me, James! You treat me like I'm just another possession, something you've collected to get a set. Now you've got me, you can just forget I even exist!' she screamed.

'I've just written the biggest scoop of the year! I don't hear you complaining about all the money I bring in; you're bloody happy to spend it shopping for yourself and your friends,' I shouted back.

'You leave my friends out of this - at least I've got some friends!' she replied, storming into the bedroom and slamming the door shut after herself. I spent two hours fuming on the couch and made sure I left early for work in the morning. At least I would be appreciated there, I thought.

I arrived at the *Chronicle* to find the office besieged with camera crews and photographers from other media. Our scoop about Wenley Moor and its links to the plague had embroiled the Government in a massive controversy and one minister had already resigned 'to spend more time with his family', with another expected to go later in the day.

I got out of my car, to be surrounded by cameras and other journalists shouting questions at me. It was a strange sensation being the centre of the news instead of being the person asking the questions. I just smiled, said they could read the next chapter of this saga in tomorrow's *Daily Chronicle*, and slipped into the office.

By midday the plague crisis was over, with hospitals overrun by people desperate to get inoculated against the plague now that an antidote was available. The Government announced that Wenley Moor was to be shut down and sealed off immediately. An official investigation was expected to begin any day. Later in the afternoon we had reports from one of our stringers on the moors about a series of explosions in the caves around the research centre. There were also reports that army vehicles marked UNIT had been seen in the area but, as usual, we could get no official confirmation.

I spent the afternoon writing the wrap-up story about the plague crisis and the debilitating effect it would have on the Government in forthcoming elections. The final death toll approached four hundred - nearly twenty of those overseas - and there

was a lot of anger over how such a human disaster could have happened here in Britain. In the end three ministers resigned and the Government itself was mortally wounded by the controversy.

In the *Chronicle* office, senior editorial staff were making murmurings about the investigation being award-winning stuff but I did my best to ignore the speculation. The news editor warned me that I had made a lot of people in high places very angry by pointing out their negligence. 'You be careful, m'boy. They'd love for you to fall flat on your face - so keep your nose clean, know what I mean?'

I was very aware of a lot of resentment towards me from the regular news reporters who had considered my defection to the Features Department a betrayal. Returning to the newsroom for the day to snatch such a juicy scoop from under their noses just added insult to injury. Despite this, several of the cadets who had worked with me on the story were happy to escape Fleet Street for the night and go out for a celebratory drink afterwards round the corner at the Savoy.

We propped up the bar for several hours as I held forth with tales of journalistic derring-do, the liquor turning each succeeding story into a greater exaggeration than the last. At the end of the bar I noticed a stunning redhead listening in to the conversation. She was tall with a figure only held in check by her daringly short black dress.

Eventually I could ignore her no longer and sent the barman off to fetch her a champagne cocktail. She joined our merry group, introducing herself as Natasha. 'That's funny, my - err - my sister's name is Natasha,' I slurred, carefully slipping my wedding ring into my pocket.

'Really,' she replied, arching an eyebrow slyly. She had noticed my action but did not seem to mind the deception. Her eyes sparkled mischievously as she suggested we go up to her room for another drink as the bar was finally closing. It was nearly 2 a.m. and the cadets seemed to melt away as Natasha and I stumbled across reception towards the lifts.

'You know, Noël Coward lives right here at the Savoy - Suite 411. We could go and visit him,' I suggested in a slurred voice. 'I reported on his 70th birthday last week, you know.'

'Let's not,' replied my new friend, grinding the palm of her hand across my crotch. A minute later we were inside her suite. I reached for the telephone to call for room service but she placed her hand on mine, keeping the receiver on its cradle. 'Plenty to drink right here,' she purred, pointing to a drinks cabinet in the corner of the room. 'Why don't you pour me a drink while I freshen up?'

I was still wrestling with the bottle opener when she reappeared from the bathroom, clad in a champagne-coloured robe. The loose ties around her waist seemed to unravel and slide apart with the ease of a rattlesnake uncoiling before it strikes. The silk robe wafted open to reveal her body within, naked and lightly tanned.

Alcohol, lust and flattery are a lethal combination.

* * *

Next morning I awoke strewn across a king-size bed with a hangover that could kill a rhino and a queasy feeling in my stomach. I looked around but the rest of the bed was empty and so was the suite. Mid-morning sunshine dazzled my eyes from between the ornate drapes that had hung open all night. I was in no shape for work so I phoned in sick before getting a cab home. Just before I stepped into the flat I guiltily remembered to slide my wedding ring back on.

Natasha was distraught at my all-night absence. Sure, I had gone out drinking before but I had always managed to get home before dawn. There were tears and accusations and angry words, most of the anger coming from me as I lashed out to conceal the sickening guilt I felt. Natasha flung a plateful of food at me. She had cooked a special meal, as an apology for the previous night and as a celebration.

‘What, of my article?’ I asked selfishly.

‘No, because I thought I might pregnant,’ she sobbed, ‘but it was a false alarm.’ I was furious, telling her we had agreed to wait before starting a family. ‘We agreed! You just decided! I never had any say in the matter!’ she screamed. ‘I thought having a baby might bring us closer together.’

‘Don’t count on it,’ I fumed and stormed out of the flat. A cold week of silences and vicious looks followed before we finally made it up, but all the while the guilt about what I had done at the Savoy lay hunched in my stomach, queasy and depressing.

At work the excitement of the big scoop slowly died away. I worked hard on a series of follow-up stories but nothing much came of them. A farmer’s wife who lived on Wenley Moor was still being treated for shock after claiming to see some sort of lizard walking upright like a man - that did not even make it into the real gutter press.

Finding the source of the plague was another blind alley. The director of the research centre, Doctor Lawrence, was among the victims of the virus and could not be called to account. I managed to get some scientists to speculate that the plague could have been a more common flu virus that was inadvertently mutated at an accelerated rate by radiation emissions from the cyclotron, but it could not be proved. There were also vague similarities found between the killer plague and a mild viral antibody still found in certain African primates, but again nothing could be proved, making another non-story.

The only thing I did manage to get conclusive evidence on was that no experiments into chemical, genetic or other biological weapons had been going on at the research centre. The work at Wenley Moor had been purely about finding new methods of generating cheap electricity. So where had the plague come from? Nobody had any answers.

Something else which fascinated me was what link did UNIT have with Wenley Moor? I firmly believed that UNIT was called in to deal with the crisis there, or may even have precipitated it. But without proof or anyone willing to talk about UNIT for

publication, I had no story. It was definitely time for me to start digging deeper about this so-called ‘intelligence taskforce’.

THREE

December 1969

Just a few weeks after my abruptly curtailed interview with Professor Cornish, the Mars Probe crisis exploded across the headlines. The round-the-clock live broadcasts from the British Space Centre generated incredible tension and soar-away ratings for the newly launched BBC3.

The nation seemed to stand still during the special broadcasts, as the *Recovery 7* craft was sent into space to link up with *Mars Probe 7*. City streets were virtually empty and cinemas complained of a massive drop in attendances. They blamed the Mars Probe crisis - why should people go to the cinema to see simulated drama when the real thing was being beamed directly into their homes 24 hours a day? The event turned presenter John Wakefield into a television star overnight as his intelligent and thoughtful commentary gave simple explanations to the complex manoeuvrings going on behind the scenes.

Like most of Britain, I found myself transfixed by the pictures being sent back from space. I sat in front of the television long into the night, hugging Natasha, as we watched the flickering images.

I hardly need to recall the events in detail - the docking of *Recovery 7* and *Mars Probe 7*, the loss of communications with *Recovery 7* and its return to Earth. At the *Chronicle*, we were left to try and chase the story from the ground - talking to the wives of the missing astronauts, and sitting through official briefings that told us nothing we could not see by watching our own televisions.

Fortunately for us, there were some other newsworthy events taking place. The Government was still slowly falling apart after the plague fiasco, and around London there were a series of violent robberies of radioactive isotopes from nuclear facilities. We did our best to beat these stories up into a major scare about home-grown terrorists gathering parts to build their own nuclear bomb but the public were interested in only one thing - the Mars Probe.

Then the second recovery mission went up. It was while watching this that I spotted a familiar figure lurking at one side of the control room in the British Space Centre - Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart! What the hell was UNIT's involvement in this? Perhaps this was what Professor Cornish had been trying to tip me off about when he terminated our interview.

I telephoned the features editor at his home and urged him to reconsider including UNIT as part of the 'Frontier Science' series of articles I was still researching. Michael Dobbyn had been features editor at the *Chronicle* for little over a year. He had got his start as a cadet at the *Chronicle* a decade before, but defected to the *Mail* for five years where he gained a reputation for hard work and harder play. Still under thirty, he came back to the *Chronicle* as features editor. It proved a difficult assignment, especially as many in the department were more than twenty years his

senior. Despite this, Dobbyn was staging a quiet revolution in Features and fervently hoped to never again be addressed as ‘whipper-snapper’.

I told him I now had proof of UNIT’s involvement in the Mars Probe - the authorities could hardly deny what was being broadcast on national television. Not to mention the whispers about UNIT’s part in the events at Wenley Moor, nor the presence of UNIT in the Ashbridge area just before the terrorist attacks of Black Thursday.

Finally, Michael relented. ‘All right, all right, you can look into UNIT. But be careful, for Christ’s sake. If you’ve had this much trouble up to now trying to get any information about this cloak-and-dagger outfit, imagine how many doors will close once they know you’re after them,’ he warned. So, while the rest of the world waited for a world-wide television link-up about the Mars Probe mission that never came, I was back in the reference library, poring over the old files for any background I could find on UNIT and its origins.

Most intriguing were the links I discovered between UNIT and the so-called secret service ministry, C19. One of my sources, a highly placed member of the intelligence community, confirmed that C19 acted as the official liaison between UNIT and the British Government. I tried to follow this up, but C19 decidedly reluctant about discussing its functions.

I put in numerous requests to the Ministry of Defence, the Home Secretary’s Office and to the United Nations itself for information about UNIT. The most helpful information I got was from UN headquarters in Geneva - they gave me the London street address for UNIT! I made my way to a suitably anonymous building near the high street in Ealing Broadway, expecting at any moment to be firmly rebuffed, or even arrested. Instead a small brass plaque was mounted on the wall outside, with plain block lettering engraved into it: UNITED NATIONS INTELLIGENCE TASKFORCE.

Inside sat a pleasant, smiling receptionist behind a plain desk, with just a simple switchboard the only thing visible on its surface. But I was aware of a series of small, remote-controlled cameras following my every move as I entered the office.

‘How can I help you, sir?’ asked the receptionist.

‘My name’s James Stevens; I’m a journalist with the *Daily Chronicle*. I’d like to speak to Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart.’

‘I’m sorry, but the brigadier is rather busy cleaning up after that business at the space centre. Wasn’t it exciting?’

‘Yes, very,’ I gushed in returned. ‘Do you know when the brigadier will be back?’ She just shook her head. ‘Perhaps there’s somebody else I could talk to?’ Another shake of the head, her pretty blonde curls wagging slightly. ‘How about I leave my card and you could pass it on to the brigadier?’

‘I’m sorry, the brigadier doesn’t speak with the media. But I will tell him of your interest. Thank you for calling,’ she concluded with another triumphant smile. The urge to wipe that smile off her face was almost overwhelming, but violence to a UNIT

receptionist would do me no good. I dropped my calling card on her desk anyway and left, my movements still tracked by the security cameras.

It was just after my visit to the UNIT 'store-front' that I started to notice oddities creeping into my life, almost imperceptibly. Strange extra clicking noises on my telephone at work, then soon afterwards on my home phone lines as well. At first I thought I was imagining it, but then Natasha mentioned the noises as well. She put it down to the telephone engineers who seemed to have been stationed across the road from our flat working on the lines for days on end.

My requests for official information also seemed to be affected. Queries to which I could normally get an answer within hours now took days or even weeks to bring a reply. Some of my most reliable sources within the halls of power became reluctant to talk to me, and certainly not while they were at work.

'The word's been spread James, anyone seen or heard talking to you is *persona non grata*, dear,' whispered Martha, a friend from the Ministry of Science. 'I'd keep my head down if I was you.'

These little niggles did not worry me. I only started to become truly nervous when the phone calls began. Strange messages were left for me at the *Chronicle*, sending me on wild goose chases for meetings with people I had never met but who wanted to give me information. I started receiving information packs at work for all manner of bizarre items: wheelchairs, stair-lifts, home loan offers...

Then the packages began to arrive: scraps of blood-stained clothing, crudely constructed figures of dead soldiers, information packs from funeral houses, and even a smashed and splintered crutch with my initials burnt into the wood. All were accompanied by threatening notes made up of letters clipped out of headlines published in the *Chronicle*. I tried to track down the culprits but there was virtually no way for the Royal Post to find the person responsible. 'I'm sorry, but the postal service is open to abuse,' explained a bored postal manager at the local sorting office. All very petty stuff but it was beginning to mount up, playing on my nerves.

Gradually, little by little, I was becoming more and more paranoid that an active campaign of harassment was being directed against me. I had the feeling of being watched all the time, as if my movements were being tracked by a person or persons unknown. Then the threatening phone calls started.

'Is that James Stevens?' said a male voice with a distinctive lisp.

'Speaking.'

'I understand you're working on a story about UNIT. I might have some information for you...' That got my interest. I grabbed a pen, waiting for the caller to continue. 'Unless you want to spend some time in the Glasshouse, we suggest you go chase another story. This one could be hazardous to your health - permanently, if you know what I mean.'

'Who is this?' I demanded furiously.

‘Just something you could give some thought to...’ the voice trailed off as the receiver clicked, then went dead.

‘Who is this?’ I demanded again impotently before slamming my phone down and cursing out loud. I told the chief reporter about the call but he was dismissive, saying it was probably just some crank. I shifted desks and changed my direct-line phone number the next day, only for more threatening calls to come in on my new number. Eventually the chief reporter took it more seriously and called in the police.

By the time the police arrived in the form of two beat constables I almost felt foolish at having been so easily panicked. I apologized as they checked over my phone and took down the details of the calls. The young WPC was sympathetic, but she said there was little the police could do beyond putting a trace on my line. That would have to be approved by CID and that could take some time, but she promised to get back to me.

Her burly companion remained sour-faced and mono-syllabic throughout the short interview. Just before they left I noticed a glint of metal on his right hand. It was a gold ring with three raised symbols on its surface which read C19. I almost asked him why a beat constable was so conspicuously wearing such an item of jewellery, but his presence was quite intimidating.

The threatening phone calls continued and soon Natasha was receiving them at home too. She said the caller was a man with a lisp and he claimed to have some information about me and my personal habits she might find very revealing. I had our home phone changed to an ex-directory number, but still the calls continued. Natasha called in the police, but they also said their powers were limited in such matters. Eventually we installed a phone that only accepted outgoing calls and employed an answering service to screen out the threats.

Once everything had settled down to normal again, I asked Natasha to describe the police officers who had visited the flat. Their descriptions matched those of the policeman and woman who had visited me at the *Chronicle* office in Fleet Street, despite the fact that both pairs claimed to have come from the local police station. Something very strange and disturbing was going on. Natasha had even noticed the policeman had something written on his signet ring, as she described it.

‘What, like his initials?’ I asked carefully, trying not to let slip my suspicions. She was only just recovering from the phone calls, I did not want her frightened any more.

‘No, it was two numbers and a letter. I think it said C19,’ she replied thoughtfully. ‘I noticed because I thought it odd they had consecutive serial numbers on their epaulettes - C19101 and C19102. Does that mean anything to you?’ I turned away and shook my head, not wanting her to see the fear on my face.

Now I had something new to investigate. I knew about C19’s role as liaison to UNIT, but why was C19 trying to intimidate me? Was there any link between this and UNIT’s role in recent incidents like Black Thursday and the Mars Probe crisis? Was this taskforce a force for good or some secret counter-insurgency agency that

jealously protected its true identity? Could UNIT be fighting terrorism, or was it a covert terrorist force itself?

To find out more about UNIT, I would need to devote myself fully to an investigation of its origins as well as its current status. Citing my 'Frontier Science' feature series, I took a seven-week sabbatical from the *Chronicle* offices to concentrate solely on my UNIT investigations. After nearly two years working non-stop at the *Chronicle*, I had two months holiday owing to me anyway; indeed, my honeymoon with Natasha had been just a weekend in a suite at the Savoy, I recalled guiltily.

I set up a private office in the spare bedroom of the flat, forbade Natasha entry to it, and even barred the cleaning lady from taking out the rubbish. I was determined that there could be no distractions and no chance for anyone to intercept the work I was doing. From now on, all my calls to contacts were made from public call boxes, meetings took place in a different location every time, and I took elaborate steps to make sure I was not being followed.

At times I felt foolish for such paranoid measures, but the threatening phone calls had chilled me to the bone. I had been warned off stories before, but never with such ferocity. I was taking these threats seriously. As the news editor at the *Chronicle* had once told me over a drink, 'If you want to play with the big boys, you've got to be prepared to fight dirty. If they've got things to hide, there are people in this country who are prepared to do anything to protect themselves. Anything.'

* * *

The information I gathered over those seven weeks of intensive detective work came from a variety of sources. It was surprising what information was freely available if you knew where to look for it, while other facts that seemed far more trivial were bound up by the Official Secrets Act and would not see print until long after I was dead. My contacts within various Government ministries and outside agencies proved invaluable, as did the staff at the *Chronicle*'s reference library.

Almost nobody would go 'on the record' to talk about UNIT, its members, or its relationship with C19. Those in official positions were risking their jobs and perhaps much more just by talking to me. Others would only speak in riddles for me to decipher, or merely confirm or deny any facts and suppositions I put to them. One person was willing to talk to me on the record, but how much credence I could place on what she said was another matter. Her name was already a standing joke in Fleet Street.

A rising star in the world of fashion photography, Isobel Watkins was most famous for a series of wild claims she made earlier in 1969 about an attempted alien invasion of Earth. To back up her story, she produced a series of photographs of the alien invaders, which were widely denounced as fakes by various experts of the time. All of this was merely good novelty fodder for the more bizarre end of the Sunday tabloid market. What made me interested in Miss Watkins was an overlooked detail in her claims, namely that UNIT and Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart had been intimately involved in fighting off the extra-terrestrial attackers. Sceptical as I was about her claims, I could hardly ignore them.

I arranged to meet Miss Watkins at her flat in Bloomsbury. It was a chill December evening as I approached the address. After reading a few old clippings describing her alien invasion claims, I had half expected a wild-eyed woman ranting and raving about little green men and monsters from Mars. Instead, Miss Watkins - 'Call me Isobel,' she urged - was sane, sensible and quite beautiful. In her twenties, she was tall and willowy with fine blonde hair cut in a Mary Quant bob. With cheekbones to match those of any model currently on the cat-walk, I could not help but ask why she was not a model herself.

'If I had a pound for every time somebody has used that line on me,' she said. I dug around in my pockets and offered her two of the gleaming new seven-sided fifty pence pieces.

'I know we're not decimalized yet, but will these do?' I replied. She smiled and invited me inside. From the exterior the mansion block containing her flat looked staunchly Victorian, made of stolid brick and mortar. But inside, the flat was a riot of colours, with bean bags piled across the floor and sitar music gurgling in the background. Most fascinating of all were the walls, covered with dozens of photographic blow-ups of her work.

All the faces of the Swinging Sixties were represented: a bleary-eyed Jimi Hendrix; the Rolling Stones releasing three and a half thousand white butterflies at their massive Hyde Park concert from the previous summer; Twiggy and Lulu; Paul McCartney emerging into a near riot of screaming, tearful fans after his marriage to Linda Eastman... Isobel herself appeared several times in self-portraits. 'Cheaper than paying for a model,' she explained before I could comment.

Another striking visage belonged to another girl on Isobel's wall of fame. The face was elfin with intelligent eyes, framed by a square fringe and a wild feather boa. The features were appealing but unfamiliar. 'That's Zoe, a friend who posed for me,' Isobel said.

Finally, there was the series of big, grainy black and white pictures that had brought this young photographer so much grief and ridicule. Each showed a tall, metallic figure looming menacingly in what appeared to be a tunnel or sewer pipe. They looked like men dressed up in rubber suits and metal masks that had been sprayed with silver paint. Yet the figures were quite intimidating, with a chilling, inhuman quality.

'These are the extra-terrestrials I photographed,' said Isobel matter-of-factly. There was no shame or embarrassment, no hint of deceit or hyperbole about her words or her manner, just utter candour. I decided to test her resolve, to see how she would react to having her claims thrown back in her face.

'Photographs which every expert in Britain says are fakes and cheap forgeries,' I challenged. She did not flinch or become angry.

'I know,' she said resignedly. The pretty young woman in the daringly short mini-skirt carefully folded herself onto a bean bag and invited me to sit opposite her. 'But

they aren't fakes, they're as real as you or I. You try taking photographs in a dark sewer with virtually no lighting while being attacked by an inhuman killer from another world and we'll see how good your pictures are!'

I sat down and explained about my investigation. She had told her story a hundred times, but would she retell it to me. Perhaps there was some detail she had missed before, some fragment that could help me prove what she was saying was true? Reluctantly, Isobel agreed, outlining her tale for me.

The extra-terrestrials tried to conquer Earth in the spring of 1969 and nearly succeeded, she said. They put the whole world into an hypnotic trance for several hours and began seizing control of crucial power and communications centres around the globe. Only the international fighting forces of UNIT had been able to stop them, led by Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart. Isobel said that she had accompanied UNIT on several of its missions and had even made friends with some of its secret operatives.

'Who were they?' I asked. So far Isobel had told me nothing new - she was about to change that.

'Well, there's Zoe, who you've already seen,' replied the photographer, gesturing back at the elfin face on her wall. 'She was a genius at maths. Then there was a Scots lad, Jamie, who wore a kilt all the time. He was a real Scotsman,' said Isobel, a quiet smile on her lips. 'And, of course, the Doctor.'

'Who?'

'The Doctor,' she replied. 'I think Zoe said his name was Doctor John Smith, but everyone just called him the Doctor. Do you know him?'

'I've never heard of him before. What does he look like?'

'Short, crumpled, quite cute actually - he had his hair just like the Beatles used to, in a mop-top.'

'And what did this trio do?'

'A lot of running around, really. I got the impression they knew an awful lot more about these invaders than anyone else. The Brigadier seemed to know him and Jamie from a previous meeting,' said Isobel. 'The Doctor, Jamie and Zoe turned up out of nowhere, helped UNIT save the entire planet and then just disappeared again.' She stood up and indicated it was time for me to leave. 'It's not that I mind talking about what happened, I just know you'll never find any proof to back me up. They've covered their tracks far too well.'

'Who has covered their tracks - the Doctor and the others?'

'Everyone. The British Government, the super powers, UNIT, those bastards at C19-'

'C19?' I asked. 'What has C19 got to do with this?'

Isobel sighed, pushing a few strands of hair out of her face before continuing wearily. 'Afterwards, when it was all over and I went public with my story, I started getting threatening phone calls from a man with a lisp. He dropped heavy hints that he was from C19 and I should keep my mouth shut or else.'

'What happened?'

'Well, suddenly my photos were being derided across the media as fakes. It's taken me months to get any new photographic work; none of the agencies will touch me because of all the stories about me in the papers. It's as if someone has put me on some kind of invisible blacklist. I even lost my boyfriend because of C19: they said his career with the army was in jeopardy if he kept seeing me!'

'Has the harassment stopped yet?'

'I think so. At least the phonecalls have stopped,' she said wearily. 'Look, I've got to go out and drag my portfolio around the agencies again. If you need any more information, you know where to call me, okay?'

I soon found myself standing outside her flat, my mind racing as it tried to absorb the significance of what Isobel had told me. I stumbled down the stairs and out into the chill early evening air. I had to find a drink and a quiet corner in which to think. My gaze wandered up and down the tree-lined avenue, looking for the familiar hanging sign of a pub.

My eyes settled on a black Jaguar car parked opposite Isobel's building. The windows were tinted but the flare of a match lighting inside the vehicle outlined the features of its male occupant. His face was the same as the burly 'policeman' who had come to see me at the *Chronicle* and who had been to my flat as well. I swore under my breath and strode off quickly towards Russell Square, glancing back only once to see if I was being followed. But the car remained opposite Isobel's flat.

Soon afterwards I was grimly clutching a pint of bitter in a pub on Marchmont Street, the Lord John Russell. The appearance of the C19 operative outside Isobel's building had scared the hell out of me. Was he there watching her or me? The threatening phone calls to me had stopped but had the covert surveillance I was sure had been going on also ceased? The fact that Isobel Watkins had also been the victim of harassment by C19 was almost reassuring, because it showed I had not been imagining the whole thing. But it just made me all the more paranoid, because now the stakes were being raised.

There was more at risk here than just my reputation, there were others at risk from this conspiracy. What the hell was being covered up? A single, terrible secret or a series of incidents? Could this just be part of some ongoing covert intelligence work by the Government, directed through the likes of C19 and UNIT?

I forced myself to put this unhelpful speculation to one side and focus on what Isobel had told me. I could not believe her story about alien invaders, it was just too fantastic. But like many legends and religious tales, there were obviously some truths

hidden within the elaborate fantasy she had concocted. Just how much was I willing to believe?

The strangest part of Isobel's story was how much she believed in it. There was no hyperbole to what she said; she was not trying to cast herself as the hero or play up her role in the events she described. She spoke of this 'invasion' with complete and utter conviction. But who were this Doctor John Smith and his two friends? Were they operatives of UNIT, of C19, or some other, as yet unknown agency? All of these questions I had to find answers for if my feature about UNIT was to see print.

I pieced together the information in the chapter that follows painstakingly over the months of December 1969 and January 1970. The Christmas and New Year's breaks that year were a blur of secret meetings and quiet whispers in corners at ministerial office parties, with gifts that consisted of bundles of sealed documents wrapped inside elaborately shaped parcels.

I finally sat down at the end of January 1970 and assembled the facts available into a rough chronological order. I was attempting to chart the events and principal people who lead to the formation of UNIT, and what that covert organisation's real activities were, as far as I could determine.

A new decade had begun and it was time for some home truths to be uncovered. What follows is the article I prepared for publication in the *Daily Chronicle*. These were my findings on the truth about UNIT, based on the facts, documented evidence and eye witness statements I had accumulated at the time.

FOUR

The UNIT Dossier

The United Nations Intelligence Taskforce is a covert paramilitary organisation which operates in plain view of the public, yet seems to arouse no suspicion. It is funded in the United Kingdom by the British taxpayer, yet is directly linked to the United Nations. It draws its troops from the regular British armed forces, yet seems to have no liaison with NATO or the objectives of NATO. And it has been involved with most of the great crises to face Britain in the past five years while remaining virtually anonymous.

You will rarely, if ever, see the name UNIT published in any newspaper report, nor hear it broadcast by any radio station or television network. This intelligence taskforce seems to operate from the shadows of British society, while the repercussions of its actions have affected every man, woman and child in the country.

Origins: the Intrusion Counter Measures Group

UNIT has its roots in the Intrusion Counter Measures Group, which was formed in 1961. The ICMG was charged with the task of protecting the UK from covert actions by hostile powers, and with mounting intelligence operations against such a threat. The person given the job of making this role a realistic and attainable goal was Group Captain Ian 'Chunky' Gilmore, seconded from the newly formed Royal Air Force Regiment.

A no-nonsense forces man, Gilmore had spent the war flying missions over enemy territories. He had witnessed the obliteration bombing of Dresden and tried to push it to the back of his mind. Those who served with him say he believed in Queen and country, and in doing what was right. A stiff upper lip and a trusty service revolver could see you through most crises. An authority figure and pure Establishment, he was sometimes a figure of fun amongst his men who christened him 'Chunky' for no reason that was apparent to Gilmore himself. Tall and upright, he maintained a well-trimmed flyer's moustache and was never to be found with a button out of place or unpolished on his uniform.

Gilmore spent most of 1962 and 1963 preparing his troops for the unknown and drafting in certain specialists to

assist the ICMG, using the Peacetime Emergency Powers Act when necessary. Among those he hand-picked to aid him was Professor Rachel Jensen. Hardly known outside the scientific community, Jensen is only now being recognised as one of the leading figures of her time.

Part of the Cambridge Group, she worked with Turing on code breaking and ciphers during the Second World War. Later she moved to the British Rocket Group where pioneering work was being done on propulsion systems and rocket guidance arrays. Then, in November 1963, Jensen was pulled out of Cambridge and forced to travel to London to join the ICMG as senior scientific adviser.

Her autobiography, *The Electrical Dreamer*, makes plain her dislike for all things military, so it is doubtful she went to the ICMG without protest. But the same volume makes no mention of her time with Gilmore's group and is curiously vague about her reasons for retiring in 1964 while still in her early forties.

The Shoreditch Incident

A major factor in her decision seems to have been an event called the Shoreditch Incident in the few declassified secret documents that even mention it. This crisis is one of the few events in recent history that can be traced directly to the formation of UNIT.

The Shoreditch Incident took place just one week after the assassination of America's President John F. Kennedy. As a bullet blew open his head in Dallas, Texas, it was 12.30 p.m. on Friday 22 November 1963. Thousands of miles away at that moment in England, it was a dark, foggy evening with winter drawing in fast. In the Shoreditch suburb of East London, two school teachers left the local Coal Hill School together.

They told a colleague they were going to visit one of their pupils, Susan Foreman, at her home address of 76 Totters Lane. The pair subsequently disappeared, as did the fifteen-year-old girl. Police investigations at the time showed the address at Totters Lane to be an abandoned junkyard. Later checks found that the girl's references and reports from previous schools were all clever forgeries. There was doubt that Foreman was even her true surname. The police suspected that she had adopted the name from the junkyard she claimed as her home address. Susan had only been at the school a few months and seemed to have had difficulty making friends. Those other pupils she did talk to described her

afterwards as strange, but remembered she had mentioned living with her grandfather.

The sudden disappearance of the two staff members in the middle of term was much more of a shock. Ian Chesterton was a science teacher, well liked by the pupils and regarded by his colleagues as a sensible and intelligent professional. Barbara Wright was a history teacher at Coal Hall, considered more stiff and formal, less able to bond with the students, but still genuinely concerned about their welfare. Both were single and there had been staff room speculation that romance could be on the horizon for the pair. Their sudden disappearance was totally out of character. Despite extensive searches and appeals for assistance, no trace of them could be found.

(Even more bizarre was the pair's reappearance in London during the summer of 1965, nearly two years later. They claimed they had gone off to become missionaries in Central Africa. Wright returned to teaching but soon abandoned secondary schools to become a university lecturer on history, specialising in the Aztec period of Central American history. Chesterton also shifted to varsity work, gained a professorship within a year and was soon presenting controversial but highly regarded papers to international conferences. He specialized in astronomy but showed expertise across a wide range of fields that seemed astounding for a former school science teacher. The pair later married.)

The strange disappearance of the two teachers and the schoolgirl were overshadowed a week later by the Shoreditch Incident. The ICMG was called in and a flurry of despatches was sent back and forth between Group Captain Gilmore and High Command. A handful of these documents have been declassified and these make mention of an emergency centred around the junkyard at 76 Totters Lane and the Coal Hill School. Every man, woman and child living or working within a three-mile radius of those two sites was evacuated by the ICMG under the Peacetime Nuclear Accident Provisions.

Another document which had not yet been declassified, calls upon the D-notice committee to prepare a cover story. Newspapers of the time describe an explosion linked to a gas leak in the basement at Coal Hill School and the detonation of an unexploded Second World War bomb found in a nearby builder's yard. Five workmen and the owner of the yard, Mr Ratcliffe, were accidentally killed by the detonation. No explanation was ever offered of how the men came to be within the evacuated area.

Few details of what actually occurred during the 48 hours of the emergency have been made public. A few facts can be gleaned from personal documents relating to the incident, such as dairy entries and private letters. Most of these documents have been heavily censored by the D-notice committee, but several make mention of an individual called 'the Doctor'. He is described as a short, quirkily dressed man, with a slight Scottish accent and immense intelligence.

Several people intimately involved with the Shoreditch Incident give the Doctor much of the credit for its resolution. Not directly tied with the ICMG, he appeared as the crisis began and left just as abruptly when it was over. Throughout, he was accompanied by a teenage girl known only by the nickname 'Ace'. Their authorization or origins remain a mystery.

(The appearance of this pair during the Shoreditch Incident is the first documented occurrence of something hereafter known as the 'Doctor syndrome'. More about this will be discussed later in this dossier.)

It is known that several troops seconded to the ICMG died during the Shoreditch Incident and were subsequently given full military honours at their burials. But one of those who died, Sergeant Mike Smith, was denied a military funeral for unspecified reasons and was buried privately by his family five days later in a nearby cemetery. Residents were not allowed back into the area for a full week after the emergency.

Following the Shoreditch Incident, Group Captain Gilmore campaigned for the establishment of a permanent rapid-reaction team to cope with such emergencies, a taskforce to supercede the limited ICMG facilities. His efforts are documented in a series of memos and secret reports that were effectively ignored for another three years. By this time the ICMG had been disbanded - ironically, just before it would be most needed.

The C-Day fiasco

In the summer of 1966, London was in the grip of the Swinging Sixties. Carnaby Street and the King's Road were the places for fashion, people shopped at Biba, Habitat and Mary Quant, and avidly listened to the new album from the Beatles. In science too, London was a world leader. An example of Britain's cutting edge status was to be C-

Day, a plan to link all the computers in the world on a single day - 16 July 1966.

The centrepiece for the experiment was WOTAN, a startling new computer housed in the recently completed Post Office Tower. The brainchild behind the C-Day project was Professor Brett, creator of WOTAN. After much advance publicity in the media, C-Day itself proved to be a fiasco for the Government. Professor Brett had what was described as a 'slight nervous breakdown' and C-Day was abandoned at the last minute, much to the Government's embarrassment.

Curiously, just as C-Day approached, the area surrounding the Post Office Tower and parts of Covent Garden were evacuated for what were officially described as 'army exercises'. There was also a sudden upsurge in headaches and time taken off because of severe migraines among people working in the area around the Post Office Tower. Some are reported to have suffered memory losses and mental instability for years afterwards. No compensation was ever offered to those afflicted by the events of C-Day.

This minor incident was the second reported case of Doctor syndrome. Writing in his recent memoirs, noted civil servant Sir Charles Summer made reference to the C-Day fiasco. He said the public failed to realise the magnitude of the disaster averted and gave much of the credit for this narrow escape to the efforts of an aged but spritely scientist he knew only as 'the Doctor'.

Summer described this person as an English gentleman in his early sixties, with 'imperious white hair swept back from his face and reaching almost to collar length, with haughty features and piercing eyes that burned with intelligence and wit'. Summer added that the Doctor was assisted by a young sailor called Ben and Professor Brett's secretary, Polly. Once the clearing up after C-Day had begun, the Doctor simply disappeared.

I have labelled this repeated motif the Doctor syndrome. Someone claiming to be called the Doctor arrives just before a crisis happens, accompanied by one or more young assistants. They quickly become embroiled in the action, then simply melt away when the incident is settled and questions start being asked.

The Doctor syndrome: other examples

Tenacious cross-checking of thousands of documents has turned up other examples of the Doctor syndrome. During a still-classified incident at a secret naval base on the coast of Northumberland during the Second World War, a man called the Doctor appeared who matches the description of the like-named individual at the Shoreditch Incident. On both these occasions he was accompanied by a teenage girl known as Ace. Incredibly, the sightings are some twenty years apart. This Doctor reappeared again in 1959 during a security alert at an holiday camp in South Wales, but this time was accompanied by a young woman with a very different physical description, known as 'Mel'.

More recently, the police were called to investigate a case of holiday fraud at Gatwick Airport in July 1966. Among those believed to be involved was a man known as the Doctor, but his appearance was completely different from either of the 'Doctors' already cited.

The civilian who tipped off the police about the fraud, Samantha Briggs, described the Doctor as a short man with a mournful face and dishevelled clothing. She said he had a 'blurred' English accent that defied categorization and seemed incredibly well informed. He was accompanied by a young Scots lad in a kilt, called 'Jamie'.

Most bizarrely, this person calling himself the Doctor was present at Gatwick Airport on the same day Sir Charles Summer describes being in the company of his white-haired elderly Doctor in Central London - 20 July 1966.

The person described by Samantha Briggs is hereafter called 'the Gatwick Doctor'. He reappeared just a month later, during the infamous nerve gas scare on the London Underground. Secret documents place the Gatwick Doctor in the tunnels during the worst part of the crisis, where he assisted one Colonel Alistair Gordon Lethbridge-Stewart...

The formation of UNIT

It was the closure of the entire London Underground network and subsequent evacuation of Central London during the nerve gas panic of August 1966, that led directly to the subsequent birth of UNIT. Despatches compliment the efforts of Lethbridge-Stewart, then a colonel in the regular Army, during the crisis. He commanded the troops who remained behind in the dangerous

area of contamination when Central London was completely evacuated.

While the nerve gas incident was quietly explained away by authorities, research now shows the capital was in grave jeopardy from an unidentified enemy. The nerve gas 'leak' on the London Underground, which subsequently spread above ground to form a deadly web-like fog, may have been much more than the 'industrial accident' it was labelled at the time. Later despatches between Lethbridge-Stewart and his superiors indicate this to be a cover story issued to hide the true facts of what really happened. As with most incidents involving the Doctor, the real facts remain frustratingly elusive.

It now seems that Lethbridge-Stewart used the favourable response to his efforts in containing the nerve gas disaster as a chance to revive the idea first put forward three years earlier by Group Captain Gilmore of the ICMG.

This time the concept was given a more receptive hearing, but the Government still refused to plough taxpayers' money into a fighting force that could stand idle for months or years at a time. Incensed at this attitude, it seems Lethbridge-Stewart risked his military career to go over the heads of the politicians and direct to the National Security Council of the United Nations.

He flew to New York in 1967 and gave a closed-door briefing to key members of the Security Council. It is not known what he told them, but aides recall that their senior officials left the briefing ashen-faced. The council voted overwhelmingly in favour of Lethbridge-Stewart's proposal, with only Great Britain abstaining. It took another eighteen months, but by early 1969 Lethbridge-Stewart was permanently seconded to head-up the British arm of the newly formed United Nations Intelligence Taskforce. He was promoted to Brigadier against the wishes of Britain's armed forces leaders and given limited powers to seal off areas, request troops and equipment from the regular Army, and engage in combat with live ammunition in extreme situations. He had to report to a UN Secretary in Geneva, but also had to answer to the British Prime Minister. UNIT would maintain a day-to-day liaison with the Government through its intelligence ministry, C19.

Talk to any senior-ranking officer in the British Army about Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart and you will probably hear a torrent of obscenities. Although none can fault his tactical skills, he is much criticized for breaking

the chain of command and trying to set up his own 'little tin-pot army', as one senior general put it. Even those who trained with him as cadets describe Lethbridge-Stewart as highly ambitious.

First blood

The United Nations Intelligence Taskforce first went into action in the spring of 1969. Records show that it was still in the process of acquiring a permanent headquarters at this time. Instead, the fledgling fighting force based itself out of a Hercules transport plane. Fragmentary documents from the flight logs show that UNIT was investigating Tobias Vaughn and his International Electromatics empire weeks before Vaughn's mysterious death and the subsequent collapse of IE.

Shocking claims made by UNIT to justify their investigation included allegations that Vaughn was holding prominent scientists against their will and threatening the families of others to make them comply with his wishes; that IE's breakthrough piece of new technology, the micro-monolithic chip, was actually a mind-control device; and that Vaughn was in league with some greater power that was supplying him with this cutting-edge technology so he could distribute the micro-monolithic chip around the world, thus enabling some unspecified 'masterplan' to be enacted.

Little or no evidence was supplied to back up these claims, nor has any since come to light. Vaughn's associate, Ashley Chapel, has consistently refused to comment about Vaughn, IE, or UNIT - who or what is he afraid of? One fact that has been concealed up until now can be revealed: the Gatwick Doctor was intimately involved with UNIT during the IE investigation. He was using the name Doctor John Smith but was more commonly just called 'the Doctor'. Eyewitness reports place him at the scene of Tobias Vaughn's death - what involvement did the Gatwick Doctor have in this? Could it have been murder?

It is known that UNIT soldiers attacked Vaughn's factory outside London and Vaughn himself died during the attack. 'Killed accidentally in an explosion' was the final verdict of the coroner, but there were whispers in the coroner's office of irregularities about the corpse, and these were hushed up after pressure was brought to bear on the coroner by Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart himself.

It is known that much of the new technology pioneered by IE was split between Ashley Chapel and Professor Ralph Cornish, and the latter subsequently used by the British Space Centre to forge a lead in the space race. There is also incontrovertible evidence that UNIT was deeply involved with the subsequent Mars Probe crisis. What is the true link between the collapse of IE and the suddenly accelerated British space programme? Was UNIT merely 'mopping up' after the failure of IE, or did the intelligence taskforce force the collapse of the company so it could seize this much sought-after new technology for its own, unknown ends?

Offence, not defence?

Why would a so-called intelligence taskforce have enough firepower at its command to start and sustain a small war? Why would it have access to some of the most sophisticated and top secret weaponry currently available anywhere in the world? Why would such a taskforce have cells based in every major military power in the world, when no single country maintains an embassy in all of those same countries, not even the superpowers? What is the real agenda behind the work of UNIT?

According to the highly restricted and brief mission-statement outlining UNIT's functions, the taskforce will 'react, assess and respond to outside threats.' But if UNIT is based in every major country on the globe, from where are these 'outside threats' expected to come? Terrorist groups and well-armed religious fundamentalist movements? Or perhaps there is some other threat the world is facing that has not yet been disclosed to the public?

UNIT's true agenda remains hidden behind a cloak of secrecy, and a veil of threats and intimidation to any who dare look into its real nature. Just as intriguing is the group of *agent provocateurs* known as 'the Doctor'. This name appears to be a codename or secret designation for operatives working covertly in times and areas of crisis. But for whom do these agents work? Documented sightings of the Doctor pre-date the formation of UNIT, yet the Doctor has been intimately involved in several crucial UNIT operations.

Who is Doctor John Smith and for whom does he work? One possibility is C19, the intelligence services ministry. Could the Doctor be a C19 operative who liaises with UNIT? Or is the link between UNIT and C19 far more sinister?

Whatever the answer to these questions, the very secrecy with which UNIT protects itself speaks volumes about the offensive nature of UNIT's true function. Until that shroud of secrecy is lifted, this sinister force remains within our midst, unexplained, unchallenged, and effectively uncontrolled.

FIVE

February 1970

What you have just read was my three and a half thousand word article to be published in the *Daily Chronicle*. After seven weeks spent researching, writing and assembling my UNIT dossier, it was time for me to return to work. I had decided to rename my series of articles 'Bad Science', after all the embarrassments, failures, and massively expensive blunders that I had uncovered during my time researching UNIT's shady background. I talked the idea through with my features editor who readily agreed.

'Actually, we've been hearing whispers about some secret project near Eastchester that's gone horribly wrong, nicknamed 'Inferno'. Nobody's been able to get the real story, but with your contacts...' Michael suggested. I needed no more prompting.

My sources inside the Ministry of Science for once had plenty to say about this topic. It seemed the Government had poured millions into a project to drill into the Earth's core, releasing the superheated natural gases inside that could power a thousand turbines, providing a seemingly inexhaustible supply of cheap electricity.

But something had gone very wrong at Inferno. The guiding force behind it, Professor Eric Stahlman, had died trying to make his dream a reality, along with several technicians. The project director, Sir Keith Gold, had resigned his post with the Ministry of Science and was saying nothing about events at Inferno. But my old friend Martha had a possible contact.

'You could try Greg Sutton. He's an Australian drilling consultant Sir Keith brought in to try and make Stahlman see sense. Sutton's not afraid of D-notices. If you can find him, he might just talk.'

Finding Sutton proved difficult enough. A friend in immigration confirmed that my quarry had not left the country, while someone else at the British Science Museum thought he could be living in Kent. I eventually tracked him down by chance, while visiting Professor Stahlman's former assistant, Petra Williams.

An attractive woman in her late twenties with ash-blonde hair, she was cleaning out Stahlman's office in the Mechanical Engineering Block at Imperial University in South Kensington when I arrived. She declined to talk about what had happened at Inferno and said she had no idea where Greg Sutton was. I noticed she kept nervously glancing at her watch, so I stalled as long as I possibly could. Finally, she snapped.

'Look, I don't know where bloody Greg Sutton is and I don't care, all right? Now get out of here before I call security,' she shouted.

'That's not very nice,' drawled a nasal voice behind me. I turned to find a tall, heavily-built man in casual tan-coloured shirt and jeans standing in the doorway. 'Bloody Greg Sutton now, is it? That's not what you were saying last night, Petra.'

Miss Williams's face sank and I realized why she had been so desperate to get me out of the office: she was due to meet Greg Sutton here and he had just arrived.

Never one to miss an opportunity, I stepped forward to the new arrival with a hand extended in greeting. 'You must be Greg Sutton. My name's James Stevens.'

Sutton's face broke into a smile as he shook my hand. 'I'd know that accent anywhere, you must be a Kiwi. How long you been over?'

'Nearly two years. I came -'

'He's a reporter, Greg,' interrupted Petra. The smile faded from Sutton's face. 'He came here to see if I knew where you might be. He's doing a story about Inferno.'

'That's right. I understand you two worked on it together,' I chipped in, trying my best to be pleasant and friendly, to defuse any angry scenes before they started.

'Yeah, that's right,' Sutton nodded. The young woman, who was obviously his lover walked over to him and slipped an arm around his waist before he could say any more.

'Greg, you know we're not allowed to talk about it.'

'You might not be able to but we don't pay much attention to Pommie D-notices where I come from. So I don't see why I shouldn't give this fella his story. Besides, he'll probably never believe a word of it anyways.' Sutton turned back to me. 'Look, do you want to go to a pub or something to talk? There's a good little bar down a mews a couple of streets away where we can talk.'

'I'd love to,' I enthused. After so long listening to off-the-record sources and contacts who would only speak in enigmatic riddles, it would be refreshing to hear some straight talking. Petra decided to stay behind and finish the packing. That way she would not be part of any illegal disclosure of restricted information.

A few minutes later I was seated opposite Sutton in a small public house called the Queen's Arms. Two pints of lager stood between us and I had my pen and notebook, ready for anything - or so I thought. Sutton spun a tale that could have stepped straight off the page of a science fiction potboiler, about a mad scientist with his crackpot scheme, an old Government buffer trying to reign the madman in, and of a green slime oozing out of the drill shaft that turned men into primordial monsters.

About halfway through I stopped taking notes and just listened. It was hard to tell if Sutton was just winding me up, but he seemed to genuinely believe this fanciful yarn he was telling. Only when he mentioned the name of another independent consultant at Project Inferno did my pen snap back to attention.

'The wildest part had to be this guy there, the Doctor, who said -'

'What? What did you say?' I blurted out.

‘The Doctor, Doctor John Smith. He was another one of the consultants Sir Keith had brought in to monitor Stahlman. I think he came down with the Brigadier and UNIT when they arrived -’

‘UNIT were there?’ I blurted again.

‘Yeah, that’s right,’ Sutton laughed. ‘You better have another drink mate. Judging by the look on your face you need it.’

I took his advice and then invited him to continue.

‘This Doctor, he dressed like he’d just gotten out of some carnival or something. Frilly white shirts, a velvet smoking jacket -’

‘How old was he? What did his face look like?’ I interrupted.

‘Don’t know, about fifty I guess. His face was kinda lived in, nose a bit beaky, and his eyes - they could bore a hole through metal,’ replied Sutton. ‘Anyway, without the Doctor’s help we never would have stopped Stahlman before it all went too far. But boy could that guy come out with some whoppers. He told us he’d travelled to - now, let me see if I can remember this right - he’d been transported to a parallel dimension where the history was different and where Inferno had caused the entire planet to split apart. Something like that.’ The Australian laughed. ‘Craziest story I ever heard but at least he helped us stop Stahlman.’

At this point Petra Williams found us in the pub and took Sutton away with her. They were planning to leave the country any day. I wished them well for their future together.

‘Don’t know what you’ll make of that story, but good luck anyway,’ replied Sutton as he left. I remained behind for another ten minutes, staring at my half-finished pint without really seeing it.

If Sutton’s story was to be believed - and parts of it were too bizarre for me to even contemplate seriously - that meant there was a fourth person going by the codename ‘the Doctor’. Even more startling, Sutton’s description of this Doctor was a perfect fit for the astronaut that Professor Ralph Cornish and British Space Control had sent up on *Recovery 7*’s second rescue mission to *Mars Probe 7*. Just like the Gatwick Doctor, this one also went by the codename of Doctor John Smith.

It all tied together neatly, perhaps too neatly. But how could I take this part of Sutton’s story as truth while dismissing the rest as unbelievable? In the end, I could not find a way to resolve the dilemma. I finished my pint and headed home to Chelsea.

Natasha and I had been through a rough patch but we seemed to be coming through it at last. I looked forward to going home at nights now, and I definitely could not have said that just a few months before.

* * *

The next week I spent at the *Chronicle*, putting the finishing touches to my 'Bad Science' feature series. The news editor had gotten wind of some of my bombshells and requested a front page lead for the Monday morning edition to really hammer our exclusive revelations home.

'Something juicy, you know the sort of thing, m'boy: GOVT. BUNGLES BILLIONS ON MAD SCIENTISTS - YOUR TAXES SQUANDERED ON CRAZY SCIENCE DISASTERS,' he explained with a boozy wave of his right hand.

The Editor even commanded the series be trailed below the masthead in the Saturday and Sunday editions just before it started - a rare show of faith in the Features Department.

The first five articles were already written by then, and I went into the *Chronicle* offices on the Saturday afternoon to put some spit and polish on my grand finale, 'The UNIT Dossier'. I was just finishing the closing paragraphs when a call came through to my phone.

'Good afternoon, Mr Stevens. I did so enjoy your article about the killer virus and Wenley Moor,' purred the voice into my ear. It was my anonymous source - the first time he had called in nearly three months. 'I understand you're working on a series of articles that should embarrass quite a few important people.'

'That's right - they start on Monday morning,' I replied proudly, before trying to draw the mystery caller out. His true identity, his motives, and his depth of knowledge had worried me for months. Certain contacts I knew I could trust, others you had to take a pinch of salt with whatever they said. Some you could risk your life on.

Sources will tell you secrets for a variety of reasons. Many feel it makes them more important; others do it out of spite or anger or guilt. A few like to play games and are happy to use journalists as their conduit to the outside world. My mystery caller definitely fell into the last category - the one that made me most uncomfortable. I did not like being anybody's message boy: I had higher aspirations.

Never before had I been given such reliable information without even meeting the source face to face. If I could just look into the eyes of the caller, I might have a better idea of how far to trust him. I prided myself on being a good judge of character face to face, but anyone could present a false image over the phone.

'I never got to thank you for your help on Wenley Moor, and I had some questions to ask you about that, Mister, err...?'

'I hope you plan to mention UNIT in your feature series,' smiled the silken voice, elegantly side-stepping my blunt attempt at interrogation.

'Yes, I'm planning a big exposé on UNIT's hidden agenda,' I said, curious how he knew this in advance. I had made sure no one else knew the contents of the 'UNIT Dossier', not even the Editor. So far I had just promised a 'big finish' to the 'Bad Science' series and left it at that.

‘Excellent, most excellent. That should keep them well occupied over the coming months. I must congratulate you Mr Stevens, on a job well done,’ smiled the mystery caller.

‘I did have one problem you could perhaps help me with. Do you know anything about C19 or UNIT’s links with a place called the Glasshouse? I keep getting -’

‘I should be very careful what you ask for, Mr Stevens, or one day you may just get it. Lots of people visit the Glasshouse, but no one ever comes back...’ he whispered before hanging up.

The whole conversation left me feeling very uncomfortable, and I decided to get out of the *Chronicle* offices, making sure to take all my notes about UNIT and C19 with me. I had received no threatening phone calls or other forms of harassment since before Christmas, but this feature series was going to embarrass a whole lot more people than before. Better safe than sorry, I told myself.

Come Monday morning and Fleet Street was abuzz with the *Chronicle*’s ‘Bad Science’ series. Television, radio and the other papers were left scrabbling in our dust, trying to follow up the revelations I had unearthed over the past five months. Many of the other media were too timid to repeat the more daring allegations in the first feature, but I was totally confident about the truth of what I had written.

Every fact published in the article had been triple checked. Unless I had three separate sources who confirmed a fact, I did not include that fact, no matter how much I believed its veracity myself. The *Chronicle*’s lawyers had poured over three different drafts of the first feature for hours before giving their approval. The Editor did not believe the adage ‘Publish and be Damned’; he preferred ‘Publish and Damn Others’.

By noon, questions were being asked in the House. The *Chronicle* had been given a tip-off from its Parliamentary correspondents that several of the more right-wing MPs were planning to bay for blood and I slipped into the Press Gallery to witness the spectacle. My presence sent a ripple through the other reporters, who recognized me from the pubs along Fleet Street, but the other hacks on the *Chronicle* kept a tight formation around me.

This was in the days before BBC3 began its live broadcasts of sessions in the Houses of Parliament, so there was none of the playing to the camera seen now. Instead, this was the last gleaming of the great orators in the House. There were several rousing speeches about facts cited in my feature, which was a general summary of the scientific disasters in Britain over the preceding ten years.

A particularly strong speech came from the backbenches, where Brian Mitchell recalled listening to Harold Wilson’s famous speech about the ‘white heat of technology’ given at the Labour Party Conference in Scarborough in October 1963.

‘You said then we must be ready to think and to speak in the language of our scientific age. Well, if this is the glory of our scientific age, then call me a Luddite!’ thundered Mitchell to great applause.

In an attempt to silence its critics, the Government promised a full inquiry into the 'allegations' made in my article. There were murmurings in the Press Gallery that this could be the straw to break the Government's back altogether. Already leader articles were being crafted around Fleet Street demanding resignations, demanding answers to the questions I had raised. While the rest of the media tried desperately to find new information or a fresh angle on what I had written, I contented myself with a few late polishes on the subsequent articles.

Tuesday's feature delved deeply into the Inferno disaster at Eastchester, which the authorities had previously managed to keep almost a complete secret. The article was trailed with a typically overblown front page lead claiming BAD SCIENCE BLUNDERS ADD 2P TO TAX!, the gist of which threw a few numbers around to create the impression that all the money lost on failed projects could add two pence to the basic rate of tax.

On Wednesday the feature series back-tracked to re-examine the C-Day fiasco and raised questions about the rise of computers in society, while Thursday re-opened the wounds of the Wenley Moor plague. By this time two Government Ministers had resigned and a third was about to be forced out. But the blood-letting did not satisfy the critics, who sensed a mortal wounding of the Prime Minister's authority. Word from the House suggested a summer election, perhaps June - one last desperate roll of the dice.

In the newsroom there was talk of my articles being submitted as a late entry for the National Newspaper Awards, which were due to be announced the following week. I was happy to have the attention, but dubious about entering my work. 'Don't be such a magnanimous prick, any award's worth another grand on your asking price!' the news editor berated me. I took his advice and posted copies of the features in before leaving the office on Thursday night. Just before leaving the building I dropped my copy for the final feature, 'The UNIT Dossier', into the basket on the features sub-editor's desk for him to see first thing on Friday.

* * *

I got up the next morning to discover something curious at the end of my latest feature. Below a searching exposé about the flaws in the planning of the Mars Probe series, a small black box had appeared. Reversed-out in white was a simple wrap-up line: THIS IS THE FINAL ARTICLE IN THE 'BAD SCIENCE' SERIES. THE FEATURE PLANNED FOR TOMORROW'S EDITION OF THE DAILY CHRONICLE WILL NOW NOT BE PUBLISHED.

Forsaking breakfast I headed straight to the office to confront the features editor. 'What the hell is going on? Who pulled my article, Michael?' I yelled at him. He was getting a cup of black coffee from the canteen and refused to answer my questions until he got back to his office. I followed him inside and he shut the door behind me before sinking into the swivel chair behind his desk.

'Jesus, Michael, you look like shit,' I gasped, finally looking at his face instead of just shouting at him. He seemed to have aged overnight, his short black hair streaked with grey. Uncharacteristic stubble speckled his chin and dark rings encircled his eyes.

Sweat stains were visible around the armpits of his white shirt and his tie hung limply around his neck.

Michael looked at me wearily. 'Yeah, well, I feel worse,' he eventually replied before gesturing at his desk. It was strewn with dozens of pieces of copy-paper, each covered in a spidery scrawl of handwriting, with words written, crossed out and rewritten many times over. The floor around the desk was littered with further crumplings of paper and torn up sheets of carbon. I recognized a few snatches of the original type-written text on some of the pages as my own work and my heart sank. It was my UNIT feature, my masterpiece.

'What happened?' I asked limply, already guessing the answer.

'First thing I knew was a phone call to my house at midnight. Seems the Editor had wandered into features, browsed through the in-tray and found your feature for Saturday's paper. Next minute I'm getting a missile in my ear and the second edition is being re-made to delete any and all mention of your article. I've been in all night rewriting, trying to find a way to save the piece,' he explained.

'And?'

Michael just shook his head.

I should have been angry, but right then I just felt sorry for Michael. We had become friends during my short time upstairs in Features and I wanted to apologize for putting him through the grinder. He had shown a lot of faith in me during preparation of this series and given me a lot more slack than most editors would have countenanced. Now he was being repaid for his trust with misery and humiliation.

'What reason was given for pulling the feature?'

'What reason? What reason!? Jesus, James, have you read this?' Michael grabbed up a sheaf of pages and shook them in front of my face, the veins bulging on his temples. 'You didn't think we'd actually be able to run this, did you? Does the phrase D-notice mean anything to you? What about libel? Defamation, does that word ring any bells?'

He raved on for another few minutes in similar tones before running out of steam. I let him abuse me, let him get it out of his system. God knows I deserved every word of it, but it had just never occurred to me the feature could cause any trouble. Naïve, really, but I had felt like a crusader for truth, and almost invulnerable. Now the reality of my situation was causing an ugly nausea in my gut. All I felt was sick and scared.

A polite rap at the door and the Editor's secretary entered. A small, mousy woman, Jane knew more about what was going on with the paper and its staff than the Editor did. If you were getting a raise or getting fired, chances were she knew about it long before you did. 'Michael, the Editor would like to see you. Oh, James, you're here, good. You'd better come and wait in my office; he wants to see you next.'

Michael stood up, straightened his tie with the resignation of a man who knows his fate has already been decided, and marched resolutely out of his office without

looking back. Jane looked at me with eyes full of sympathy and walked quietly after the features editor. I followed sheepishly behind, like a naughty schoolboy who has been caught out and is on his way to see the headmaster.

Jane's office was a small, oak-panelled ante-room to the Editor's office. She busied herself with some filing while I spent an uncomfortable few minutes listening to the sound of shouting from next door. The barrage of noise was going all one way, pausing only for the occasional murmur in reply. The wooden walls muffled the words but the meaning was clear. Michael was getting the dressing-down of his life and I was next.

After a prolonged silence the dark-stained door opened, light glinting on the brass plaque with the word EDITOR engraved into it. Michael beckoned me inside. I had never been into the Editor's office before and could not help glancing around to take in my surroundings. All around the wood-panelled walls black-and-white photographic portraits of previous editors looked down sternly on proceedings.

The current incumbent was seated behind a vast mahogany desk that was completely clean, barring a brass and green-glassed desk lamp and a single sheet of paper with the *Chronicle's* letterhead clearly visible at the top. Just two paragraphs were typed on the page, but these were partially concealed beneath the Editor's clasped hands. Michael was already seated opposite his superior on a stiff-backed wooden chair, and an empty chair was awaiting me beside him. I sat down without waiting to be told and regarded the figure opposite me.

Peter Wise had been Editor of the *Daily Chronicle* for twelve years, having been Deputy Editor for four years before that. Now in his early fifties, he had begun as a cadet reporter before quickly rising through the ranks via General News, the police round, the Business Section, a stint in the Press Gallery at Parliament and finally into senior management. For the *Chronicle*, his rise to the top was unusually quick but the Second World War had cut down many obvious candidates for the post.

In physical appearance Wise was not unlike the stereotypical image of an Oxbridge don. His hair was snow-white and receding, his hands were pink and callous-free and his face was deceptively placid behind the pair of half-moon glasses over which he peered. Only the piercing eyes of flinty blue revealed the killer instinct of the Fleet Street journalist that lurked within this unthreatening exterior. His visits to the newsroom were rare, but the sharpness of the Editor's tongue when riled was legendary. Perversely, I found myself wondering why he was always called the Editor with a capital 'E', even in my own subconscious.

'Ah yes, Stevens,' he began, eyes blazing into my own as his right hand pulled open a desk drawer. He withdrew a slim manila folder and placed it unopened on the desk in front of him, all the while never shifting his gaze from my eyes. 'James Stevens, born on 22 November 1945, in Auckland, New Zealand. Attended various minor schools with an excellent academic record marred only by a total lack of respect for authority. Joined *The Daily News* in Taranaki as a cadet reporter, and quickly gained a series of promotions before shifting to the *New Zealand Herald* in Auckland less than two years later.' He recited all this without once looking down to refer to the folder, which

remained firmly shut on his desk, the words STEVENS, JAMES carefully written in block capitals down its side.

‘You emigrated to Britain in 1968, and quickly worked your way from some worthy provincial papers to Fleet Street before securing a post here at the *Chronicle*. Married the daughter of a noted member of the aristocracy at a registry office to escape a problem with the immigration authorities, causing no end of scandal. Since arriving in this office you have distinguished yourself with diligence, hard work and solid graft. The problems with your youthful rebellious streak seemed behind you. You were settling down into a good, reliable reporter - until this incident.’

The Editor paused to sigh, like a disappointed uncle. ‘I won’t ask you to explain this article, or how you thought you could possibly get this tissue of lies, wild suppositions, half-truths and falsehoods published in a highly respected journal of record. If you realized what you were doing was wrong and went ahead anyway, somehow hoping to sneak it into print, you’re far too dangerous for us to continue employing. If you didn’t realize what you were doing was wrong, that makes you possibly even more dangerous. Unless you can convince me otherwise, we can no longer continue with your services, Stevens.’

During his short but well-rehearsed speech, I kept wondering who was really behind all this charade. I knew my feature was based on facts and I could point to three sources for every statement in it. There was another agenda at work here. I decided to play along and see if I could get a glimmer of what was really going on.

‘What would I have to do to redeem myself?’

The Editor paused before answering, but plainly already knew his reply to my question. ‘Obviously this article can never be published, neither in the *Chronicle* nor in any other British or Commonwealth journal. Should all or any part of it be published anywhere in the world with or without your consent, you would be dismissed immediately.

‘Also, we would expect you to hand in all notes, tape recordings and documents obtained or taken during the course of your investigations for this article. They are the property of the *Daily Chronicle* and would remain in our possession. Finally, you would have to give an undertaking never to repeat any of the contents of this article to any person or persons.’ He sat back in his high-backed chair of burgundy leather fully satisfied, steeping his hands together in front of his chest.

I already knew my response to those terms, but decided to continue with the shadow boxing, to see if the Editor would reveal just how damaging the revelations in my article could be. It was obvious somebody wanted this story killed, but just how badly? ‘So what’s in it for me?’ I asked cheekily, bringing a snort of disbelief from Wise. ‘I mean you’re asking me to surrender a lot of time and work. I’ve spent seven weeks of my private holiday time putting this story together.’

The Editor leaned forward. ‘If you accept these terms, you would be fully compensated for the loss of time and earnings. Plus, you could expect a guarantee of employment here for at least another five years and annual increases in your salary at

double your normal pay rate.’ I tried to calculate this figure out in my head but was quickly interrupted by Wise. ‘In case you’re wondering, that’s worth an extra £15,000 over the next five years.’

In the chair next to me Michael gave a sharp intake of breath. The amount of money on offer was close to his entire salary for the year - a small fortune. ‘Jesus, take the money, James!’ he whispered out the side of his mouth.

I decided it was time to take control of the situation. ‘For an article you say is full of lies, suppositions and half-truths, you seem willing to pay one hell of a lot of money to stop it seeing print,’ I ventured.

‘The money we’re offering you is as nothing to the potential legal costs if we published and were sued - and we would be, I can assure you,’ replied the Editor evenly.

‘All the same, I can’t help feeling maybe my story isn’t so crazy after all. Maybe I should take it to another paper - they’ll probably pay twice what you’re offering for my juicy piece of news.’ By now the atmosphere in the office had fallen from frosty to arctic. ‘Anyway, you’ll never be able to fire me, the journalist’s union would be out on strike in a minute.’

‘I wouldn’t count on that, Stevens. No one else on Fleet Street will touch you or your article: the word has already been put out. As for the unions, before I invited you in I was talking to the Father of the Chapel. He was more than happy with the extra two per cent pay rise I offered across the board in exchange for the union’s silence on this matter. Everyone has their price - what’s yours?’

Wise reached into his desk drawer again and brought out a large corporate cheque book. Using a fountain pen from the breast pocket of his suit jacket he wrote the date, my name and his signature on the top cheque, leaving the amount-to-be-paid line blank. Meticulously folding the cheque along its vertical perforations, he pulled it out of the book and offered it to me. ‘This is a blank cheque. You can fill in your own price - anything up to £50,000. Take it Stevens, while you still can.’

Those aching moments in the Editor’s office at the *Chronicle* haunt me to this day. I remember turning to Michael, watching the sweat trickle down his face, his eyes staring directly in front of him, not daring to catch my eye. I remember the cheque held steadily in front of me, enticing, clean and crisp, the dark blue ink still glistening as it dried on the paper. I made my decision and stood up.

‘I sorry, but I’ll have to refuse your kind offer. I’m not a whore whose favours and services you can buy off. This is a cover-up, a conspiracy, and I intend to expose it, no matter what you put in my way. You can fire me but you can’t shut me up,’ I said, my voice surprising cold and passionless.

The Editor withdrew the cheque, tore it neatly into quarters, and dropped it into the cane waste basket by his desk. Pursing his lips, he signed the piece of letterheaded notepaper on his desk and pushed it towards me. ‘Due to this incident of gross misconduct, you are hereby summarily dismissed from the *Daily Chronicle*. You will

receive no severance payments and are expected to vacate the building forthwith. Your personal items will be sent on to you. Good day.'

I picked up the letter of dismissal, tore it neatly into quarters, and threw it in the Editor's face before walking out of the office. I stopped by my desk to grab what few notes I had left at the *Chronicle*. I knew whoever was behind this would make good with the threat about seeing that I never worked as a newspaper reporter again. My career in the dailies was at an end. My telephone started ringing and I picked it up, answering without even thinking.

'Good morning, James Stevens, *Daily Chronicle*.'

'Not anymore, you're not,' a chillingly familiar voice lisped. It was the same person who had been making threatening phone calls to me at work and at home before Christmas. 'We told you to back off this story but you wouldn't listen. It's already cost you your job. But just wait until you get home Stevens, just you wait...'

I sped through the mid-morning streets, all the while expecting to be pulled over by the police. Abandoning the car outside the flat, I sprinted up the stairs and burst through the already open front door, fearing the worst. Inside the flat was a wreck; furniture torn apart, books and papers flung across the floor. I ran from room to room, shouting Natasha's name without reply. The door to my study had been broken open by brute force, the wooden frame around the lock splintered inwards. Within was a mess of ripped and smashed notes and reels of tape, all strewn across the floor.

Finally I went into the main bedroom, almost expecting to see Natasha's dead body lying on the floor. Instead, her discarded clothes littered the room and there was an ominous gap in the open wardrobe. Spread across the neatly-made double bed were a dozen glossy ten by eight black-and-white photographs.

Each depicted naked flesh, two bodies intertwined, coupling and uncoupling against silk sheets. Only in the fourth photograph was the man's face visible - my face. Suddenly, I recognized the woman in the pictures, the woman from the Savoy Hotel. Across a photo of the woman's bare chest three words had been smeared in angry red lipstick: 'HOW COULD YOU?' I recognized the handwriting as Natasha's.

I should have known. The whole incident at the Savoy. That woman virtually throwing herself at me. It had all been just a ploy to get some incriminating evidence to use against me, to hurt me. My colleagues at the *Chronicle* had warned me but I had been too drunk and too flattered to know any better. Now Natasha knew my guilty secret and I doubted she would ever forgive me. The bastards certainly knew how to fight dirty.

Hoping against hope, I dug out the personal phone book and called the number for Natasha's family home. It was the only place I could think she would have gone to first: most of her friends were still off skiing at this time of the year. It rang and rang, and just when I was about to slam the receiver down, a quivering voice answered my call.

'Hello, Natasha, is that you? It's James.'

‘You bastard! How could you?’

‘It’s not what you think; I was set up,’ I protested.

‘Are you saying you didn’t sleep with that whore?’ My silence was answer enough. ‘All this time I’ve stayed faithful to you when you treated me like dirt and this is how you repay me!’

‘Look, where did the photos come from? Can you tell me that?’

‘They were delivered by hand this morning. Some guy in a dark suit. Said he was a friend of yours and he had something that might interest me,’ she sobbed.

‘Natasha, I’m so sorry, I never meant to hurt you,’ I pleaded.

‘And to think I’m going to have your baby, you shit! I never want to see you again!’ she screamed and slammed down the phone.

I must have stood there holding the receiver to my ear for a full minute, not realizing she had gone. A baby? Natasha was going to have a baby - our child? I never even knew she was pregnant.

After regaining my wits, I tried calling her back but the number was permanently engaged. The operator confirmed the phone was off the hook, but refused to try and break through. ‘Do you know whose phone number that is?’ she said imperiously before hanging up.

* * *

Days passed without reply to my phone calls or letters to Natasha. Finally I despaired of contacting her and decided to visit the family manor in the countryside. Digging out a battered road map from the mess of books and papers on the floor of the study, I set off for Castle Howarth. The journey was bitter, with the country caught in a cold snap that had closed schools, airports, and killed dozens of motorists.

Somehow I made it through the chaos on the roads. Just two miles short of my destination the weather closed in completely, with a blizzard reducing visibility to just a few feet in front of the vehicle. Eventually, inevitably, I lost control on an icy corner and wrapped the car around an old oak tree. The rest of the journey I made by foot, trudging through knee-high snow drifts to reach the main entranceway. It took another hour to cover the half-mile approach to the castle.

As I stumbled onward, I could hardly see the centuries-old turrets ahead of me, so heavy were the snow showers engulfing the sprawling country estate. I had only been here once before, during the previous summer when Natasha introduced me to her father. Then the grounds had been immaculate, the grass a brilliant emerald and the castle’s sandstone walls blazing gold in the bright sunlight. Now the building loomed like a slumbering stone behemoth.

After clambering up the icy steps I hammered at the tall black doors and waited, my thin coat soaked through and almost frozen to my shoulders. The wind was so cold it pulled my cracked lips back to the gums, flashing my teeth in a grimacing parody of a smile. At last the door was opened by a few inches and I forced my way into the warmth inside, ignoring the protestations of the aged butler, Sumner.

‘Look, I don’t care what your high and mighty Lordship has told you, I’m bloody frozen and I want to see my wife - got it?’ I demanded. The meticulously uniformed Sumner looked me up and down with disdain, as a puddle of water formed around my feet from the ice and snow dripping on to the black marble floor of the entrance hall. The frosting of snow on my hair was thawing out and melting down my face. It would have been comical in other circumstances.

‘Hmph,’ mused Sumner, arching a grey eyebrow at me before looking over my shoulder into the lounge behind. ‘Sir?’ I turned to see Lord Howarth standing in front of a blazing fire, swirling a generous measure of brandy in a ludicrously oversized balloon glass. The old man regarded me sourly but raised a finger to indicate I could stay - for now. ‘Come in here, boy,’ he boomed. I shook off my dripping coat and handed it to a disapproving Sumner before striding into the lounge. ‘Sumner, could you attend to the matter we discussed earlier? Thank you.’

Lord Howarth was a great bear of a man, over six foot tall and nearly eighteen stone of barrel-chested aristocracy. Hunting, shooting and fishing had put iron in his limbs and port, brandy and sherry had put a glow into his cheeks, as well as mapping prominent red veins across his nose. Now approaching sixty, he still had a full head of wiry grey hair and a generous, ginger-tinged beard and handle-bar moustache.

He stood commandingly in front of the fire, his massive frame encased in a three-piece checked tweed suit and his legs stretched out in well-worn brown riding boots. When I began dating Natasha, I thought it wise to do some background reading on her family in the clippings files. My compatriot Catherine had provided a full résumé of the Howarths.

His Lordship favoured flogging, birching and any other beatings that could be meted out, judging by the coverage of his few speeches in the House of Lords. He was said to be more disappointed when his wife produced a daughter as his only offspring than by the fact that she had died in the process of childbirth. Despite this he had doted on Natasha.

At our only previous meeting he had deemed me ‘a filthy colonial descendant of criminal scum’. When I pointed out that few convicts had been exiled to New Zealand, they mostly went to Australia, he merely shouted louder and longer about hanging being too good for my kind. It was about then I decided to marry Natasha if only to spite the old bastard. Now he had a look of satisfaction on his face requiring a sandblaster to remove it. He had told her so and now I had proved him right.

‘So, you’ve come crawling back to see my daughter, have you?’ he bellowed. Lord Howarth never spoke, never stated, never suggested. He shouted, bellowed and boomed, generally at a level of decibels that would put the Who to shame.

‘My wife, she’s my wife,’ I replied quietly.

‘Not any more! I’ve already had my QC draw up the divorce papers - so kind of you to provide such irrefutable evidence of adultery; it will make the proceedings so much quicker and less painful.’ He gestured at a selection of the same photographs Natasha had already received. C19 had obviously been thorough in their work. ‘Thankfully I have a few friends on the bench who will make sure this never makes it into the papers.’

‘How convenient,’ I snarled.

Howarth reached out a great fist and pulled me towards him with a speed at odds with his bulk. ‘Now listen to me, you little shit! I have friends in very high places and I would advise you not to take that tone with me. It’s this simple: you will never see my daughter again; never speak to my daughter again; never try to contact my daughter again. If you do so I will have you killed. Do you understand?’

‘If you think -’ My protests were cut short by a massive blow across my face. Pain exploded behind my left cheekbone and I went sprawling across the Persian rug on the floor. Howarth strode forward and picked me up again, one fist drawn back ready to strike again.

‘Do you understand?’

‘You can’t keep me -’

A blow to the stomach doubled me over, while another to the face flung me backwards onto an immaculate mahogany coffee table that splintered apart beneath me, collapsing to the floor. His Lordship stood over me, now clutching a black metal poker from beside the fireplace. ‘Obviously, your grasp of English isn’t all it should be. I shall have to beat it into you. Do’ - he smashed the poker into my side with a dull thud - ‘you’ - another blow, accompanied by a popping noise - ‘understand?’ A third blow and more pops: the sound of my ribs breaking, I realized through a haze of pain.

‘Yes,’ I said, blood dribbling from my mouth on to the rug.

‘Good, then that’s settled,’ smiled Lord Howarth. He stepped back and looked up at several figures in the hallway. ‘Ah, gentlemen! This ruffian broke into my house and began smashing my priceless antiques, before attacking me personally. I had to defend myself and was only just able to repel him when you arrived.’

I tilted my head enough to see four policemen standing behind me, each clutching a wooden baton. ‘Yes, your Lordship,’ the leading policeman said. ‘What would you like done with this piece of scum?’

‘Make sure some harm comes to him, then take him to the cottage hospital. He appears to be bleeding on my furniture.’

‘Criminal damage as well, is it? We better sort this out, lads,’ announced the leader, a sergeant. The four stepped forward and began repeatedly hitting and kicking me about

the head and body. I tried to put my hands up to protect my face but could find no strength in my arms to move them. After a minute the violence stopped, but the pain remained. 'Right, that's enough lads,' said the sergeant. 'Let's take him away.'

Six hands grabbed at my clothing and began dragging me away. I was hardly conscious but looked around as I was being taken out of the front doors. Up a flight of stairs I could see a woman's figure in silhouette, a slight bulge prominent at her stomach. I tried to call out her name but just gurgled in my own blood.

'Oh, James,' I heard Natasha sob as I passed out.

* * *

It was nearly 36 hours before I regained consciousness in a hospital bed, and another week before I was well enough to leave. My attackers had been careful not to cripple me permanently, but my face was a swollen mess of cuts and bruising. I had a lot of time to think while I lay in the hospital bed, my nose full of the stench of disinfectant.

For so long, I had been obsessed only with myself, with what I wanted. When I finally found someone I could love, and who would give me the love I had never enjoyed before, I had treated her like dirt. Now I would never see Natasha again, and certainly never be a father to our child. I had done exactly what my own father had done to me: effectively abandoned my own offspring before it was even born. The vicious circle was complete.

Christ, what a mess I had made of my life. I had lost my wife, I had lost my unborn child, and I had lost my job. The one time I had abandoned my tabloid motto of never letting the facts get in the way of a good story, when I had tried to achieve something by uncovering the wrong-doing of others, was when I got the sack. And not just from the *Daily Chronicle*. By now the Editor would have carried out his threat to blacken my name all along Fleet Street.

But perhaps some good could still come out of this, I told myself. If I could nail the true story behind UNIT once and for all, I could vindicate myself. I could regain some self respect and maybe even find redemption for all the things I had done wrong.

It was not going to be easy. Already the UNIT conspiracy had forced me out of my job and the thugs from C19 had used their dirty methods to break up my marriage. Sure, I had slept with another woman, but by entrapment - a classic honeytrap. Whoever was really behind all this would obviously stop at nothing to hide their secrets: threats, intimidation, entrapment, perhaps even murder.

I made a resolution to myself. I was not going to be manipulated into dropping this investigation. There was too much at stake. I was going to discover the truth about C19, UNIT and the mysterious Doctor John Smith - even if it killed me.

PART TWO: MASTERMIND

The cost of freedom is always high, yet one path we shall never choose - and that is the path of surrender, or submission.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy

SIX

From: Private F. Cleary
UK Division, UNIT
Good Friday 1970

Dear Mum

Well, I've finally got a chance to write home and tell you how I'm doing at my new posting. We're based at a barracks to the west of London - I can't say exactly where, otherwise they'll have to cut it out of my letter. Something about special restrictions with this new outfit we've just joined, or so Sergeant Benton says.

Like I said in my last letter, I'm joined something called UNIT - that stands for the United Nations Intelligence Taskforce. What exactly it is we're going to do here seems pretty hush-hush right now, but apparently it's a bit like peace-keeping work. They showed us a copy of the charter from the UN but I could hardly make head nor tale of it. Something about First Contact, special investigations, and defending the world against external attacks. But if UNIT operates around the globe, who is it meant to be defending the world against?

I asked the sergeant about that. He said UNIT investigates problems at secret research centres when things go wrong and provides security for peace conferences and the like. Because we're meant to be a neutral force, it means we can act as peace keepers. As for the external attacks, he says that's mostly terrorists and 'hostile incursions' - whatever they are. (I just hope we don't end up in Northern Ireland, that's one of the hostile places I volunteered for this bunch to avoid!)

Apparently UNIT seconds troops from the Army at regular intervals but they only accept volunteers who aren't married. That worried me a bit when we were first offered the chance to sign up but my extra money was hard to turn down. (I've put a little bit extra in with the letter this time to help you and the children out. Hopefully it'll be more from now on.)

The squad I'm in are a really decent bunch of guys and everyone pitches in when there's work to be done. All in all, it's a bit of a cushy number from what I can tell.

The sergeant says it could be months before we see any action. That's got to be better than those poor guys on the Ark Royal. Word is, things are rough and getting rougher out in South-East Asia where they're going.

Anyway, I better get myself going because we've been given a half days' leave. I'm hoping to do some shopping, especially since they've said shops can open this year. I know, I know: the Good Lord didn't make Good Friday for shopping, but the Army doesn't follow the Pope when it comes to church times either. Before you ask, I'm hoping to go and see the chaplain tonight.

Give my love to Susie and the others, and look after yourselves. You don't want to be catching that Asian Flu!

All my love,
Francis

SEVEN

April 1970

I spent much of March getting well and trying to pull parts of my life back together. Knowing my income as a freelance journalist might be erratic for a while, I sold the flat in Chelsea at a handsome profit and picked up a new car and a small terraced house just off Wandsworth Common for a song. It needed some work but that could wait. All I needed right now was an office (with at least two telephones in it), a toilet and somewhere to sleep. Interior decorating was not a priority.

The next step was to try and build a career as a freelancer. It was slow going at first, but I resisted the urge to grab any work on offer. Better to go hungry for a few weeks and make a splash with a great story than get a reputation for being small change and small time. For once I got a stroke of luck, although in reality it was only just reward for a lot of previous hard work on my part.

Despite a last minute effort by the *Daily Chronicle* to withdraw the 'Bad Science' feature series from competition, I won a major journalism award for my articles. The cash prize was minimal, but the kudos attached proved very helpful in jump-starting my freelance career. I cheekily used the acceptance speech to announce my availability for feature work on any magazines that wanted me and immediately picked up several good contacts. The editor at *Metropolitan*, Sally Lincoln, was especially enthusiastic and made me promise to give her first refusal on any scoops I might put together in future.

Better still was an immediate commission to turn my feature series into a book. 'Strike while the iron's hot, dear boy,' explained Henry Spencer, the non-fiction editor of a major publishing house. We met for an expensive literary lunch at Simpson's of Piccadilly a few days after the awards ceremony. 'It needn't be the world's greatest book, as long as it's timely!' I took him at his word and demanded a thousand pounds as an advance, a sum I knew to be ludicrously over-priced. But the thought of losing out to another publisher proved too powerful an incentive and Henry painfully agreed to my demand, along with a healthy percentage of the cover price in royalties.

When my 'Bad Science' feature series first hit the stands, the Fleet Street broadsheets had spent weeks investigating in far greater detail the incidents I had only broadly outlined. The *Daily Chronicle* would never have countenanced such expense on a story of unknown merit. Thanks to this hard work by others, I was quickly able to expand my five published features into 55,000 words, all bashed out in a sixteen day frenzy fuelled by caffeine and chocolate.

The prose was not pretty, but it did the job. When I delivered my manuscript at the end of the month, Henry asked me what I planned to write next, perhaps expecting me to be a one-trick pony. But I already had two ideas for new books brewing at the back of my brain, just waiting for a chance to get out.

'I want to do a sequel to *Bad Science*, an investigation into covert agencies in Britain. I've already done quite a bit of work looking into this and it's amazing how many of these men in black suits there are lurking about the place, doing things behind the scenes,' I explained.

He looked dubious. Henry was proud of boasting about his academic success at Cambridge but in fact had only just scraped through his degree, he had drunkenly admitted to me the first time we met. Too busy chasing the other students, particularly the boys. His father was in publishing and it was inevitable that the son should follow. But what Henry lacked in academic talent he more than made up for in publishing sense. He happily announced that he had the 'common touch' and could turn a book about farming guppies into a prodigious seller given the right marketing.

'I'm not so sure about a sequel, dear boy,' he sniffed. We were at Simpson's again, because Henry had his eye on one of the waiting staff. He always liked to mix business with a little pleasure. Replete in a finely pressed wool suit, white silk shirt and Eton tie, Henry cut a dashing figure. His receding brown hair was nearly cropped close to the skull and his eyes swept the room, hungrily seeking out his prey as spoke. 'Once was good, but can you come up with the same sort of shocks again? Maybe, maybe not. What's the other idea?'

I leaned forward to whisper my idea across the table at him. 'What if John F. Kennedy had lived?' I sat back to let him digest for a moment before continuing. 'It'll look at what could have happened if JFK hadn't died at Dallas. Would he have won a second term? If he had, would Bobby have replaced him as President? What with Chappaquiddick all over the papers, the Kennedy clan and its many tragedies are big news right now...'

The previous summer, the last surviving Kennedy brother had driven the final nail into his family's political coffin in America. Senator Edward 'Teddy' Kennedy had been at a party on the tiny island of Chappaquiddick during the annual Edgartown Regatta at Martha's Vineyard. Around midnight - the time was hotly disputed, as were most facts of the case - the senator was driving a young female secretary in his car. The car plunged off a small wooden bridge into the harbour.

Teddy somehow survived the crash and got to shore, but 25-year-old Mary Jo Kopechne drowned. There were rumours, allegations and slurs against the last surviving Kennedy brother, who carried the final hopes for a new Camelot following the assassination of his two brothers.

The whole messy story had just been dredged up again by an inquest. Now the anniversary of the tragedy was fast approaching and Teddy Kennedy would soon be running for Senate again.

Henry was sitting bolt upright now, his food ignored, his flirtation with the waiter utterly forgotten. 'My boy, you're a genius! *What if JFK Had Lived* - it'll sell by the truckload! Every man-jack is doing a Chappaquiddick book, but this tome of yours could cover the entire, tragic Kennedy dynasty!' His eyes were gleaming; I could

almost see him writing the cover-copy in his mind. Realizing his enthusiasm was giving too much away, his gaze narrowed to regard me. 'How much?'

'Seventeen fifty,' I said, smiling.

'What! That's outrageous! I could never -'

'For both books,' I interrupted, before Henry could get a full head of steam. 'Either you commission both books for a total advance of seventeen hundred and fifty pounds, or I take them to another publisher. It's that simple.' Henry started talking again so I held up a hand. 'Think of it this way: you're actually getting the Kennedy book for less than you paid me for *Bad Science*.'

'But that didn't have any strings attached!' he whined.

'Take it or leave it,' I replied, making it clear this was not open for further negotiation or debate. Although *Bad Science* had not yet been published, the advance orders had been exceptional and the book was sure to make the bestseller lists. A quick sequel would at least break even, while my proposal for the Kennedy book had money-maker written all over it for the publisher that picked it up. Henry sulked for another course but finally agreed to my terms, on condition that I paid for lunch. It was worth every penny.

By the middle of April I was back at the typewriter, trying to turn out as many pages as humanly possible each day for the Kennedy book. Finally my years of research into the background of JFK's presidency, his murder and the subsequent effects on his family, his nation and the rest of the world were paying off. The Kennedy scrapbook I started on my eighteenth birthday was now an invaluable resource, especially as I did not have direct access to the clipping files at the *Chronicle* anymore. Whenever I got particularly stuck for a fact I could make a discreet call to Catherine in the *Chronicle*'s archives and she would post me the information I required for a tenner. I tried to avoid doing this as I did not like asking her to risk her job, especially while my name was still high on the Editor's blacklist.

In between writing sessions I combed the national and major regional papers for any references to bizarre happenings or passing mentions of public appearances by UNIT. The two categories almost always coincided. The name UNIT itself would never be published in any article - the usual flurry of D-notices made sure of that - but I soon became adept at recognizing the signs of an intervention by the covert intelligence taskforce. Eyewitness accounts of strange events were quickly followed by denials, retractions, or just an ominous silence, with nobody bothering to follow up a story that was plainly still very much alive.

I noted full details of all such occurrences in my UNIT log, for further investigation when I was blocked on my writing about the Kennedy clan. My contacts on the national papers and in the various Government agencies that I had built up over the last two years also proved helpful with information about UNIT's activities.

A typical example of an intervention was the death of two scientists at the Beacon Hill Research Establishment in what the papers called 'mysterious circumstances.' A

source within the Ministry of Science indicated that UNIT had been called in to investigate while the local police were kept away from the scene. A sympathetic phone call to the sergeant at the nearest station revealed that his men were furious at being excluded from the investigation. If a murder or murders had taken place, it was up to the police to investigate such a crime - not some bunch of jumped-up tin soldiers playing at sleuth!

Several other oddities happened about the same time. There was a dramatic increase in sudden deaths from natural causes, such as asthma and heart attacks. This was blamed on 'an unusually high level of pollution', but nobody could explain why the deaths all occurred within the space of a few days and then mortality levels fell back to normal rates.

An exhibit apparently on loan from 'an international intelligence organization' was stolen out of a display case at the National Space Museum, although later reports stated it had just been 'misaid'. Elsewhere, 450,000 free plastic daffodils that had been distributed around the country were recalled for 'safety reasons' by the authorities. A source of mine within the Ministry of Science confirmed the authority behind the recall was actually Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart. But what the hell did UNIT have to do with fake flowers?

With my Kennedy deadline looming fast, I had to put such questions aside for later investigation.

EIGHT

From: Private F. Cleary
UK Division, UNIT
April 1970

Dear Mum

When I said this was going to be a cushy number, I didn't realize just how cushy! For the past few days I've been driving the brass around all the plastics factories on the outskirts of London, and now I've just got back from a long shift guarding a horse box at a travelling circus! Don't ask me what's going on, because I ain't got a clue and none of the top brass will tell us what's going on either.

It's been nearly five weeks since I joined UNIT and still I've seen no real action. We seem to spend all our time on drills and training exercises. The latest weird one they've had us doing is trying to guess what symbols are printed on a special kind of playing card before it's shown to us. Something to do with testing our levels of extra-sensory perception. Apparently they want us to be less susceptible to hypnosis and mind control after some big scare recently.

UNIT's got to be the strangest mob I've ever been in. You hardly ever see the brass, head of which is a brigadier called Lethbridge-Stewart. He seems an all right bloke, a bit bluff and keen on proper discipline - one of the old school of soldiers, you might say. Under him is Captain Yates. He's another public school type - right sort of tie and all that. He does a lot of the Brig's dirty work - detailing clean-up squads and the like - but still keeps cheerful.

Best of the bunch is Sergeant Benton. He's a regular guy with an eye for the ladies and never one to miss the main chance. Likes a pint, does the sergeant, and knows when the lads are feeling the strain. Never shy when it's his round, either. The other night he was talking about something called 'Bug Hunts' but when I asked him to explain he just looked daggers at me and said I'd see soon enough. Nobody told me we'd be doing pest destruction when I volunteered for this crazy outfit!

There's one guy here who really gives me the creeps. His name's the Doctor. Doesn't seem to have a last name, and he dresses like he's an out-of-work actor or something. Big white frilly-shirts with lots of ruffles, purple velvet smoking-jackets, and he drives this bright yellow vintage car he calls Bessie! I swear, he's the strangest looking bloke I've ever met, with the sort of thousand yard stare you only see on Leeds United football supporters. This guy's trouble, I know it.

The strangest thing about him is that despite the fact he's got no rank, and no insignia (he certainly never puts on a uniform!), all the top brass jump whenever this guy says a word. The sergeant says the Doctor is UNIT's scientific adviser and he has got them out of some real scrapes in the past. They seem to take his opinions very seriously - apparently he's the reason why I spent the day helping to guard this horse box. Blue it was, and made this weird humming noise. I've got to be honest, Mum, I'm not quite sure what I've let myself in for here. Still, you always know that your Francis will come out on top - it's the luck of the Clearys!

I'm missing you all and hope to be getting my first 48-hour pass soon. When I do, you can guarantee I'll be on the first train back to Liverpool to see you!

All my love
Francis

NINE

July-November 1970

After a desperate rush, the *Bad Science* book was hurried out in hardback just days before the General Election in June. The publishers, the editor and I were attacked in many newspaper leader articles for trying to influence the outcome of the election by publishing a book critical of the Wilson Government so close to polling day.

I appeared on several late-night chat shows to answer the criticisms. On *The Passing Parade*, noted BBC3 broadcaster Alex MacIntosh demanded to know what right I had to play god with the fate of the election, to which I replied he was talking rubbish. For once in his career MacIntosh was rendered speechless, giving me a chance to explain further.

'Look, Harold Wilson called the election for June 18 long after the publication date for *Bad Science* was announced. You can hardly blame me, my editor, or my publisher if the Prime Minister has a poor sense of timing,' I said, trying not to perspire under the blazing studio lights.

'Ah, but here you are now criticizing the PM for his poor sense of timing - you're at it again!' MacIntosh said triumphantly.

'Look, Alex, the people of Britain are perfectly capable of making their own minds up about who should run the country. I don't support any particular political party or philosophy, as you well know. But Harold Wilson has cast himself as the architect of the white heat of technology. My book shows that so-called white heat is about as effective as a single-bar heater in the Antarctic!'

After that the programme degenerated into a shouting match, during which I gave as good as I got. The producer of the show was an expatriate Kiwi, Vincent Mortimer, whom I knew vaguely from the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation. A red-haired dynamo, he had quickly risen through the ranks of the fledgling television service in New Zealand and was now making a name for himself with the new channel, BBC3. I had profiled him for a paper once in Auckland and was delighted to meet him again. He took me for a drink in the bar after the show and congratulated me on the success of my book.

'You ever thought of getting into television? I thought you handled Alex really well, and it's not often that someone comes out ahead on points against him! We're desperate for good journos on BBC3; the old fogeys who run the main channels won't give us a sniff of anybody decent - we only got MacIntosh because he's a sanctimonious prick they couldn't wait to get shot of,' he complained.

'I would have thought my Kiwi accent would dissuade you - hardly the Queen's English,' I replied.

‘No, we’re ditching all that plum in the mouth crap. BBC3 - we’re the Voice of the People!’ Vincent joked. I declined the chance of going into television. I was only just carving out a niche as a freelance writer, and did not feel sufficiently confident in my current career to launch myself into another. Vincent gave me his business card anyway, scrawling his home number on the back.

‘Look, if you get anything you think I might be interested in, give us a call, OK?’ he asked. ‘Ring anytime, day or night - I hardly get any sleep so you won’t be disturbing me.’

Three days later the Tories led by Ted Heath were returned to power for the first time in seven years with a majority of 43. Henry immediately had all remaining copies of *Bad Science* stickered to read THE BOOK THAT BROUGHT DOWN A GOVERNMENT!, which even I thought was overstating the case a tad. But the first hardback edition sold out within weeks and I made sure never to criticize one of Henry’s publishing decisions again.

For me it was time to get back to work writing my Kennedy book. The publicity generated by *Bad Science* had eaten up several valuable weeks of my writing schedule and it was going to be a push to meet my deadline. For once my UNIT log was standing idle, with few if any entries being added for several months. As soon as I handed in my Kennedy manuscript it would be time to restart my investigation of the covert intelligence taskforce.

* * *

Four months later and my second book was complete. The handsome royalty cheque I received for *Bad Science* from Henry in September had swollen my bank account considerably and given me the financial freedom to pursue my investigation into UNIT and Doctor John Smith for at least six months.

My first calls were to the long list of contacts I had built up within various Government agencies over the years. Having been out of circulation for several months there was a lot of catching up to do and a few well-placed bottles of expensive alcohol and perfume helped smooth the wheels considerably. Of particular interest was a piece of information I picked up from a friend within the Ministry of Science about a new initiative against crime.

‘It’s a joint effort between the Justice Department, the Government, and the Prison Service,’ confided Martha, a highly placed secretary-cum-personal assistant to the Minister. She knew more about the workings of the ministry than her boss. ‘Apparently some Swiss scientist has come up with a revolutionary new technique to remove violent impulses from the minds of criminals. There’s going to be a demonstration at one of Her Majesty’s prisons next week.’

‘Which prison? Martha, can you get me in to see the demonstration?’ I asked. This sounded like an intriguingly Orwellian concept and exactly the sort of scientific meddling that Governments always denied they had any knowledge of or involvement with. A new brainwashing technique, with human prisoners being used as guinea pigs? This had scandal written all over it.

‘I don’t know, James, you’ll have to make this worth my while,’ she slurred slightly, clutching my inner thigh with her left hand. We were in a tiny backstreet pub near Whitehall, hidden away in a booth at the back. ‘My flat is just a few streets away...’

* * *

Three days later I was in the back of an unmarked black van, being driving up the long curving driveway to Her Majesty’s Prison Stangmoor. Thanks to my gentle persuasion Martha had obtained an observer’s pass for me to attend the first British demonstration of the Keller Process. I sat amongst five other observers, all of them dressed in grey suits with pens in the breast pockets and clutching clipboards. We had been met at the Stangmoor Railway Station six miles away by a surly-faced officer, who had then driven us to the prison in the back of his Black Maria.

The prison was a converted castle, and the stern stone walls and turrets gave it a gothic, forbidding feel that was testament to its former function as a fortress. Stopping outside, we had to hand over our observer’s passes to another prison officer, clad in a long black greatcoat and peaked cap. A walkie-talkie crackled just inside his coat.

Fortunately, he did not ask for further identification, which would have quickly revealed my true profession. I had taken the chance of using my real name on the observer’s pass. It was better to risk being revealed as a journalist early on and lose the story, than use a false name and face prison myself for unlawfully gaining entry to a prison. While the guard confirmed our right to enter, a security camera filmed us from a vantage point above the tall wooden doors into the prison. Satisfied that we were all to be allowed in, the surly guard called through on his walkie-talkie for the gates to be opened.

Once inside we were subjected to several more security checks before finally being ushered into a large chamber with white tiles on the walls, floor and ceiling. The smell of disinfectant suggested the room’s usual purpose as an infirmary, but nearly all the furniture had been cleared out for the demonstration. A dozen wooden chairs were lined up along one wall in two rows, while a few more were pushed hard against the wall opposite. In one corner of the room stood a large control unit, covered in dials, switches and buttons - presumably part of the Keller Machine. But it was towards the centre of the room that all attention was focused.

On a low metal trolley sat a squat, upright cylinder made of some opaque plastic or glass, topped with a dark dome. The cylinder was set into a control unit the size of a briefcase. A series of spiralled wires led from this unit to a white plastic dome over a padded leather chair with metal arm rests. The dome’s positioning over the chair was not unlike that of a hair dryer in a beauty salon, but there was something altogether more sinister about this contraption. Eventually I realized what the assemblage of machinery most reminded me of - an electric chair.

Several prison guards in their black uniforms lurked at the sides of the room to dissuade us from taking a closer look at the device, so I took a chair against the wall and sat down to wait. The seats around me quickly filled up, leaving only two chairs in the front row empty. After a few minutes two latecomers entered, looking slightly

flustered. The woman was small, mousy and had a pleasant face. But the man accompanying her was instantly recognizable to me from the times others had described his appearance - it could only be the Doctor!

This was the first time I had seen one of the *agent provocateurs* known as the Doctor in person. Previously I had watched this operative in the background of the Mars Probe broadcasts, not realizing the significance of his presence at the time. Now, I was in the same room as the so-called 'scientific adviser'. I could not get an interview with him without blowing my cover, but at least I could observe him at close range.

All the descriptions I had heard of this person made much of his outlandish dress sense, yet they still had not prepared me for the ageing dandy who had entered the room. An extravagantly ruffled white shirt was barely held in check by a two-piece velvet suit. Over this was draped a black, silk-lined cape. His hair was a quiet explosion of greying curls over a lived-in face. The hawkish nose jutted from between a pair of piercing eyes that swept the room quickly to assess those present.

'Morbid lot of sensation seekers,' I heard him mutter.

After several more minutes of waiting, a barrage of noise began to shake the room, as the prisoners in the nearby cells began yelling out in protest. 'What's all the racket about?' I asked innocently. One of the prison officers overheard my question and muttered a reply under his breath.

'It's traditional, when sentence is about to be carried out against a condemned man.'

'Condemned? The Keller Process isn't fatal, is it?'

'You'll see,' the guard said gruffly before snapping to attention as two men entered the room. The taller of the two was a heavy-set man in his late forties, with bushy eyebrows and a glowering face. Probably Victor Camford, the prison's governor, judging by the brief physical description Martha has given me the day before. Beside him was a smaller, elegant man in his fifties, with greying hair and a dapper three-piece suit. He would not have looked out of place in Harley Street, but was certainly incongruous inside a prison.

The governor welcomed us to Stangmoor and handed over to the smaller man, whom he introduced as Professor Kettering. The professor addressed the gathering with the practised ease of someone who has given many lectures to distinguished audiences.

'Today, ladies and gentlemen, we no longer execute even the most hardened criminals and killers. Society has progressed far beyond that primitive form of retribution,' he began.

'All depends what you mean by progress, doesn't it?' interjected a voice from the row of chairs in front of me. I made sure I kept a complete transcript of everything that was being said, giving thanks for those extra nights spent brushing up my shorthand since going freelance. It looked like that was going to prove useful.

Kettering shot a stern look at his audience before continuing. 'Today science has abolished the hangman's noose and substituted this infallible method,' he said, grandly gesturing towards the machine at the centre of the room.

Again, he was interrupted by an impertinent voice from the audience, speaking in rich, fruity, rounded tones. I caught sight of the person making the interjections - it was the Doctor. 'People who talk about infallibility are usually on very shaky ground!'

Kettering refused to be rattled by this heckling. Instead he walked slowly over towards us. 'For the benefit of less sophisticated members of my audience,' he said, pausing very pointedly to stare at the Doctor, 'I will explain the process in very simple terms. Professor Emil Keller, the inventor of this process, discovered that anti-social behaviour was governed by certain negative or 'evil' impulses. This machine, the Keller Machine, isolates and extracts these impulses, leaving a rational, well-balanced individual.'

'I bet it doesn't!' the Doctor interjected.

By this time Kettering was visibly fuming but seemed determined to remain in control of the demonstration, despite the distractions. 'May I continue?' he asked the Doctor wearily.

'By all means.'

'Thank you.' Kettering grimaced, before stepping back to point out the different components of the machine. 'The condemned man is placed in this chair with his head beneath this dome. A series of probes are attached to his skull, so as to connect with the neural circuits.' Now the professor moved across to the control console. 'The extraction process is controlled from this console, and the negative impulses are stored in what we refer to as the reservoir box at the base of the machine.'

The Doctor did not seem satisfied. 'Where do they go after that?'

'Nowhere, sir. I repeat, they are stored in the box.'

'Which, presumably, is full of your negative or evil impulses?'

Kettering smiled, as if lecturing an obtuse child. 'Not full. The indicator registers only 65 per cent at the present time.' As he spoke two men in the white garb of hospital porters wheeled in a trolley, on which lay a semi-conscious giant of a man, clad only in a patient's white smock. The trio were accompanied by a balding, nervous-faced man in a doctor's white coat with a stethoscope hung round his neck. While the two porters struggled to shift the huge, heavy patient from the trolley into the padded chair, Kettering continued his commentary.

'The machine has already been used very successfully in Switzerland, in the processing of one hundred and twelve cases. This will be the one hundred and thirteenth.' He stepped back to welcome the new arrivals. 'Doctor Summers,' he said,

introducing the worrying-looking physician supervising the procedure. Summers lowered the helmet over the patient's head and began linking electrodes.

'When this process is finished, the negative impulses which made this man a criminal will have been removed,' Kettering said smugly. 'He will take his place as a useful, if lowly, member of society. If you are ready, Doctor Summers?'

I could hardly believe what I was hearing. These doctors and professors were planning to electronically lobotomize this man because he had committed a crime. I wanted to shout out against this civilized act of barbarism but stilled the voice in my head. Protesting now would not stop what was about to happen. Better I got the full picture and used my skills as a journalist to stop this ever happening again.

Kettering was looking to Doctor Summers, who nodded the patient's readiness. The professor stepped to the control console and began manipulating the dials and switches. He paused to look at the governor, who addressed the semi-conscious patient and the audience. 'Let the sentence of the court be carried out.'

Kettering turned a dial control and the lights in the chamber began to dim as the Keller Machine hummed into life. Again I was struck by the similarities to the power drain caused by an execution by electrocution. As the power surging through the Keller Machine increased, the domed reservoir began to emit a piercing, pulsating noise unlike any I had ever heard before. The dome over the patient's head glowed in time with the noise as it increased in volume, almost as if it were alive. I could not get an image out of my head of a vampire feeding, as if the machine were draining the life from the prisoner.

The process had barely been underway for ten seconds when the prisoner suddenly began to scream and thrash around in his chair, arching his back in apparent agony. There was a concerned muttering from the observers around me, including the Doctor and his companion. At the central console Kettering hurriedly began flicking off switches, craning his head around several times to check on the prisoner.

As the pulsing of the Keller Machine began to fade away, Doctor Summers quickly stepped in to monitor the patient's pulse and respiration. After a few anxious moments he nodded an assurance to the professor, before stopping to look at the reservoir indicator dial on the front of the machine. He gasped and called Kettering over. I could just hear a comment passed between them: 'It's never been this high before.'

The professor returned to the console to reassure the governor in a hushed voice before loudly addressing the audience. 'There was a minor malfunction, but the machine compensated. The process is now completed - satisfactorily.'

'Satisfactorily be blown,' the Doctor said indignantly.

The warders stepped forward to shift the still-twitching prisoner back on to the trolley and wheel him away. 'The subject will now be taken away to recuperate. Within an hour or two he will be perfectly normal,' Professor Kettering said.

'I admire your confidence, sir,' the Doctor sneered.

‘Thank you, that is all, gentlemen.’ Around me the audience of observers got up and began leaving the room, whispering excitedly between themselves. Noticing the Doctor and his companion were advancing towards Kettering and the governor, I hung about just within earshot, doing my best to look knowledgeable as I examined the Keller Machine close-up.

‘Perhaps you could explain that unfortunate man’s reaction?’ the Doctor was demanding to know.

‘An excess of negative particles - the machine over-reacted and then corrected itself,’ Professor Kettering replied smoothly.

‘In other words you don’t know!’

The professor turned the questioning back on to the Doctor. ‘May I ask who you are, sir?’

Governor Camford interceded with an explanation. ‘The Doctor is Scientific Adviser to UNIT - the United Nations Intelligence Taskforce.’

‘How interesting,’ Kettering began, ‘though I really don’t -’

‘UNIT, sir, was formed to deal with new and unusual menaces to mankind,’ the Doctor said. ‘In my view, that machine of yours is precisely that!’

At this point the governor moved to stop the disagreement becoming more heated. Noting my presence in the chamber, he suggested they continue their discussion later. Meanwhile a guard unceremoniously bundled me out of the room and into the waiting Black Maria for the return journey to the railway station. One of our number was conspicuous by his absence, a young medical student from a teaching hospital in London who had introduced himself as Arthur. Despite this, the van left without him.

I spent the journey back to London going over my notes. Several of Professor Kettering’s blandly-made statements I had found utterly chilling. ‘He will take his place as a useful, if lowly, member of society’ rung in my mind with particular clarity. Not content with lobotomizing criminals, he seemed intent on creating some benign, mindless underclass to service those who were not deemed by society to harbour evil or negative impulses. The Keller Process was barbaric and I intended to expose it.

First of all I contacted Martha at the Ministry of Science and urged her to see me for lunch immediately. Having explained what I had seen at Stangmoor, she was happy to help me find out more about the mysterious Professor Emil Keller and his frightening new machine. She put me in contact with several leading medical and scientific figures in Switzerland, so I could get some background about Professor Keller and the 112 previous subjects of his process.

The authorities in Switzerland were full of praise for Professor Keller and his female Chinese assistant. In fact, they were almost over-effusive in their praise, as if they had been coached in how to give their replies. When I asked them for documentary

evidence about the testing of the Keller Process, they were more than happy to send for their files. But a surprise came when each person or organization I spoke with discovered they did not possess any records relating to Professor Keller or his bold new initiative in reducing crime rates.

I spent the next 36 hours checking the credentials of everyone involved with the Keller Machine. No major university or scientific academy in Europe or Britain seemed to have any record of Professor Emil Keller or his machine. Indeed, none had any record of an Emil Keller studying for or obtaining his doctorate. There was something very rotten about all this - it was time to confront Professor Kettering. According to Martha he had sponsored Professor Keller's work in the United Kingdom, using his friends in high places and considerable powers of persuasion to get the Government approval for a series of tests at Stangmoor, with more at other prisons to follow.

I travelled to the professor's offices in Harley Street to find his personal assistant in tears. Through sobs she explained that Kettering had died in unusual but unspecified circumstances at Stangmoor not long after the test. I tried contacting Governor Camford at the prison but all lines to Stangmoor were out of service for an unspecified time, according to the nearest telephone exchange.

Instead I phoned the police station nearest to the prison and discovered there was a riot in progress at Stangmoor. No love was lost between Governor Camford and the local police chief, who was happy to talk to me off the record. The police were being kept back from the prison but they had gleaned some facts from injured prison officers brought out for treatment. It seemed the bodies of both the missing observer, Arthur Linwood, and Professor Kettering had been found at different times in the process chamber where the Keller Machine was tested.

I knew the riot at Stangmoor would probably be over within a day or two - prison riots rarely lasted much longer. But that would get the name of the prison into the minds of news editors around the country. My exclusive exposé of what had really been going on at Stangmoor before the riot would blow the lid off these sinister mind-control experiments the Government had condoned and encouraged. But I would have to act fast.

My first phone call was to Sally Lincoln, the editor of *Metropolitan* magazine. When I won my journalism award for the 'Bad Science' feature series six months before, I had promised her first option on any scoops I came up with. Now was the time to remind her of that promise. A phone call secured a breakfast meeting the next day with Sally at the Savoy.

'Well? I haven't heard from you for half a year and now you drag me out of bed to talk. You better made this good, James,' she warned. Sally Lincoln was a rarity: one of the best editors in the magazine business with an eye for hard news as well as high fashion. Despite the early hour she was dressed to kill in a white pantsuit with golden accessories, and had a startling brass rinse in her hair.

I quickly outlined the bare bones of my story and stressed its immediacy. Sally remained sceptical. 'How will you ever prove all this? I know you have your sources, James, but this sounds like something a mad scientist would dream up!'

'Ah, but I do have proof - I was there.' The stories in which I usually plied my trade relied on sources and contacts, nods, winks and whispers. To have actually been an eyewitness to the key sequence of events outlined in my story made the proposed article all the more damning to those in power. Vague, unsourced allegations were easily dismissed; an eyewitness account would be much harder to shoot down.

Sally smiled. 'James, you're a darling. When I can have your copy? This week's issue was going to focus on the peace talks and De Gaulle's death, but unless something dramatic happens, we can pull both of those stories off the cover for your piece.'

'You'll have the article by noon tomorrow, I've already started writing it.'

'Any pictures? What about this mysterious Professor Keller?'

'Sorry. Only a handful of people have ever seen him, and at least one of those people is already dead.'

Sally sighed. 'Oh well, artist's impression it is then. You don't mind if one of my boys calls you up for a full description of this chamber of horrors, do you?'

'No, give him my office number. It's on here,' I said, handing her my latest business card.

The following Monday all the broadsheets and several of the tabloids had picked up my story from *Metropolitan*, the day before it was due to be published. Most papers on Fleet Street kept a wary eye on other publications for possible scoops that they could freshen up as their own. The medical journal *The Lancet* was a favourite source of shocking revelations about the declining state of the National Health Service.

Weekly news magazines like *Metropolitan* were happy to occasionally leak some details of a big scoop, just enough to whet the appetites of the nationals. The papers would then run around trying to discover the full story and create a surge of publicity for the magazine's revelations. The theory behind the practice was that punters who would never normally buy the source magazine would pick the title up on the strength of it being mentioned in their regular rag. The practice was surprisingly successful.

So my scoop was transformed into headlines like BRITISH GOVT'S BRAINWASH HORROR SHOCK! in the left-wing tabloids and MIND-CONTROL EXPERIMENTS IN BRITISH PRISONS across the front pages of the more tasteful broadsheets.

In the actual article in the *Metropolitan* I slipped in a sidebar about other Government-run or approved establishments where it was believed similar secret experiments were being carried out. This section of the story was kept deliberately vague, since there was actually very little evidence on which to base it. Instead, I was using the sidebar to include a reference to the Glasshouse, to see if anyone would come forward with information about this rarely mentioned containment facility.

The name of the Glasshouse had come up several times in my investigations, linked to either C19 or UNIT. 'Glasshouse' was army slang for a military prison - could UNIT be holding political prisoners or terrorists there? That might explain the intervention at Stangmoor. I had tried all my normal sources to get more information about the Glasshouse without success. Now I had decided to make a covert appeal to the public.

While I waited for the response - if any - there were follow-up articles to be done stemming from my Stangmoor scoop. Curiously, the police were never called in to stop the riot. It was quelled by prison officers, but then trouble flared up again. Instead of standard procedures being followed to stop the uprising, an unnamed paramilitary team stormed the former castle and secured peace.

Nobody in authority would explicitly state who recaptured the prison but a description of the lead officer confirmed my suspicions. It was the soldiers of UNIT, led by Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart. But what was an international intelligence taskforce doing stopping a prison riot in rural England, when it was apparently meant to be providing security for the vital World Peace Conference in London? Indeed, why had UNIT's so-called scientific adviser been present at the testing of the Keller Machine a few days before? Was the testing of the Keller Process related to the riot? Was UNIT somehow involved in mind-control experiments, or merely trying to muddy the waters for a rival intelligence agency? More questions without answers for my UNIT log.

TEN

From: Private F. Cleary
UK Division, UNIT
November 1970

Dear Mum

Well, after long months of waiting I finally got to see some action and now I wish I hadn't. I thought it would be exciting and fun, like all those war comics I used to read. Instead I just feel ashamed and sick and guilty. I don't know how to say this to your face, so I'll write it down instead. I have killed a man.

I can't give you too many details because of the restrictions they put on us about telling anybody outside the squad what happened. It's enough for you to know there was a riot and people's lives were at risk and we had to go in and sort it out. The sergeant said if we didn't stop the riot, the whole country, maybe even the whole world could be at risk. There were terrorists involved and they make Uncle Seamus's friends in the you-know-what army look like a bunch of sweet little altar boys.

The rioters had taken over an old converted castle and we had to storm the building and stop the riot - 'at any cost.' When the NCO said those words I felt a chill in my heart like I haven't felt since Dad died. This wasn't about playing soldiers anymore, like Jimmy and I used to do on the waste ground. This was about the real thing - death and killing.

We were taken close to the riot by helicopter and then got into the back of a delivery van. The Brig drove the van up to the front gates of the grey stone castle. He had dressed up as a delivery man, overalls and all. He was even wearing a flat cap! I learnt a lot of admiration for him, it took a lot of nerve to do that, and most top brass would have sent someone else in to do their dirty work. But the Brig led from the front like a real soldier. You can tell he's seen a lot of action - he was cool as a cucumber.

He got out of the van and talked to the guard on the gate, said he had a big delivery of food and grog in the back. But the only thing in the van was me and the other

guys in the squad, armed to the teeth and ready to come out shooting at the first sign of trouble. We could hear every word the Brig was saying and his voice didn't quake or quiver once - I would have been too terrified to speak! After what seemed like hours of waiting, the guard let us in. As the van drove through the gates, we began to slip out the back of it, silencing the guards one by one as we reached them.

We had only got a few hundred feet inside when the alarm was raised. Then everything went crazy. Shots started coming at us from all sides, the stone walls of the courtyard inside echoing and magnifying the noise so it seemed like a hundred people were firing at us from all angles. I clutched my rifle to my chest and took cover beside Tommy, one of the boys who volunteered for UNIT from the same outfit as me. He began returning fire, trying to pick off one of the rioters, who were sniping at us from the castle turrets above. I just lay there, wondering what to do.

Suddenly Tommy yelled at me to give him covering fire, leapt up, and began running towards an open door into the main building. Without thinking I pulled my rifle up to my shoulder and began blasting away over Tommy's head. 'Shoot at them, not me!' he shouted and disappeared inside the main part of the castle. Reappearing a second later, he began firing up at the turrets while yelling for me to follow him. I made the sign of the cross and started running.

Mum, I've never been so scared in all my life. This wasn't fun, it wasn't exciting, it wasn't daring or any of those other things it seems to be during war movies down at the Odeon. I was bloody terrified and the only thing that kept my legs going was the sound of Tommy's yelling and the bullets whizzing past my head. I dived through the open doorway and rolled hard against a stone wall, knocking the wind out of me.

I lay there gasping while Tommy stood over me smiling. 'Ain't you ever been in a real battle before?' he asked. I just shook my head. He reached out a hand to pull me to my feet but then clutched at his throat. Blood started to bubble out between his fingers and the look of surprise on his face was almost funny. Tommy fell to the ground, choking to death on his own blood.

I looked up to see one of the rioters standing over me, a revolver pointed at my head. The next few seconds seemed to take forever. I remember he was smiling, and his teeth

were all yellow with lots of metal fillings. He hadn't shaved for several days and there was a big red scar down his right cheek. He was dressed in dark blue overalls and they were splashed red - somebody's blood, I suppose. My rifle was on the ground, I was at his mercy.

He swore at me and pulled the trigger. I closed my eyes, willing it to be over, thinking about you and the rest of the family and how I'd never see you again, and how I was going to die fighting for something I didn't know or understand, and how they'd probably tell you it was an accident or something, and how it would all be for nothing.

Click. That was the noise the rioter's gun made. Click. He was out of bullets. I grabbed my rifle and shot him once, twice, three times, over and over until I was out of ammo myself. When I opened my eyes again, he was on his back, blood running from his mouth. He made a rattling sound and then stopped moving at all. I had killed him. I had ended his life.

I spent a long time just sitting there, staring at the man I had murdered. We won the battle apparently, and the medics came and took Tommy away. He had been shot through the throat and would never talk again but they say he'll live - if only on an invalid's pension. Tommy's only 24, Mum. What kind of future is that?

It's been several hours now since we returned to barracks and all I can think about is questions. The sergeant came round to talk to me. He said I had done my duty and I should be proud. He said the man I killed was a multiple murderer and a rapist and he had only ever caused the world pain and misery. He said I would be dead now if I hadn't shot the rioter, and what good would that have done?

I said I didn't know, but that didn't make me feel any better, knowing I had ended a life. He told me to go see the chaplain and talk it through with him. The sergeant said that what UNIT did was just like a war, but it was a war that nobody heard about. Without UNIT, the world would be a much more dangerous place.

I wanted to believe him but all I have now are doubts and questions. What right did I have to end that man's life? Sure, he was going to kill me, but does that make what I did any better? The Bible says that murder is a sin. Was what I did murder? Have I committed a mortal sin, by ending another life?

I'm not sure what I believe in anymore. All I know is I will never be the same again. There is darkness inside me tonight.

All my love
Francis

ELEVEN

December 1970

For several weeks *Metropolitan* passed on to me a variety of crank calls from readers about my mind-control article. Several people claimed to have been subject to brainwashing while in perfectly ordinary hospitals, one woman insisted she had been attacked by a plastic daffodil that wanted to kill her and a farmer wanted to talk to me about how deadly nightshade was not deadly at all, if taken in small enough doses. What this had to do with mind control, he could not say, but he believed propaganda was just another form of mind control and he was sick of the campaign of propaganda against deadly nightshade.

These calls I humoured as best I could and investigated those worth even a second glance, all without success. Just when I was beginning to despair of ever learning more about the Glasshouse, I received a letter that had been sent to me care of *Metropolitan*. The letter had been written in a halting, hesitant scrawl with many erasures and additions. While the missive carried no surname or postal address, the content was enough to convince me the writer was certainly worth meeting. Her letter made mention of several different incidents I had been trying to tie together.

The writer, a young girl calling herself Dodo, had included a telephone number where she could be contacted during evenings only, and I spent an impatient day waiting to ring her. Finally, I got through to what proved to be a halfway house for the homeless. A new innovation to London, such places had been set up by the charity Shelter, which was formed after a controversial television documentary called *Cathy Come Home* had publicized the plight of the homeless.

‘Hello? I wanted to speak to a woman called Dodo?’ I asked, suddenly feeling foolish. Was this strange name real, a nickname or a codeword? For all I knew, the letter was an elaborate hoax or even an attempt to entrap me. The voice on the other end of the phone was confused for a moment before responding.

‘Oh, you mean Dorothea! I’ll just get her.’ Less than a minute later a quiet, nervous woman spoke to me.

‘Who is this?’

‘My name is James Stevens, I write for *Metropolitan* magazine. You sent me a letter?’

‘I’m not sure I understand...’

‘It was about the Glasshouse.’ A long pause followed. I almost thought she had hung up but I could still hear background noise from the hostel. Finally, she spoke again.

‘I remember now, you wrote an article about mind control. I need to tell you about what happened to me at - that place...’ She hesitated, almost saying the name but

stopping herself, as though afraid of even speaking it aloud. What was she frightened of?

‘The Glasshouse?’ I asked.

‘Yes...’

I wanted to press her further, but it was obvious she felt unable to talk over the phone. She seemed even more paranoid than me. We arranged to meet at a small café near Clapham Junction train station, late the next morning. ‘How will I recognize you? I don’t know what you look like,’ I pointed out.

‘Carry a copy of the latest *Metropolitan*. I’ll find you,’ she promised. In the background the level of noise in the hostel swelled to a crescendo. ‘I’ve got to go now, it’s dinner. We’re having mince tonight!’ She sounded excited, as if mince were the culinary highlight of her week. What kind of woman was this mysterious correspondent, who stayed in a hostel for the homeless and called herself Dodo? What did she know about the Glasshouse and why did it scare her so much?

So far I had only received warnings and threats about the Glasshouse. Its inclusion in the mind-control article had been a shot in the dark, now it seemed I might be close to a breakthrough. What happened at the Glasshouse, and why did the few people who were willing to even acknowledge its existence clam up when it was mentioned? Even my anonymous telephone informant who was happy to talk about UNIT at length had warned me away from the Glasshouse - why? Perhaps Dodo could provide the answers to at least some of these questions.

* * *

The next day was bitter, the start of a typical pre-Christmas cold snap. As I travelled to Clapham Junction, the papers were full of the Queen signing a state of emergency declaration about the power crisis. Industrial disputes with electricity workers were causing power cuts across Britain and it was going to be a long, hard winter unless the problem was resolved soon. I had already stocked up on candles for the house and was thankful the heating and kitchen were mostly gas.

Getting to the café thirty minutes early, I ordered a mug of scalding tea and read through the latest issue of *Metropolitan*. Around me the early morning trade of construction workers piled into plates of eggs, beans and chips with toast and tea, while office workers rushed in to grab two slices of toast and coffee to take away. The café was an archetypal ‘greasy spoon’, complete with a shouting cook in the kitchen and blousey manageress behind the counter who seemed to know every customer on sight.

The half-hour passed quickly but there was still no sign of Dodo. Not knowing what to expect, I had envisioned a wild-eyed woman in her late forties looking for a quick hand-out in exchange for some gossip she had picked up on her travels. On the phone it had been difficult to assess Dodo’s age and origins, because her accent seemed to shift between well-educated Oxbridge tones and a coarser smattering of Cockney.

Nearly another hour passed and still I waited, nursing another tea and some toast to placate the loud, blousey Italian manageress. Earlier she had pointedly wiped down my table twice, in an effort to move me on, but now the early morning rush was over she seemed content just to glare at me from behind her counter. Only a handful of customers remained besides me, and most were lingering over morning papers, delaying the unhappy journey into work as long as possible.

Finally, I despaired of my appointment ever arriving. I started rising to leave when a quiet voice to my right startled me.

‘Mr Stevens?’

‘Yes?’

‘I’m Dodo.’ The speaker was a young woman, in her early twenties, 25 at the most. She had been sitting at the table on my right for at least 45 minutes and I had hardly noticed her because she did not match my preconceptions of what the mysterious Dodo would look like. Now, she stood up and approached me nervously. Short and slim, she was wrapped up in a heavy hounds-tooth duffel coat that had seen better days. Most of its buttons were missing and a blue silk tie wrapped around her waist held the coat together. Her feet were only partially protected from the cold by broken leather boots, at least one size too large for her feet.

I invited her to sit down and called the manageress to take our order. She was unhappy about Dodo’s presence in her café. ‘I’ve seen this one around before; she is a trouble maker!’ the manageress said in a stern Italian accent.

‘There’ll be no trouble,’ I assured her, before ordering a full cooked breakfast for Dodo. The young woman sitting opposite me quietly said she had no money and could not pay. I handed the manageress a five pound note and told her to keep bringing food until my guest was sated. Dodo did not react hungrily to this rather crass display, so I guessed she was not simply after some quick cash. As she ate in delicate, small bites, I took the opportunity to study her more closely.

Her oval-shaped face was pale and without any make-up. Her dark hair was in a short, untidy bob and had not been washed for several days, the greasy fringe masking a few pimples on her forehead. Strong black eyebrows arched over her hazel-green eyes, which kept darting nervously towards the doorway of the café. Her mouth was wide with thin lips and opened to reveal slightly crooked teeth.

Her hands were small and delicate, with broken fingernails that had been bitten back to the quick. She wore no jewellery and had no watch, glancing up at the clock above my head every few minutes. I guessed she originally came from a well-to-do family in the suburbs, judging by the very proper way she held her knife and fork. Her upright posture too spoke of many lessons spent learning the correct way to sit and stand. Someone had brought Dodo up to be a proper young lady, although a trace of Cockney in her voice suggested she had not always lived in the suburbs.

She ate heartily, as if the simple fare were a rare treat. After two full breakfasts, she placed her plate to one side and carefully wiped the corners of her mouth clean with a

paper serviette. Claspings her hands around a chipped enamel mug of steaming tea, Dodo looked at me. 'Well, what do you want to know?'

I shrugged. 'What do you want to tell me? You wrote to me, remember, you have something you want the world to know.'

'I don't know where to start,' she said nervously.

'How did you see my article?' I asked.

'The magazine, I found it on a park bench, someone had left it there. I saw the cover about mind control and read your story inside. I knew I had to talk to you, to tell you what happened to me.'

'What did happen to you?'

'I'm not sure.' She put a thumb to her mouth and began biting at a jagged nail as she spoke, keeping her voice to a murmur that no one else would be able to easily overhear. 'I suffer from blackouts, memory losses. Sometimes I have flashbacks to events I couldn't possibly have witnessed, strange visions I can't explain.'

'Such as?'

'I imagine myself in the Wild West during a shootout, or else I'm on some sort of ship where there are monsters with only one eye. Sometimes I have dreams where I'm being attacked by dancing dolls.' She watched me to see how I was reacting. 'I know, I know, it sounds like I'm crazy, but these visions - they're as real as this café, as real as the chair on which I'm sitting.'

'When did these blackouts and visions start?'

'That I can remember clearly - 16 July 1966.'

'C-Day, when all the computers in the world were going to be linked up to the one in the Post Office Tower,' I said.

'That's right. I visited the Post Office Tower just before C-Day and something happened to me - I don't know what. I had a breakdown and spent several months in the country afterwards, trying to sort myself out. I came back to London, hoping to get a job, but then the blackouts started. I would be walking down the street and start feeling faint. Next thing I knew, I would wake up in a hospital bed. The doctors would tell me I had collapsed and been brought in by ambulance.'

'That happened several times. Eventually, I was sent to a psychiatric hospital for treatment,' she said, her head bowed. The admission was obviously one of great shame to her.

'Did something happen to you there?' I asked Dodo gently, handing her a handkerchief. She nodded, tears running down her face, her lower lip quivering. She blew her nose before continuing.

‘I think they gave me shock therapy. I get flashbacks of being strapped to a table, having electrodes put on me and - and -’ It was too much for the young woman, who collapsed into a fit of sobbing. I let her cry, waving away the café’s manageress who was coming over to discover the cause of this heartache.

After a few minutes Dodo had regained her composure. I glanced at my watch - it was nearly midday. ‘Look, I know this is difficult for you,’ I said. ‘I’m very interested in what you have to say. But I need to take notes about what you’re telling me, or get a recording of it. Would you be willing to come to my office so we could do that?’

‘Where’s your office?’

‘It’s at my home, off Wandsworth Common.’

‘I don’t know,’ she said, biting her lip.

‘Look, I don’t blame you for being nervous, but I promise you can leave anytime you want. Bring a friend along for your own peace of mind if you want,’ I suggested.

‘I don’t have any friends anymore. And I haven’t had any peace of mind since they sent me to - that - place.’ She pondered before answering my offer. ‘Okay, I’ll come to your office but I need to be at the hostel by six or else I won’t get a bed for the night.’

We caught a black cab back to my house. I turned up the gas heating, put on a pot of tea and let Dodo wander through the rooms, looking at my possessions which spilled out of as yet unpacked crates in corners. Mostly the boxes held souvenirs from my time as a daily newspaper journalist, but Dodo did discover a framed photograph of Natasha.

‘Who’s this? She’s pretty.’

‘That’s my wife. Soon to be ex-wife. Natasha.’

‘Sorry.’

‘That’s okay,’ I said, handing her a cup of sweet tea. ‘We got married for all the wrong reasons. Why don’t you take your coat off?’ Dodo carefully unknotted the silk tie around her waist and folded it into a pocket before slipping out of her overcoat. Beneath she was wearing a thick blue jumper and workman’s denim jeans. The jumper was riddled with burn holes around the edges. Dodo looked embarrassed about her clothes, her face red from blushing.

‘I got these from the Salvation Army. The jumper used to belong to an old sailor who smoked,’ she said, sheepishly poking a finger through one of the holes in the wool. ‘He used to fall asleep and the cigarettes would burn holes in his clothes.’ There was a mischievous twinkle in her eyes for a moment that I found very appealing, but I quickly remembered why she was in my home.

‘Well, shall we get started?’ I led her into my office. While Dodo made herself comfortable on an amply padded sofa in the corner, I busied myself setting up a recently purchased dictaphone to record our interview. ‘Don’t be nervous of the microphone, it’s just so I can get the facts straight,’ I assured her. ‘You were telling me about being sent to a psychiatric hospital...’

Haltingly, between swallows of tea and long pauses, Dodo told me the story of what had happened to her since C-Day, more than four years previously. She was sent to a succession of psychiatric hospitals and institutions, each one grimmer than the last. Instead of making her better, the brutal methods were actually pushing her sanity further away. A doctor at one hospital near Colchester in Essex used electro-shock therapy on her, giving her dozens of electric shocks over a fourteen-month period.

‘He told me I could leave the hospital any time I wanted but when I tried to go he had me put in a mixed sex ward for the severely disturbed,’ she said, her knuckles white as her fingers clutched at the now cold cup in her hands. ‘I had only been there a few hours when one of the male patients tried to... to...’

The tears came again. Between sobs Dodo said one of the men had tried to rape her. She screamed for help but none came. She shouted to the other patients to aid her but they screamed or cried or laughed or turned away, rocking themselves gently backwards and forwards.

‘The man, he was tearing at my gown, trying to hurt me, trying to -’ The young woman pulled her knees up to her chest, folding her arms around her legs. ‘I kicked out at him, screaming at him to leave me alone. I managed to kick him in the face. He fell backwards and smashed his head on the end of a table. When he hit, it made a sound like an egg cracking open, only much louder. The blood started coming out of his mouth and his nose and he was writhing around on the floor and then - then the bastard wasn’t moving any more. Ever.’

She looked up at me, her eyes blazing with anger.

‘I killed him. I killed him and I was glad.’

The dictaphone clicked off loudly as the tape spool ran out. ‘Now seems like a good time to stop,’ I said. ‘Do you want something to eat? You must be starving, because I certainly am.’

‘What time is it?’ Dodo asked, looking out the window into the early evening darkness. Snowflakes swirled in flurries of wind beneath the streetlights - it was going to be another cold night, with a power cut very likely. I looked at my watch and was startled to find it was nearly seven o’clock.

‘Dodo, I’m really sorry, it’s well after six.’

‘Hell! I’ll never get a bed in the shelter now,’ she cursed.

‘Is there anywhere else? I’ll happily pay for a taxi,’ I offered limply. She just shook her head wearily.

‘No, they’ll all be full on a night like tonight.’ She stood up and started putting her coat on, then paused. ‘I know it’s asking a lot, but I couldn’t stay here for the night? I’ll sleep on the floor...’

‘Of course you can stay here,’ I replied. I had not dared suggest this myself, fearing she might misinterpret my intentions. ‘But there’s no need for you to sleep on the floor! I’ve got a spare bed, and plenty of sheets and blankets. You’re welcome to stay, especially since it’s my fault you’ve missed getting a bed at the hostel. Look, I’m going to cook some food - why don’t you have a bath? There’s plenty of hot water and I’ve put candles and matches in the bathroom in case there’s a power cut.’

‘A bath? Ohh, I haven’t had a good soak for months - at the hostel you have to share the hot water,’ she said with distaste.

While Dodo was in the tub I hunted out some of Natasha’s forgotten clothes and left a pile of them outside the bathroom door. My ex-wife was several inches taller than Dodo, but they were of similar build, so something from the pile ought to fit my guest. The power cut out a few minutes later, leaving me grateful for a gas stove on which to finish cooking supper. Once it was ready I hammered on the bathroom door.

‘I’ll be out in a minute!’ shouted my guest. When she emerged in a cloud of steam, the transformation was astonishing. Her lank, greasy hair was now shining and clean, pulled back with a hairband to reveal her face, smiling and red-cheeked. From the selection of clothes, she had chosen a simple charcoal-blue dress with a delicate lace blouse worn underneath.

‘Sorry, there’s been a power cut so it’s dinner by candlelight I’m afraid - nothing intended by it,’ I said. Dodo’s eyes twinkled wickedly.

‘I bet you say that to all the girls!’ As we ate, I realized I did not even know Dodo’s last name, so I asked her. ‘It’s Chaplet, actually. My proper name is Dorothea Anne Chaplet, but for some reason everyone just calls me Dodo.’

‘Chaplet - that’s a French name, isn’t it?’

‘Yes. I remember doing a school project about family trees once and I traced ours back to the Huguenots, who came to England from France fleeing religious persecution.’

‘That’s right! They settled round here, in the Wandsworth area, around the River Wandle.’

‘It’s strange,’ Dodo said sadly. ‘I can remember doing that school project, but I can’t remember my own mother’s name, or what colour her eyes were. I’ve lost great chunks of my life. I know they’re locked up somewhere inside my head, but I can’t get at them. It’s very frustrating.’

We talked for several hours about growing up and our respective childhoods, carefully skirting around what had happened to Dodo in the last four years. Somehow,

that was separate, as if it belonged to a discussion only to be held in the study. Finally, after midnight, we said goodnight and went to our own beds.

The next morning I was up early, transcribing the recording of our interview from the previous day. I let Dodo sleep on well into the day, guessing she had probably not had a good night's rest in months, even years. She roused just after eleven and emerged blinking into my office.

'God, I slept so well, it was so quiet. You don't know how much noise people make in their sleep until you have to spend every night in a dormitory with 35 others.' She yawned. I sent her to the kitchen in search of breakfast before we resumed the interview. It was time to move on to the subject I really wanted to know about - the Glasshouse. Even as I mentioned the name, Dodo tensed up again.

'I know this is difficult, but just take your time,' I said, doing my best to reassure her. 'For a start, why don't you try telling me how you ended up there?'

Slowly, painfully, she recounted her travails after the death of the male patient who tried to rape her. Declared a hopeless case, Dodo had been transferred to what was described to her as 'a radical new centre for psychiatric treatment' outside London. She never knew its proper name or location, just that it was nicknamed the Glasshouse and only the worst cases were being sent there.

'I woke up to find myself in this ward full of empty beds. I was strapped down on a bed, unable to move. The walls and floor were all gleaming white, but the ceiling and roof - they were made of glass, like a conservatory. There were cameras sticking out of the walls, watching me. It was like being trapped inside a giant goldfish-bowl,' said Dodo, shuddering at the memory.

There were nurses and orderlies, but they all wore masks, so she never saw the faces of any of the staff. Several times Dodo was wheeled through the hospital on her way to 'treatment' sessions, still strapped to her bed. She saw dozens of other wards, all with only one or two patients in each room.

'I couldn't understand how they could run a hospital like that, even a psychiatric one. It just didn't make any sense.' She was kept heavily sedated and much of her time in the Glasshouse was a drug-soaked blur, but she did remember a few key incidents. 'One time I overheard a nurse and an orderly talking about the patient in the next room. He was a soldier who had just been sent to the Glasshouse by something called UNIT. The director wanted to see this soldier immediately.'

'A soldier from UNIT? Are you sure about that?' I asked. This was the first real link I had between the covert intelligence taskforce and the Glasshouse. I wanted to know more, but was mindful that I could not press Dodo too hard. She wanted to help me, but she had to be allowed to do so at her own pace.

'It was definitely UNIT. I thought they had meant the soldier's unit, as in the squad he was posted with, but the name came up another time, when I had my session with the director,' she explained. Dodo could not remember his name, but said he seemed to

have a hold of terror over the inmates and even the staff. 'When his name was mentioned they nearly crossed themselves, like Catholics in church.'

'What can you tell me about the director?'

'It's hazy. I remember his eyes, they were jet black and seemed to burn right into your soul. He kept asking me about UNIT, what did I know about it, and what did I know about doctors. I thought he was asking me about the doctor who gave me the shock therapy but when I tried to tell him about that, it just made him angrier.' She shook her head, as if she were under interrogation again.

'Dodo? Dodo! It's okay, you're safe now,' I said, snapping her back to reality. 'Look, I've got other things to do for the next hour, why don't you make some lunch until I'm finished. We can go on with this later.' She smiled and wandered out, the dark memories of the Glasshouse seemingly banished for a while. While she went into the kitchen I made an urgent phone call to Catherine in the *Chronicle's* clippings library.

'Catherine, I'm really sorry to call you at work, but I was wondering if you could do a careful search for me. The name I'm after is Dorothea or Dodo Chaplet - anything you've got.'

'Dodo? As in the extinct bird?' Catherine asked. Less than half an hour later she called back. 'Sorry James, nothing on either name.'

'That was quick! Haven't you got anything better to do with your time? *Chronicle* not keeping you busy?'

'In case you hadn't noticed, there's been a snowstorm overnight and most of the roads and rail lines into London are shut. Most of the bosses are working from home, and we certainly won't be seeing any freelancers in the building today. Us mere mortals had to struggle in anyway,' she replied tartly. I sometimes got the impression she had never forgiven me for leaving the *Chronicle*. 'You were one of the last surviving specimens of intelligent life in captivity here,' she had said when I told her I was leaving. 'Now it's just me again.'

I went into the kitchen to find Dodo had prepared a thick, meaty soup for lunch. As we ate in silence, I noticed she had begun unpacking and finding home for the crates of saucepans, plates and cutlery that had stood untouched in the kitchen since I first moved in months before.

'I hope you don't mind, I had to start unpacking to find anything to cook with,' she said, grinning. I said that was fine: it was nice to see the place being turned into a real home at last. An idea was starting to form in my mind, but I kept it to myself for now.

After lunch we went back to my office for a final interview session. I asked Dodo to tell me how she got out of the Glasshouse, if security was so tight. She had already described the barred windows and dozens of locked doors which kept the patients firmly imprisoned.

‘Inmates would be a better description. It was curious. I got the impression there were psychiatric sessions going on but only a handful of patients took part in them. When the director couldn’t get what he wanted out of me, the staff almost seemed to forget I existed. Once I spent nearly three days strapped to my bed unattended: no food, no bedpans, nothing. It was terrible, degrading having to lie there in my own...’

After a few moments to compose herself, she resumed. ‘It was like we were there to suit the purposes of the director and his staff. The Glasshouse wasn’t about helping people or curing them of mental illness, it was more like a prison or a concentration camp.

‘Anyway, after what seemed like weeks or even months, the director came to see me for a final visit, this time in my own ward. He tried asking me the same old questions again, but I just screamed at him to leave me alone. He shook his head and ordered a nurse to unstrap me. The director said I could leave any time I wanted and had some clothes brought in. They both watched me while I dressed and then the director escorted me out through a series of security doors and gates.

‘We stopped outside a plain-white wooden door and this evil man, who had been interrogating me and then ignoring me for weeks, he said something strange to me. I can still remember word for word: “You are a very obdurate young woman; you’ve been trained very well. But I will make sure you never trouble me again.” The next thing I knew I was wandering around in a shopping centre on the outskirts of London.’

‘And you can’t remember anything about where the Glasshouse was or what the building looked like from outside?’

Dodo shook her head. ‘The director did something to me, took my memories away about the - about that place. I think I was there several months ago, but I’m only just starting to remember it all now. The blackouts and holes in my mind keep getting worse, not better.

‘Since then I’ve been wandering around London, with no real home, nowhere to go for sanctuary. The hostel is okay, but some of the people there are not much better off than the other prisoners I saw at the Glasshouse. Their minds are in pieces. I suppose I’m a bit like that too.’ Her eyes clouded over, as if she had lapsed deep into her own private thoughts. Leaving her to ponder, I began fixing some dinner and did some thinking of my own.

Dodo was a bright, intelligent woman who had been deeply screwed up by a series of incidents. Despite these, I did not believe she was in any way dangerous or deranged. She could be charming and funny and had a natural innocence that even the events of the past few years had not completely extinguished. God knows, she was a better cook than I could ever hope to be and brought some warmth and sparkle into my functional but dreary home. I made up my mind and put a proposition to her over dinner that night.

‘Dodo, I was wondering... instead of going back to the hostel, would you like to stay here? I’ve got plenty of spare rooms. Of course if you do stay, you’re under no obligation to me in any way and I understand, of course, if you’d rather not -’

‘James, shut up!’ she chided. ‘I’d love to stay here -’

‘Oh, well that’s -’

‘- on three conditions. One, I pull my weight around here by doing some cleaning and other work. Two, you let me sort out some of the rooms. Most of your possessions are still packed in the boxes in which they arrived here and the whole place needs some decorating and fixing up. Three, if at any time either of us is unhappy with the arrangement, I can leave or be asked to leave at two day’s notice,’ said Dodo, before finally stopping for breath. She had obviously been thinking along the same lines as me, but had gone much further. ‘Well, what do you think?’

‘It’s a deal!’

We celebrated with a bottle of red wine and talked long into the night, getting to know more about each other. I did most of the talking, regaling my new house guest with tall tales from my time as a daily newspaper journalist.

After a long, relaxed evening, saying goodnight to each other proved to be a nervous, stuttering moment. Dodo stopped outside my bedroom door and looked hard at me. ‘Thank you for letting me stay, James. You don’t know how much it means to me to have a home again. I’ve been alone for so long,’ she whispered, on the verge of tears. She balanced precariously on tip-toes to kiss me on the cheek before disappearing into her own room.

Over the following weeks we grew to be the best of friends. While I worked on my research into UNIT and Doctor John Smith, Dodo was busy sorting out the house. She put up shelves and lined them with my books and photographs (although all pictures of Natasha remained boxed away), and she built wardrobes for clothes. For a fortnight the floor was a sea of stripped wallpaper as she redecorated the rooms one by one. Next, she repainted the ceilings, doing my bedroom and the study while I went out of London to chase interviews with several people I knew had experience of UNIT or the different operatives known as the Doctor.

I returned to discover the house transformed. She was painting the ceiling of her bedroom when I came back and half-jokingly complained I was not due back for another day. ‘I wanted to have it all done before you got back, but the paint fumes in here are almost overpowering.’

I took her out for a meal to celebrate and we both laughed when the maître d’ thought we must be recently married. After one too many bottles of wine we staggered back to the house, where Dodo’s bedroom was dense with fumes from the drying paintwork.

‘Guess I’ll have to sleep on the sofa tonight,’ Dodo giggled. I nearly said something but kept my silence. It had been a wonderful evening and I did not wish to ruin it or

our friendship. Instead I playfully threw some blankets at her and headed for the bathroom.

When I emerged several minutes later, Dodo was standing in the hallway outside, struggling to undo the catch at the back of her dress. She was wearing one of Natasha's old black-sequinned minis, but on Dodo it reached down to her knees. 'Could you undo me, please? I can't seem to reach it.'

She turned around and held her lengthening hair up away from the zip with her hands. I fumbled with the recalcitrant catch for a moment, tugging hard without success until it fell apart completely. My hand holding the zipper slid down Dodo's back, brushing over the smooth white skin beneath, lingering over the fastening on her black, silky bra.

'You can undo that too, if you like,' she whispered.

TWELVE

From: Private F. Cleary
UK Division, UNIT
December 1970

Dear Mum

Things are getting worse for me, I don't know how much longer I can cope. I've seen something I can't explain, something XXXXX, and it's frightened me a lot. After the riot where I murdered that man, I went through a very rough patch. I spent a lot of time talking with the chaplain, trying to sort myself out.

He said my guilt was only natural. I had killed in self-defence and in a good cause, so it was not murder. I'm not sure that I believed him, but he's a priest and priests can't lie, can they?

The sergeant also gave me a good talking to - told me to buck my ideas up. He said if I didn't pull myself together he'd have to report my conduct to the Brig. I guess I was letting the squad down. The other boys had been doing a lot of my cleaning duties for me and keeping me going. They're a good bunch of lads and I realized that maybe what everyone said was right. Killing is wrong, but sometimes it's necessary. At least, that's what I kept telling myself. I almost believed it.

But now...

Now I don't know if I can believe what I see with my own eyes.

It started when we had to go on guard duty at the XXXXX Power Complex. I don't know what you've heard but there was an attack on the complex. That's pretty serious when you realize that XXXXX is a nuclear power generator and it provides electricity for a lot of the South. Anyway, the authorities got wind of the attack in advance and sent UNIT in to sort things out. There seemed to be a lot of top brass involved - the Brig, the Doctor and some pompous little upstart from Whitehall called Chinn. Called himself a one-man Committee of Enquiry, but he just seemed full of his own importance to me!

Anyway, there was something very strange going on. The weather kept changing every five minutes - one second it'd be hot and sunny, the next there'd be snow on the ground. We didn't know what was happening or which kit we should be wearing. The sergeant just told us to wrap up warm and be ready for anything.

I got put on guard duty with Billy Boyle. He'd been with UNIT for nearly two years but he didn't like to talk about what he'd seen. He'd just mumble about things I wouldn't believe and tell me not to ask too many questions, 'coz I wouldn't like his answers. So it was a pretty quiet stretch for the first three hours we were there. The gate we were guarding was the side entrance to the main reactor building and there wasn't going to be any action near us, the sergeant said. He was wrong.

It started with this strange-looking orange guy walking towards us. He looked like he ought to be a modern dancer or something, he had this weird body-suit on, all swirling brown and orange it was - played tricks on your eyes. His hands and his face were sort of gold-orange too, and they shone as if they were part metal. His head and face were the strangest of all. He had these huge bulging eyes that didn't have any pupils and his hair was like thick, curly strands of copper wire.

Billy called out a friend or foe greeting but this orange guy he just kept coming towards us. I used my walkie-talkie to call for support while Billy approached the intruder. He was just giving the orange guy another warning when the intruder seemed to change before our eyes. His shape started to blur and then he wasn't a man anymore, he had turned into some sort of XXXXXXXX, as big as two men.

Now this XXXXXX seemed to be made out of a swirling mass of XXXXXX with XXXXXXXXXX all of it orange and red, pulsating like it was alive. One of the XXXXXXXXXX reached out and grabbed Billy by the throat. He screamed and his body jerked around like he'd had an electric shock. Then the XXXXXXXXXX flung Billy's body on the ground and started coming towards me. I got my rifle up and shot off a full clip, but the bullets just disappeared into the XXXXXX's guts without leaving a trace.

It started reaching out towards me. I tried to run but it was like my feet were frozen to the spot. One of the XXXXXXXXXX flew towards me. There was a white flash and a second of incredible pain, like my head was going to explode. After that, everything went black.

I woke up two days later in a bed at UNIT's medical centre. The nurses said I was likely to be alive - I'd had enough electricity put through me to light up all of Merseyside. They showed me my rifle, which was all buckled and twisted. I had big burns across my hands where I'd been holding it when the XXXXX touched me.

The Brig came round to talk to me. He thanked me for my bravery and reminded me that under the terms of the Official Secrets Act I was not allowed to talk to anyone outside UNIT about what I had seen. He also told me that Billy was dead. It seems the XXXXXXXX had used up most of its juice on him - that's how I had survived. That just made me feel guilty. How come I lived and Billy died? It could have been me the XXXXX killed.

The Brig said what I had seen was an hallucination, used by terrorists to make me believe I was seeing some sort of XXXXX. When I insisted that's what I had seen, the Brig smiled, but said I was obviously still suffering from the delusion and needed some more rest and relaxation. He said the good news was that we had managed to beat the terrorists, thanks to help from the Doctor.

When he was telling me it was all a mirage in my mind, somehow I knew he was lying. I know what I saw and it was a huge orange XXXXX. I can't explain what it was, or where it came from, or how it could change its shape like that, or anything else about it, but I know what I saw was real. And it was bloody frightening.

I don't know if I can cope with being in UNIT. There's something very strange about the sort of missions we get and the sort of enemies we have to fight. If I had known it was going to be like this, I would never have volunteered.

I hope my letter hasn't scared you, Mum. Just know that I'm trying to keep safe and look after myself. I've only got another few months before I can return to my old squad in the regular Army. After the things I've seen and done recently, a stint on the streets of Belfast will seem like light relief!

Your loving son
Francis

This letter has been censored under the terms of the Official Secrets Act.

THIRTEEN

January-March 1971

My series of interviews outside London had been only partially successful. Several of the people I wanted to talk with about UNIT and its activities were happy to speak with me but only as 'deep background', meaning they would never be identified in print and would only confirm or deny facts I had already gleaned from other sources. Others were dubious about talking with me at all, while several threatened to get the authorities on to me. But nobody was willing to go on the record and speak publicly about UNIT, C19 or the Doctor.

One of my primary targets was Professor Elizabeth Shaw, who was leading a highly secretive new research project at Cambridge. My old contact Martha at the Ministry of Science had tipped me off that Professor Shaw had been seconded from Cambridge in 1969 to work with a certain top secret intelligence taskforce, but had left after a year to go back to Cambridge. If I could get her to talk, it would be a major breakthrough for my investigation. After several of my messages for Professor Shaw met with a stony silence, I gave up for a while and got on with other work.

The new Heath Government had a very short honeymoon, with blame for the collapse of the World Peace Conference in November 1970 being laid squarely at its door. There were rumours circulating about lapses in security for the conference, which had been provided by an unnamed but highly regarded 'international intelligence taskforce' under the Government's authority. That got my attention, but as usual, getting anyone to talk openly about this incident proved impossible.

The Government responded to this loss of confidence by creating a new department, the Ministry of Security. Its purpose was to gather all of Britain's intelligence divisions and agencies under one umbrella, bringing about a greater coordination and cooperation between them. A source of mine likened the task of this new ministry to putting a cobra, a hammerhead shark and a man-eating tiger into a small wicker basket together, giving them a good shake and expecting them all to come out as the best of friends.

'Not very realistic,' my source said wearily. I had known him off and on for two and a half years and trusted him impeccably. He disappeared for long periods at a time and always contacted me when he wanted to talk. Highly placed within the intelligence community, it seemed to amuse him to have an investigative journalist like myself as a confidant. He never lied to me, he never exaggerated and he always gave a direct answer to any direct question - if he could. The only time he hesitated from revealing a fact was when it could in turn reveal him as the source of such a leak. During all my dealings with him, we never used each other's real names. Instead we adopted codenames. He was Cassandra, I was Whiti. It was a contrivance, but one that amused us both.

Cassandra absolutely refused to talk about UNIT except on one occasion. In all our other meetings, he would not be drawn on the subject. 'If I told you what they really

do, you wouldn't believe me,' was all he would say about the matter. Talking about C19 was just as much off limits. Indeed, it was Cassandra who had warned me off investigating C19.

'Keep away. You think you know all about C19 - it's just the spy ministry, and that's partially true. But there is a much darker side to it. There's a secret within the secret service - a team of operatives that has got near total autonomy and dirty tricks that defy belief. Even I can't bring it under control,' my source confided, genuine fear in his voice.

In January 1971, I had a rare face-to-face meeting with Cassandra to talk about the new Government department and its role and functions. We met in a busy road services café halfway to Bath at noon one Friday, the location being Cassandra's suggestion. 'This way, if anybody sees us together, I can claim to be sitting opposite you by chance because all the other seats were taken,' he explained.

He was scathing about the Ministry of Security. 'Amateurs and idiots' was his considered opinion. Cassandra said the civil service had used the establishment of this new ministry to transfer every half-wit, malcontent and piece of deadwood from other departments into one place. 'The whole set-up is a farce and the Ministry of Security will be lucky to see the end of the year. It's been sabotaged from within by mutual agreement of all the intelligence services. First thing they've agreed on in years,' he said wryly over a large fried lunch.

Cassandra cited as an example of this sabotage the case of one Horatio Chinn. 'The man's a buffoon! He'd been knocking around various Government departments since the war, thinking he's some sort of trouble-shooting Napoleon, cutting through red tape and bureaucracy.'

'I don't hear a hint of self interest here, do I?' I said cheekily. Cassandra just glared at me before continuing.

'In reality Chinn's only talent is stroking the egos of insecure Ministers and parliamentary private secretaries of Her Majesty's Government. That's how he had managed to get so far in the civil service while maintaining his reputation as a congenital idiot with everyone not motivated by politics and a hunger for winning votes.

'Anyway, it was decided that this tin-pot, power-crazed fool would be the perfect candidate for inclusion at the new Ministry of Security,' my source explained. 'Subtle hints were dropped in Chinn's presence about a high-flying new posting at the MoS and he was round at the Minister's house currying favour before you could say Charles Manson.

'A few days later it was announced within Whitehall that Horatio Chinn had been appointed as a special advisor to the Minister of Security and we all breathed a sigh of relief. But a few weeks something happened that could be particularly relevant to your current investigations,' Cassandra said.

‘For once the Government had picked a Minister with something between his ears. The new boy quickly realized that Chinn might be good at flattery, but failed miserably at almost everything else. After a few weeks, the Minister couldn’t stand this little megalomaniac any longer and came to my humble self for advice. He wanted a poison chalice to finish Chinn off once and for all, so I gave him the name of some friends of yours, Whiti.’

I always got the impression that my source had missed his calling in life and should have been a storyteller, due to his great love of building suspense in an audience. I happily played along. ‘Friends of mine?’

By now the café was emptying out and the seats around us were empty. Cassandra bent forward to whisper a name in my ear, checking first to make sure no one was within hearing. ‘UNIT.’

‘What?!’

‘I thought you’d appreciate that. I told the Minister that UNIT was impossible to control and had been a thorn in the side of the intelligence community for years. It needed a strong-willed dynamo who would not be put off by rules, regulations or red tape. Confidentially, I also told him that by putting the highly combustible Horatio Chinn on UNIT’s back, he could pit two of his biggest irritants against each other, thus killing two birds with one stone. With any luck, at least one of them might self-destruct - certainly they would cancel each other out for a while and the Minister could get on with some real work.’

By now I was intrigued but did not start taking notes of the conversation. Cassandra and I had an unspoken agreement that his information was strictly deep background and certainly never for attribution. I spent our rare talks desperately cramming his information into my brain for later recall and investigation. ‘So, what happened?’

‘A battle royal apparently, between the civil servant from hell and the career soldier with a mandate from Geneva, Brigadier Alistair Gordon Lethbridge-Stewart. Just when Chinn was beginning to wear Lethbridge-Stewart down, UNIT was called to an "incident" near the Nuton Power Complex. Nuton is a nuclear power station which supplies power for most of Southern England and any threats to its safety are taken very seriously.

‘A discovery was made near Nuton, something of great importance to the world - that was the whisper around Whitehall.’ Cassandra held up a hand to silence me before I could speak. ‘Don’t even ask me what, I am not at liberty to reveal that information and you wouldn’t believe me even if I did tell you. Suffice to say, Chinn seized upon this discovery as his ticket to the top.

‘But something went very, very wrong and the power complex itself was affected. Nuton was within minutes of going critical and most of the Home Counties would have been utterly irradiated in the resulting meltdown. Considering the number of Tory voters that would have vaporized, you can understand the Minister’s irritation. UNIT’s operatives were able to prevent the disaster and the highly classified official investigation into the incident laid the blame for the whole fiasco firmly at the door of

Horatio Chinn. He got an early retirement - with a generous pay-off and full pension, of course! - and UNIT became flavour of the month with the Minister. As I understand it, they're still rebuilding parts of the power complex destroyed in the incident.'

I wanted to press Cassandra for more information but had learnt to take whatever he was willing to let slip and carefully follow it up afterwards. We left the café separately, with Cassandra slipping out first, leaving me with the bill and a lot to think about.

I spent the rest of January trying to discover more about the Nuton crisis without success. The Government had slapped enough D-notices on the incident to wallpaper Whitehall and no-one intimately involved with what had happened was willing to talk. I got a few hints, a description of one of the UNIT operatives that matched the Doctor operative I had seen at Stangmoor, and a bizarre story from a former worker at the complex about orange monsters from outer space trying to take over the world. But after nearly three weeks investigation, I could find nothing concrete or useful. Intriguing as Cassandra's tip-off had been, it was just another unanswered riddle in the larger mystery about UNIT's activities and the enigmatic Doctor.

In late February 1971 I realized I could easily spend the rest of my life researching a book about UNIT, C19, and the Glasshouse without ever getting any closer to the truth. It was time to start writing. I was certain that once the book was published it would bring all manner of hell down upon me. But I also believed it would encourage a lot of people to come forward who had so far been unwilling to talk. But before I could begin writing, there was another twist of events.

* * *

The phone call from Cambridge came as a complete surprise. It was just after nine on a chilly morning in March 1971, and I was finishing my daily trawl through the papers in search of leads on new UNIT activity or appearances by one of the men known as 'the Doctor'. On my office desk the page proofs for my JFK book awaited my attention. I was just about to tackle them when the telephone rang.

'Is that James Stevens?' a haughty female voice asked.

'Yes, speaking.'

'I understand you've been trying to contact me.'

'Quite possible,' I replied, slightly mystified. 'What's your name?'

'Shaw. Professor Elizabeth Shaw.' That got my attention. I had been leaving messages for Professor Shaw across Cambridge for months but had given up hope of ever getting a reply. Now, it seemed, she was calling me - but would she be willing to talk? I decided to take the gentle approach. Quickly grabbing a notebook and pen, I began scrawling down key points I wished to put to her, while asking my first question.

'I'm an investigative journalist looking into new advances in British scientific research,' I fibbed, crossing my fingers. This was not a complete lie, but it was pretty close. My caller could hang up at any time and that would be a wasted opportunity. With her apparent closeness to UNIT, she was potentially an incredible source of vital information about the taskforce's activities. I had no idea how delicate she was about the subject of UNIT, so I decided to work my way to the topic slowly. But Professor Shaw was rather more blunt than I expected.

'That's funny,' she said, 'I heard you were investigating a certain intelligence taskforce linked to the United Nations.'

'Yes, that too,' I replied with a smile, trying to keep the tension out of my voice. She had spoken the words that almost nobody else would even acknowledge as easily as if she had said her own name. I decided to shoot for the Moon. 'I was wondering if we could meet to talk about your time with UNIT?'

There was a long, ominous silence, finally broken up by a strange puffing noise that I could not identify, like some organic steam train approaching, coming ever closer. What the hell was going on? 'Professor Shaw, are you still there? Are you alright? Professor Shaw?'

'Sorry,' she laughed. 'I'm just lighting my pipe. Look, I don't get down to London very often, can you come up here to Cambridge?'

'Yes, of course. When and where should we meet?' We quickly arranged an appointment to meet at lunchtime in the science section of Heffer's Books for the following Friday. Professor Shaw bid me farewell and rung off, still puffing her pipe.

I sat back in my office chair, feeling elated. My armpits were drenched with sweat and my heart was racing. I had an appointment with a scientific researcher who was a former member of the UNIT staff. This was the breakthrough I had been working towards these long months. Of course, there was no guarantee Professor Shaw would talk. This could all be an elaborate plan to entrap me into some crime or some admission.

Yet, for once, I felt my paranoia was unjustified. I had not been threatened or followed for months as far as I was aware, and the strange clicking noises on the phone had stopped too. Since Dodo's arrival in my life, everything was better, happier and even the malevolent shadow of C19's dirty tricks team seemed to have lifted from my life. Also, Professor Shaw had been nothing but courteous and helpful, had not flinched away from talking about UNIT the way almost everybody else did. Perhaps, for once, I had found someone who was willing and able to talk about my quarry. All would be revealed at our meeting this Friday.

Despite myself, I could not help taking Dodo out for a meal to celebrate. Even if the breakthrough was just another wild-goose chase, it had lifted my spirits. Dodo said that was worth celebrating in itself. We went on to a nightclub afterwards and finally got home around three in the morning to discover the front door hanging off its hinges. The scene inside the house sobered me up damn quickly.

The interior of the house had been trashed, seemingly by burglars. Chairs and tables were smashed, obscene graffiti had been painted onto the walls, and the stereo and television were both missing. But there was something too precise, too measured about the damage. Even the graffiti was just too neat and grammatically perfect. Either the intruders were well educated, or else they were not really burglars at all. Sick realization drove me towards my office, where the triple deadbolts had been smashed open with a mallet, while the main lock had been delicately picked open first with no sign of damage - hardly the behaviour of petty criminals.

Inside, the floor was strewn with papers and notebooks, with a smouldering pile of documents burning feebly in the centre of the rug. The fire had gone out at least an hour before - the intruders had long since left the scene. Dodo was nearly hysterical at all the damage. 'Your notes, all your work!' she sobbed.

I did my best to soothe her. 'It's not that bad, I've kept back-up copies of the most important documents,' I reassured her. 'Why don't you fix us both a brandy for our nerves while I start cleaning up in here?' She nodded, her lower lip still trembling and went out of the room.

I pulled back my heavy wooden desk to reveal the old safe I had installed in the floor when I first moved into the house. At the time I had thought myself deeply paranoid but the last break-in at the flat in Chelsea had convinced me to take such extreme precautions. I had bought the floor safe from an old pawnbroker I knew, when he was going out of business. Saul had a shop near Fleet Street and had got good business from reporters through the years, who frequently went through periods of financial embarrassment. I had even bought my wedding ring from Saul.

He once told me he had hoped to pass the business on to his son, Jacob, but the boy had died during the war and now it was time for Saul to retire to the family home in Golders Green. I bought his own jewellery safe and now used it to store all my most important notes and files. But had the intruders discovered this vital hiding place?

I opened the safe to find its contents untouched and offered up a little prayer of thanks to Saul. He was still helping out journalists, even in retirement. After locking everything back into the safe and shifting my desk back into position, I went into the kitchen and shared a large brandy with Dodo to steady my nerves.

We spent the next three days repainting the walls and tidying up after the break-in. I never reported it to the police because I did not trust the authorities anymore. What would I do if two C19 operatives turned up to deal with my complaint? That was what I believed had happened when I was still at the *Chronicle* and I did not feel like inviting them into my home again. They seemed to be making their own appointments, anyway.

Friday came and I debated long and hard before travelling up to Cambridge for my meeting with Professor Shaw. It seemed to be no coincidence that the break-in happened while I was out celebrating my phone call from her. Grimly determined to confront her with accusations to this effect, I took the train up to Cambridge. A short taxi ride delivered me into the centre of the university town and I quickly located the science section in the main branch of Heffers' Bookshop.

I mulled my way through several weighty tomes about genetics without understanding a word before I was finally approached by a young woman.

‘Can I help you?’ she asked politely.

‘Actually, no,’ I admitted guiltily. She looked familiar but I did not say so out loud, in case she thought I was making a pass at her. ‘I’m not really interested in buying a book, I’m just here waiting to meet someone.’

‘I know,’ said the woman, offering me her hand to shake. ‘I’m Professor Shaw, but you can call me Liz - everybody does.’

I shook her hand, finally remembering where I had seen her before. Professor Shaw had been the young woman accompanying Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart when he visited the Ashbridge Cottage Hospital back in October ‘69, just before the Black Thursday incident. I had hardly glanced at her then, not realizing the significance of her presence. Now I had a chance to study her more closely. Professor Shaw was barely thirty, her honey-brown hair framing a finely featured face with twinkling, mischievous eyes. She was dressed in a smart but casual trouser suit.

‘You were expecting someone older?’ she asked.

‘Actually, yes, I was,’ I admitted, wrong-footed again.

‘Don’t worry, I’m not offended, everybody does it. It’s still hard enough being taken seriously as a woman scientist without having to worry that you’re not old enough to be credible either.’

‘It’s not just that, I suddenly realized I’ve seen you before. You were with Lethbridge-Stewart at Ashbridge Cottage Hospital where they had the meteor man from space scare.’

‘Ah yes, not one of tabloid journalism’s greatest moments,’ she said. ‘Come on - let’s go get some lunch!’

Liz led me through a dizzying series of back streets and narrow alleyways, all the while discussing the worrying state of global affairs. Clouds of smoke billowed from a pipe she started smoking. ‘Disgusting habit, I know, but what can you do? Anyway - in here!’ She disappeared down a thin wooden staircase and I followed cautiously after.

We emerged in the smoke-shrouded basement of a pub. Two old men playing chess in a corner acknowledged a cheerful greeting from the scientist. Liz hammered on the bar several times and was eventually rewarded with the appearance of a glowering barmaid. After ordering drinks and food, we sat in an alcove at the back of the basement bar. Before I could say a word, the professor took control of the conversation.

‘At this point I am required to tell you that under the terms of the Official Secrets Act, the Peacetime Nuclear Emergency Act, and several other pieces of legislation that carry lengthy prison sentences and even the death penalty as punishments, I am unable to tell you anything about almost anything. However, I’m interested to hear what questions you have to ask me, and you may discover the accuracy or otherwise of your findings so far,’ she said happily. ‘No notetaking, no recording, nothing on the record, and certainly no mention of my name in any publication or broadcast. So, that’s the guidelines laid out - what do you want to know?’

I put my notebook back in my pocket and sighed. This was not going to be easy. ‘You were seconded from Cambridge in ‘69 to work for UNIT -’

‘Yes, I was seconded from Cambridge in 1969. I went to work in London for an international taskforce whose name I am neither able to confirm nor deny,’ replied Liz.

‘What was your role at – err - this taskforce?’

‘Try to avoid open-ended questions. Put statements to me and I may be able to give you yes or no answers. I can’t go any further than that,’ she suggested. At this point the barmaid stomped over with our drinks and food. Despite my misgivings about the pub, the ale was excellent and my shepherd’s pie was tasty and filling.

Once the meal was underway and we were alone again, I began the delicate task of trying to prise information out of Professor Shaw. It was a bit like walking through a minefield blindfolded, never knowing when a question would blow up in my face. Liz apologized twice for not being more forthcoming but she was not free to do so. Gradually, I built up a picture of her time at UNIT.

She had not gone to the ‘international taskforce’ willingly, but soon grew to like it there. She worked as a scientific adviser alongside another person whom she could not discuss. She was directly answerable to Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart, the British head of the international taskforce. ‘That’s a matter of public record,’ she said.

Professor Shaw would neither confirm nor deny anything about anyone known as ‘the Doctor’ or as ‘Doctor John Smith’. She had been present at or involved with several of the flashpoints I had detailed in my *Bad Science* book, including Wenley Moor, the Mars Probe crisis and Project Inferno, but was unable to discuss them further. She had left the international taskforce amicably some months after the closure of Project Inferno and was now undertaking research into genetic engineering and genetic diseases, with a special focus on the reptile world. No, she had not remained in regular contact with the other members of the international taskforce; the nature of their work precluded such contact.

Obtaining these few scraps of information had taken me nearly an hour, at the end of which I felt Liz knew a lot more about my investigations than I knew about her work at UNIT. I put it to her that she had been asked by UNIT or the Doctor to find out how much I already knew. Perhaps she was now linked to C19...?

She flinched at the last name. 'I can tell you categorically that I am not and never have been a willing participant in the activities of the organization you have just mentioned.'

'C19?'

'I can also tell you that the international taskforce for which I worked liaised with the Government via the department you have just named. I'm sorry, that's all I can say on the subject.'

Liz was no longer smiling or cheerful. All colour had drained from her face and she seemed genuinely afraid at the mention of the name C19. Had she been threatened by an operative from C19? I asked her several different questions to get at the topic but she would not budge. 'Change the subject or I'll walk out that door immediately,' she warned.

'OK, OK!' I said, trying to soothe her. I went to the bar to get more drinks. When I returned to the alcove, Liz apologized for her outburst.

'It's just that there are things I've seen, things that I've experienced that I would prefer never to have to think about again. All right?'

I nodded.

'Look, I'm sorry I can't give you the sort of information that you want. I wish I could,' Liz said. 'I honestly think you've got some of your facts wrong, or rather that you've interpreted events the wrong way round and it's going to get you into trouble. I wish I could tell you what really happened at Wenley Moor and other places, but even if I did you'd never believe me.' She stood to leave. 'Just be careful, that's all I'm saying. Be careful.'

I pondered her words while I finished my pint. Liz had come across as caring about what I would write and genuinely concerned I should get facts straight. But she was unwilling or unable to give me any evidence to support what little she had said. Like Greg Sutton, Isobel Watkins and others before, she had seemed credible, yet the version of UNIT reality she offered was totally at odds with the evidence I had gathered.

I was so absorbed by my thoughts, I hardly noticed that the barmaid had disappeared during my interview with Professor Shaw and the chess players had wandered out soon after her as well. Now a large man with straw-coloured hair stood in the shadows behind the bar. I was contemplating another pint when he came over to the alcove. Probably hoping to clear the glasses away, I guessed, and offered him my empty pint. Instead he grabbed my shirt and hauled me up out of my chair.

'This is your first and last warning. Stop messing with C19 or else we'll mess you up - permanent! Understand?' He spat the words into my face, a meaty fist pulled back ready to strike. I nodded hastily, all the while trying to burn his features into my memory.

The face was broad and deeply tanned, eyes brown and wide with anger, his top lip curled in a snarl. Just inches away from his face, I realised his hair was more blond than yellow, its lightness accentuated by the depth of his tan. Willing myself to concentrate, I tried to prepare myself for the blows that would surely come.

Instead the blond man hurled me across the room. I skidded on the wooden floor and crashed against the base of the stairs. My attacker stomped across the basement to stand over me. 'Go to the police about this and we'll find you and kill you. Now get out, while you can still walk, you little parasite!' he shouted, kicking me in the stomach. I managed to haul myself up the stairs and out into the street, where I vomited my lunch out on to the pub's steps. It was a long stagger to the nearest street before I could hail a taxi to the station and my train back to London.

The next few days I spent in bed recovering from my injuries. I had a cracked rib and my stomach muscles were severely bruised. Dodo doted over me, keeping up a brave face but I knew she was just trying to hide her fears. Eventually, she broke down and admitted her real feelings.

'I just get so scared sometimes,' she sobbed. 'Everything before I met you is a jumble. I don't know what's truth and what's not anymore. You're the only concrete thing I've got to hang on to and if anything ever happened to you...'

'Nothing's going to happen to me, we'll both be fine,' I assured her.

Dodo tried to believe me, but still said she felt haunted. 'It's as if something is out there, waiting to get me, circling. I can almost feel its hands around my throat,' she cried, clutching at her neck.

I held her and caressed her and soothed away her tears. How could I tell her how scared I really was?

* * *

Outside, the world seemed to be plunging ever closer to a nuclear conflict from which no one nation could ever hope to emerge as victor. The collapse of the World Peace Conference in London had pushed events that much closer to nuclear conflict. Reports from behind the Iron Curtain suggested the health of Nikita Khrushchev was failing. Although it was nearly seven years since his removal from the office of Premier, the old, cold warrior still exerted considerable influence over the ruling Politburo in the Soviet Union.

Now, as that influence waned with his health, hardliners were taking over crucial seats in the ruling communist committee. Border incidents between the USSR and China were increasing and war was becoming increasingly inevitable. If those two superpowers clashed, the entire world would quickly be dragged down with them, according to worried-looking political pundits on the news and late-night TV shows.

I was aware of these events happening, but unless they directly infringed upon my investigation into UNIT, C19, and the Glasshouse, this escalation towards a third world war had little effect on me. I was utterly focussed on my quest for the truth, to

the exclusion of everything outside that focus - excluding Dodo. When I stopped work each day, Dodo and I would eat supper and watch the news. She was becoming increasingly worried about the world situation but I barely noticed. For the first time in my life, I was falling in love.

Now that I had some distance from my marriage to Natasha, I realized it had been about everything but us. She married me to enrage her father, and I had the same reasons. But I also wanted to thumb my nose at authority; to upset the rich and powerful by marrying into their cosy little world; to be a brash colonial upstart creating some hell in high places. The two of us were young and immature. Being in love or making a life-long commitment had been the last things on our minds.

Natasha tried to make the marriage work far more than I ever did, and for a time we were happy together. But the intervention of C19 destroyed that happiness, making me all the more determined to expose covert agencies. Occasionally I could not help but wonder what had happened to our child? Had Natasha gone ahead with the pregnancy, and if so, was it a boy or a girl? It was hard to believe I was probably a father and yet I would never see my own son or daughter.

Instead I turned all my affections toward Dodo. Both of us had been badly hurt; both of us were missing something in our lives. Now, I was finding out what love really meant with Dodo and I had never been happier. Our relationship had a fragile quality, because we both knew how special it was to find real love and friendship. Before we had ever made love, we became good friends, learning to trust each other.

The grim shadows of war forming in the world outside could not penetrate our joy - or so I thought. The whole world seethed with discontent, hatred, and distrust, but I did not recognize the growing threat as Dodo already had, a threat that was so close.

Before May 1971, I had never heard the name Victor Magister, but I had already unknowingly witnessed his handiwork. Soon I would know his name all too well, like everyone else in Britain. Soon we would all bear witness to the works of Victor Magister.

FOURTEEN

May 1971

Terrorism returned to Britain with a vengeance on May Day, but this time it was not a bomb from Northern Ireland that rocked England. Instead, a new threat to the United Kingdom (and, indeed, to the whole world) announced its presence via a bizarre archaeological publicity stunt held at midnight and broadcast on BBC3's *The Passing Parade*. Dodo had persuaded me to stay up and watch the programme the day before.

'They're opening up a barrow called the Devil's Hump in Wiltshire. Apparently there's meant to be a curse on whoever interferes with the hump. If anyone opens it, death and disaster will engulf the area,' she explained.

'Why are they opening it at midnight, for God's sake?'

'Because it's Beltane tonight - April 30, the eve of May Day. One of the big occult nights of the year!'

'Terrific. And I was hoping to watch the rugby highlights,' I complained half-heartedly. Having grown up in New Zealand, a liking for rugby had been ground into me from an early age. There had been an important end-of-season game on at Twickenham and I wanted to see it.

At midnight we switched over to BBC3 and were met with the simpering inanities of *The Passing Parade*'s man on the spot, Alastair Fergus. Vincent at BBC3 had told me that Fergus was only ever allowed to do field assignments after he had nearly caused a major diplomatic incident with his ignorance of current events and banal, patronizing lines of questioning. Watching the presenter at work, I could well see what Vincent had meant - Fergus came across as a fake only interested in making himself look good. He introduced the archaeologist running the dig, Professor Gilbert Horner.

Compared with Fergus, the man at the centre of the controversial dig was a breath of fresh air. He slapped Fergus down in a bluff northern voice and quickly stole the show. The professor predicted the barrow contained the tomb of a warrior chief from the Bronze Age, circa 800 BC.

Horner said he had chosen this moment to break through because of its significance in pagan religions. He also admitted he had a book about the dig being published the next day. I detected the hand of book publicist supreme, Henry Spencer at work and smiled to myself. Dodo curled up beside me on the sofa as we watched Horner scraping away at the wall to reveal a large stone. The whole event seemed staged and a bit quaint - a piece of light entertainment to fill the late night schedules. The professor began tugging at the stone's edges just as midnight rang out on the clock in our hallway.

Suddenly a black-cloaked figure burst on to the screen from the left, shouting at the professor. 'Don't remove that stone! Stop him!' The figure grabbed at the professor

just as the heavy burial stone toppled out on to the archaeologist, crushing him to the ground. The television screen filled with a blizzard of white and then only darkness.

Gradually the broadcast image returned to normal and the prostrate figures of the professor and his attacker could be seen. Both were covered in snow and ice and seemed to be frozen solid. A young woman stumbled into view from the left and threw herself at the bodies on the ground.

‘Oh no, no!’ she cried out, sobbing.

The screen cut to a long, black silence, before finally being replaced with a caption card on screen:

DEVIL’S END
TEMPORARY FAULT
BBC3 TV

A soothing voiceover announced a break in transmission but said it was hoped the programme would resume shortly. In the meantime, here was some light music. Dodo and I turned to each other, equally perplexed. We waited another twenty minutes, but the broadcast from Devil’s End was eventually replaced with another programme and we went to bed still mystified by what we had seen.

The next morning the papers were full of reports trying to answer that very question - what had happened? The BBC switchboard had been jammed with calls complaining about the loss in transmission. There was speculation in some papers that something had gone terribly wrong at Devil’s End, while others suggested the whole programme was an elaborate hoax by BBC Drama, emulating the famous Orson Welles radio version of *War of the Worlds* which had frightened America in the 1930s. BBC3 stuck with its story that transmission had been cut off at the source and they had not been able to contact anyone in the area since.

By midday, the production team from *The Passing Parade* had returned to London but refused to tell the waiting media what had happened at Devil’s End. An official statement released through the BBC World Service said there had been an ‘incident’ at the dig and confirmed that Professor Gilbert Horner had died as a result. Wiltshire police announced that a five-mile exclusion zone had been set up around the affected area. For the first time, the phrase ‘terrorist incident’ was used.

All day I flicked through the television channels and radio stations for updates. This event had UNIT written all over it. There was something else, something nagging at me. Who was the man who attacked Professor Horner just before the incident? His face was never shown. But the girl who appeared on screen just before transmission was cut - I knew I had seen her somewhere before. It was time to call a friend.

‘You pick your times, James - it’s a madhouse here!’ Vincent said when I phoned him at BBC3.

‘I know, I know, but I need to see a tape from last night. I’ve got a feeling I know that girl you showed crying.’

‘I heard some pick-up lines in my time but that -’

‘Vincent! This is serious.’

‘All right, all right. Look, you can come in tonight, after seven. The top floor has impounded the original footage but I’ve got a copy of the live-to-air broadcast you can watch.’

That night I drove to White City and left my car in a pub carpark near the BBC before walking the rest of the way to Broadcasting House. Soon I was in a private screening room with Vincent, watching again the footage from Devil’s End. Alastair Fergus simpered, to be replaced on screen by Professor Horner. ‘That man will be dead in a few minutes,’ I whispered, thinking out loud.

‘I know,’ Vincent agreed, ‘it’s like watching a ghost.’

Suddenly, the black-cloaked figure burst onto the screen and threw itself at the professor. We watched the tragedy happen once more: the screen faded white to black, and then the girl stumbled into view. In the BBC3 viewing room the sound quality of the recording was much better than on my ageing television set at home and now I could hear the girl’s words properly for the first time.

‘Oh Doctor! No, no!’ she sobbed.

‘Did she say “Doctor”?’ I turned to Vincent. ‘Can we run that last part again, but slower - you know, like an action replay on *Match of the Day*?’

‘Sure.’ We watched the girl’s entrance again, this time much slower so her face was more clearly visible. At once I knew where I had seen her before: she was the woman with UNIT’s ‘scientific adviser’ at Stangmoor Prison when I witnessed the Keller Process. Now her muffled cries made sense; she was not calling for a doctor, she was calling to the Doctor. He was the figure who had attacked Horner just before the incident.

‘Vincent, I’ve got to go. Thanks for all your help. You’ve put another piece into a puzzle for me!’ I said as I ran from the room.

‘What puzzle? What are you talking about?’ he shouted after me, but I was already on my way back to my car. Whatever had really happened at Devil’s End, it was obvious that the mysterious operative currently using the codename of ‘the Doctor’ was deeply involved. If I was right, then the five-mile exclusion zone was probably being enforced by UNIT operatives. I had to get to Wiltshire and fast. Barrelling through the streets I raced home to pack an overnight bag. But I arrived to find myself already overtaken by the flow of events.

‘They’ve caught the terrorist!’ Dodo said excitedly when I got in. ‘It’s just come on the television. They’ve caught the guy behind the explosion at Devil’s End. Come and see!’

The lead story on the late evening news was the capture of a terrorist called Victor Magister. Described as a radical anarchist whose sole aim was the destruction of Western society, Magister was alleged to have led a gang responsible for the explosion at Devil's End. A stern-faced chief constable from Wiltshire was being interviewed on camera by Alex MacIntosh of BBC3. In the background was a jumble of broken bricks and stone, almost as if they were broadcasting from a bomb site.

'Magister booby-trapped the barrow so that when Professor Horner cut it open last night, an explosion of dry ice and toxic gases was caused,' the chief constable explained. 'A member of the intelligence services tried to intervene but arrived too late to save Professor Horner. Earlier today Magister blew up the historic village church here at Devil's End. Fortunately, no civilians were hurt in that explosion. Thanks to the work of an international taskforce against terrorism, we have captured Magister and he will stand trial, accused of murdering the professor.'

'What about his accomplices? Surely Magister could not have caused all this chaos on his own?' MacIntosh asked, indicating the rubble around them.

'Other members of the Magister gang were killed in the second explosion at the church. Magister had been posing at the new vicar of the parish and we believe he may have used satanic rituals to mesmerize members of the congregation into assisting him. We are currently trying to ascertain the whereabouts of the previous vicar, Canon Smallwood, who has disappeared in mysterious circumstances.'

'Thank you for your time, Chief Constable,' MacIntosh said, turning back to camera. 'We have obtained this photograph of Victor Magister - do you recognize this man? If so, contact your nearest police station immediately.'

The screen was filled with a face that could only be described as sinister. Greying black hair was slicked back from the face, highlighting a prominent widow's peak. Black eyebrows hooded dark, sinister eyes, while a salt and pepper goatee beard and moustache encircled a cruel, thin-lipped mouth. The face was so stereotypically satanic it could have been lifted off the cover of a Dennis Wheatley novel.

'Why don't they just have him twirling his moustache?' I asked Dodo rhetorically.

'You don't think he did it?'

'Well, he'll certainly never get a fair trial after that performance!'

On screen, MacIntosh was wrapping up his broadcast. 'So this tiny village tries to cope with the black stain of terror that has engulfed it. As the authorities interview everyone who lives in the area to determine exactly what has occurred here, the question that must be asked is how could this happen in a quiet English country village? And can things ever return to normal at Devil's End? This is Alex MacIntosh, for BBC3.'

I slumped into the sofa, utterly drained. There was no point going to Wiltshire now; the area would be crawling with police and security services quietly removing all the

real evidence and commanding everyone to silence. My story had been killed stone-dead, despite the tacit admission of UNIT's presence in the area.

I decided that until the trial of Victor Magister opened in a few months' time, I might as well get on with writing my book about UNIT, C19 and the Doctor. I probably could deliver a first draft to Henry by September and then make revisions if any revelations emerged during the trial, however unlikely that seemed right now.

FIFTEEN

franKie
mAy '71

Dear mUm

sorry its been so LOng since i wrot to u but i hav been
UNhaPpy. i saw a dæMON and i saw THE deVil and he was
angri with me.

he says i mustNOT be bad or else i will bE in HELLLLLL

i mUst bE gOOD frOm nOw On

hElp me mummi

luv
frAnkie
agE 27

SIXTEEN

June-July 1971

The summer of 1971 was notable for three things: the death of Louis Armstrong, the Cod War developing between the UK and Iceland, and the massive media overkill about Victor Magister. While the accused spent his time on remand at a special prison in a secret location somewhere within Britain, newspapers, magazines and television companies began a series of investigations into the background of this mysterious figure.

Who was Victor Magister and where did he come from? Nobody could find any record of such a person until his arrival at the parish of Devil's End, making Magister an obvious alias. One of the broadsheets latched on to the Latin translation of Magister and renamed this supposed criminal mastermind 'the Master'. The name stuck and soon teams of investigative journalists began finding evidence pointing to the existence of the Master Gang - a team of terrorists responsible for many unexplained terrorist incidents from recent years.

Quickly added to Magister's list of alleged crimes was the series of attacks across Britain a year and half before known as Black Thursday. A *World in Action* documentary suggested that Black Thursday was actually an attempted coup by the Master Gang which had nearly succeeded. The *Sunday Times* 'Insight' team of investigative journalists discovered evidence that the Wenley Moor plague was actually the by-product of an attack on the nuclear research facility by the Master Gang. The plague was actually a radioactively accelerated virus that attacked the body's auto-immune system, initially passed on touch and then later becoming windborne. Neither of these scoops made any mention of the role of UNIT in each incident, nor of my previous investigations that had revealed the incidents in the first place.

These revelations were followed by a flood of similar stories. The Master Gang was soon blamed for the failure of everything from the Mars Probe series of rocket launches ('an attempt to destroy Britain's lead in the space race, thus shattering the credibility of our Empire' thundered the *Daily Chronicle*'s leader the next day) through to the collapse of the World Peace Conference in London. After a few of these stories appeared, I began to see a pattern emerging.

I contacted Cassandra who was not happy to hear from me, especially over an open phone line. 'This is not a good time to talk, Whiti,' he whispered. 'I'll call you when I can.'

'Okay, but make it soon,' I insisted.

It was another two days before my source in the intelligence services finally got back to me. He confirmed my suspicion that the stories were the result of a series of carefully controlled leaks of information - some of it accurate, some of it fabricated - to different news media organizations. The plan was to resolve a whole series of

embarrassments for the Government by placing the blame for them squarely at the door of Victor Magister and his Master Gang.

‘But surely this is overkill,’ I interjected. ‘One or two well-planted stories I could understand but this is going way over the top. There’s no way Magister will ever be able to get a fair trial anywhere in Britain: the case against him has been blatantly prejudiced by the media coverage.’

‘That’s the whole point,’ Cassandra replied. ‘The stick and the carrot, the stick and the carrot. Wait a few more days Whiti, you’ll see what I mean.’

Mystified by his oblique explanation, I concentrated instead on securing my press accreditation for the trial of Victor Magister. This was going to be a three-ring circus and I wanted to be in the front row for all the action. But Cassandra’s words returned to me a week later when the Lord Chamberlain’s office made a shock announcement.

Due to the extensive media coverage prejudicing any chance of Victor Magister getting a fair trial in Britain, it had been decided that his case should be heard in camera before a tribunal of top judges. The statement also mentioned in passing that matters of vital national security would be compromised should a word of the proceedings be openly reported. The entire trial would be closed to the public and the media.

The stick and the carrot: now I realized what Cassandra had been alluding to. First the media was given a series of nice juicy carrots with all the leaks about the Master Gang. Now came the stick, the punishment to keep the media in line. As always, the intelligence services were a long way ahead of the media in their mind games.

The announcement about the Magister trial being in camera brought howls of fury from the media. At the forefront of protests about this show of high-handedness by the Government was BBC3’s *The Passing Parade* programme. Of all the media, this show felt it had a right to report about the trial since it was by sabotaging the programme that Victor Magister was brought to justice in the first place.

Alex MacIntosh hosted a special edition of the show that night, where invited guests held a round-table discussion about the decision and its consequences for the media and the public. I phoned up Vincent and reminded him of the invitation to try my hand at television. He quickly had me drafted on to the panel of guests for the debate.

To my left sat noted journalist, writer and broadcaster Malcolm Muggeridge, while on my right were an uncomfortable spokesman from the Lord Chamberlain’s office called Davis Jenkins and the editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, Peter Wise, recently given a knighthood for his ‘services to the media’. The latter did his best to avoid all eye contact with me before the live programme went on air.

MacIntosh began by asking each of us what we thought were the implications of this decision, starting with Muggeridge. An elder statesman amongst commentators and journalists, Muggeridge still cut an impressive figure with his concise summaries of situations and frequently incisive predictions. He had obviously thought long and hard about the wider issues of this case, although he was not well versed in its intricacies.

Muggeridge said the decision to hold the trial in camera was setting a dangerous precedent for Britain and could only harm the credibility of the world's greatest system of justice. 'Certainly, exclude the press and public when it comes to matters of national security, of course, but in essence this trial is a murder case - the killing of that archaeologist, Professor Horner. That is what Magister is standing trial for, if Victor Magister is, indeed, his real name. There seems to be some doubt about even that.'

MacIntosh turned to direct Muggeridge's comments at the man from the Lord Chamberlain's office. 'Davis Jenkins, is this setting a dangerous precedent? Are you eroding British justice by this decision?'

'Of course not,' Jenkins said obsequiously. In his three-piece pin-striped suit and Eton tie, Jenkins was every inch the model civil servant. His round, baby face spoke of an easy, comfortable life and his carefully parted hair revealed just a hint of dandruff. Jenkins was barely thirty years old, but despite his youth his attitudes and appearance were those of someone closer to fifty. I took an instant dislike to him as he spoke.

'As Malcolm Muggeridge well knows, there are two reasons why this trial must be held in camera. Not only is there the danger to national security posed by this case, but also the highly prejudicial reporting of this whole affair by news media like this very programme.'

'Indeed?' The presenter turned to my old boss. 'Sir Peter, as editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, how do you respond to this charge that your coverage of the so-called Master Gang has prevented Victor Magister ever receiving a fair trial in Britain?'

'I think my paper's coverage of this matter has been fair and unbiased. But there have been others who have not shown our sound judgement and prudence in this matter. The *Chronicle* agrees with the decision to hold this trial in camera for reasons of national security. The sanctity of Britain must come first!'

I could not help snorting in disbelief at Sir Peter's self-righteous justifications. He noticed my reaction and went on the offensive.

'May I just say I would not have agreed to appear on this programme had I known that a sensationalist tabloid hack like James Stevens would also be taking part in this debate.'

'After your display of selfless toadying to the Establishment, I should take that as a back-handed compliment,' I said gleefully. 'Being called sensational by the editor of the *Daily Chronicle* is like being criticized for being too clever by a simpleton!'

'Gentlemen, if we can keep the debate seemly,' MacIntosh said. 'Now, Mr Stevens, you are a prize-winning investigative journalist and best-selling author of the book *Bad Science*. What is your view?'

I took a deep breath. I had been preparing my thoughts for just such a moment and now was my chance to say what I really felt, knowing that the live-to-air broadcast would make it difficult to censor my comments.

‘Frankly, I think this whole affair stinks of conspiracy, corruption and collusion. The media and the British public have been manipulated ever since the day Victor Magister was arrested and that manipulation continues even now.’

‘How can you justify such a claim?’ asked MacIntosh, one hand held to his earphone. He was obviously receiving instructions from his producer in the control box. They were giving me my head - for now.

‘Consider this, Alex: as soon as the so-called Master was arrested, all the major media were each given different photos of him, so they would all have a picture exclusive the next day. Yet this was no time before his arrest and subsequent incarceration awaiting trial for all those different photos to be taken. How long have the authorities known about this dangerous terrorist, and why have they concealed his existence from the media and the public?’

‘Since Magister’s arrest we have seen exclusive after exclusive about different terrorist crimes this man is meant to have masterminded. Yet not a word about his involvement in any of these events was spoken before his arrest at Devil’s End. Also, many of these so-called exclusives are fabrications. The Master Gang has been blamed for Black Thursday, the Wenley Moor plague and problems at the British Space Centre without a shred of proof to back up any of these claims. My *Bad Science* book investigated each of these specific incidents and I have gone back to all my original sources. None of them has made any connection between Victor Magister, the Master Gang and these incidents.’

‘But these stories about him can’t all be wrong, can they?’ Malcolm Muggeridge asked. ‘Sorry, these allegations?’

‘Perhaps not,’ I replied. ‘But my sources indicate there has been an active campaign of disinformation led by members of the Government and the civil service to lay the blame for these incidents on Victor Magister, thus exonerating themselves. By leaking these fabrications the Government can then use its own lies to prevent the media covering the Magister trial, furthering the cover-up.’

By now MacIntosh was making frantic signals at me from off camera to shut up and the studio floor manager in the background was indicating it was time to wind up the show and quickly. I was determined to finish what I had to say, no matter what the consequences.

‘I know for a fact that the cover-up is being carried out by a covert intelligence taskforce known as UNIT, aided and abetted by a department of brutal enforcers -’

‘Well, that’s all we’ve got time for tonight,’ interrupted MacIntosh, who was now sweating profusely. ‘I’d like to thank our guests -’

‘A department of brutal enforcers working within the Government’s secret service ministry, C19. I believe they are using a secret establishment called the -’

Suddenly all power to the entire studio was cut. Only a single television monitor remained on in one corner. A BBC3 TV caption card appeared on the screen:

THE PASSING PARADE
TEMPORARY FAULT
BBC3 TV

A voiceover reassured viewers that there had been a technical fault and BBC3 was moving on to the next item in its schedule for tonight. MacIntosh turned and swore at me for a full minute before calming down. 'What the hell did you think you were doing?'

'I had something to say, so I said it.'

'I'll make sure you never appear on a show with me again!' he vowed and stomped off the set. The other guests melted away quickly and I was just leaving when Vincent beckoned me over.

'That was brilliant!' he said. 'The top floor are going crazy but that's the best edition we've had for months - thanks for coming. I'd keep my heads down for a few days if I were you: you've probably made a few important people very, very angry indeed!'

Realizing he was probably right, I rushed home with my mind full of the horrors I might find waiting for me there. Instead I walked through the door unharmed and found Dodo asleep on the sofa. I kissed her awake and tried to suppress my paranoia. If anything should happen to her...

'Did you see the show?'

'Yes, you were very good,' she murmured dozily. 'I thought that editor was going to hit you at one point. The look on his face!' I packed her off to bed, and was just locking all the doors and turning out the lights when the phone rang. It was long after midnight: who was calling at this time of the night? I picked up the receiver and felt a chill as the caller spoke - it was Cassandra.

'Jesus Christ, what the hell did you think you were playing at, James?' There was none of the normal caution in his voice, he seemed genuinely afraid. He had certainly never called me James before.

'What is it? What's wrong?'

'Get out. Get out of the house now - while you still can!'

The phone went dead. Not as if Cassandra had hung up. There was just silence, nothing at all. The wires had been cut.

'Hello? Hello?' I kept asking impotently. I was interrupted by the sound of glass smashing in the front room, and then a hearty whoosh. Following the noise I ran next door to find the floor on fire and the window smashed; someone had thrown a

molotov cocktail from the street. Another smash, this time from the floor above, then another and a third. The house was being attacked with petrol bombs.

I ran up the stairs to the main bedroom. Inside the curtains were on fire and Dodo was crouched on the bed screaming. Wrapping a robe around her, I dragged Dodo down the stairs and out the kitchen door into the back yard. Make sure she was safe and unhurt, I got the attention of the neighbours and made them phone the fire brigade. Clutching a handkerchief to my face, I ran back into the burning building.

A wall of heat barred the way up the stairs and the acrid fumes from the flames made breathing almost impossible. I was gasping for air between choking fits as I staggered into my office to try and rescue some of my notes. But inside I found someone tugging at my desk, trying to shift it to get at my floor safe.

‘I wouldn’t bother if I were you,’ I shouted over the roar of the fire. ‘I shifted all my important notes to a safety deposit box after the last break-in.’ I began edging slowly towards my desk, hoping to reach the top right drawer. Inside was something I had recently also acquired after the burglary - an old service revolver I had bought to protect Dodo and myself. I had never fired a gun in my life but somehow having it in the house had made me feel safer. If I could just get hold of it...

The figure turned to look at me; it was the blond man with the tan who had attacked me at the pub in Cambridge. He peered at me through the smoke and noticed my movements towards the desk drawer. Reaching into his waistband he pulled out the revolver.

‘Looking for this?’ he said. ‘I told you to stay away. Now I’m going to show you why.’ He threw himself at me. We both slammed against a wall, the impact forcing all breath from my body. I slumped to the floor gasping as my attacker staggered back. ‘Now you’ll have to die, you little shit!’ He lashed out with the revolver, smashing me in the side of the head with its butt. I remember falling sideways and blood trickling down into my eyes, warm and dark. Then, blackness...

* * *

I regained my senses in the garden, black smoke billowing over my pounding head. I rolled to one side and vomited on the grass, retching and coughing, my lungs still full of smoke. Dodo crouched beside me, holding a damp cloth to the side of my face.

‘Are you all right? I saw a man run out of the house and then nothing. When you didn’t come out I got one of the neighbours to help me drag you out,’ she said. ‘How do you feel?’

‘I’ve been better.’ I managed to sit up and look at what remained of the house. The exterior shell still stood but the downstairs interior was completely burnt out. Fortunately the fire brigade had arrived in time to save most of the upstairs rooms. ‘Good thing it wasn’t a terrace block,’ I joked, but could not manage a smile to match my attempted humour.

‘Look, the ambulance men want to take you to hospital. They say you’re suffering from smoke inhalation and possible concussion,’ Dodo said uncertainly.

‘Forget it, I’m not going into hospital!’ I replied. Dodo nodded.

‘I though you might say that. Well, the people next door say we can sleep in their spare bedroom tonight. Who knows? Maybe it won’t look so bad in the morning...’ She turned away and I knew she was crying. I stood up and embraced her, trying to soothe the tears away.

‘What’s wrong, what’s the matter? It’s just a house, we can always get another.’

‘I was so scared I was going to lose you,’ she cried. ‘I don’t ever want to be alone again.’

‘You won’t be,’ I whispered and kissed her.

The next morning I woke up angry. The ground floor of the house was a black, sodden mess. I had been to my share of fires as a reporter and knew that frequently putting out the blaze caused more damage than the fire itself. Everything was soaked through, making me glad it was summer - at least we had a chance of drying out our remaining belongings during the day. Much of the furniture was smoke-stained, and virtually all the downstairs section would need to be rebuilt. At least we could continue living on the top floor while repairing what was left below.

More worrying by far was the precedent that this new escalation in the campaign to scare me off had set. Up to now I had only been subjected to vague threats and one physical attack. Within an hour of my appearing on television and mentioning the names C19 and UNIT, someone tried to kill me. What made me more angry was that Dodo had become a target too, and had nearly died because of the attempt on my life.

Although I had kept my most valuable notes elsewhere, months of work on the book about UNIT, C19 and the Doctor operatives had been wiped out by the fire. If not for Cassandra’s warning, I could have lost everything: my work; my home; the woman I loved; my life. This had gone far enough: it was time I went on the offensive.

Leaving Dodo to sift through the wreckage, I went to New Scotland Yard to file a complaint. The constable at the front desk took one look at the blood-caked wound on the side of my head and immediately got the desk sergeant. ‘Yes sir, how can I help you?’

‘I want to report an attempted murder,’ I replied. ‘Mine.’

‘Really, sir? And what’s your name?’

‘Stevens, James Stevens.’

‘Mr Stevens. Didn’t I see you on the telly last night? Talking about something called C19?’

‘That’s right. Can we please just get on with this? I’ve been attacked, left to die in my own home while it burnt to the ground, and I’m not feeling very well,’ I said, my voice husky from all the smoke I had inhaled. Having to wear the same clothes I had on the previous night, I still stunk from the fumes of the fire.

‘Very good, sir. I’ll take you to a private interview room and get somebody from CID to come down and see you,’ the sergeant replied. He led me through a series of doors and corridors before finally indicating a white room furnished with only an old oak desk and two hard-backed wooden chairs. ‘If you just wait in there, somebody will be along to deal with you shortly, Mr Stevens.’

‘Thanks,’ I said and wearily sat in one of the chairs. I felt exhausted, physically and emotionally drained by the events of the past 24 hours. I had searched carefully throughout the house but there had been no sign of the revolver in the wreckage, which meant that the weapon was probably now in the possession of C19. I had not dared to tell Dodo - she was frightened enough already.

After waiting more than ten minutes, I became infuriated at being made to wait like this. I guessed they had forgotten about me in this obscure interview room. Typical! I decided to see if I could find anyone to complain to about my treatment. But when I tried the door handle, I discovered it was locked. What the hell was going on? I hammered against the door and yelled and shouted but got no response from outside. A familiar voice behind me got my attention.

‘Persistent, aren’t you, Mr Stevens?’

I turned to face my attacker from the previous night, a hidden door in the wall closing behind him. He was dressed in a regulation police uniform, with the insignia of a sergeant visible. He was smiling.

‘You couldn’t take a warning, could you? You just couldn’t just leave this story alone. You wouldn’t listen, no matter how many warnings we gave you. Now, we’re going to have to take care of you - permanently.’ The blond man slipped his hand into a pocket and pulled out a pair of gleaming brass knuckle-dusters, fitting them carefully on to his right fist. The legend C19 was carved into the glinting metal.

‘What do you mean, take care of me? People know I’ve come here today; I made sure I told people I was coming here,’ I said nervously.

‘Nobody’s going to save you, Mr Stevens. There are no knights in shining armour in real life, no cavalry, no heroes who burst in at the last minute and save scum like you. Reality is you and me and that’s it. Nobody saw you come into this building, nobody will remember you at the front desk, and nobody ever remembers seeing me - not if they know what’s good for them, anyway.’

The huge man strode across the room towards me, throwing the heavy wooden desk to one side. ‘Officially, I don’t even exist,’ he said. ‘And from today, neither do you.’ He pulled back a fist and smashed it into my nose. The bones broke with a dull crack and blood began gushing from my nostrils, pouring hot and wet into my mouth and down my throat, making me gag. ‘From today, you’re just another missing person

statistic,' the blond man confided. 'Goodbye, Mr Stevens. We won't meet again.' Then the blows came quickly, savage in ferocity yet quite clinical in their precision.

I fell to the floor, throwing my hands up uselessly to protect myself. Just before I lost consciousness, my face pressed against the floor, I saw the secret doorway open again and a pair of legs walked in. A boot was grinding my face into the floor, preventing me from looking up to see who the newcomer was. But when the person spoke, I knew its familiar tones immediately.

'Ah, the troublesome Mr Stevens. After all the assistance I gave you, that it should come to this!'

As blackness engulfed me, I realized I recognized the voice. It was -

SEVENTEEN

From: HER MAJESTY'S ARMED SERVICES
To: MRS SIOBHAN CLEARY
Date: 16 June 1971

Dear Mrs Cleary,

We regret to inform you that your son, Private Francis Cleary, has suffered a nervous breakdown while seconded for active duty with the United Nations Intelligence Taskforce inside the United Kingdom.

Private Cleary is a good soldier but has been under a great deal of stress in recent months and collapsed in his barracks earlier this month. He has been hospitalized for his nervous exhaustion, but psychiatric experts who have studied his case believe he needs further treatment before a decision can be made about his future with the Armed Services.

Private Cleary has thus been transferred to a specialist psychiatric facility for this further treatment. Unfortunately, due to the sensitive nature of his work, we are unable to give you details of his location with UNIT. However, we would like to take this opportunity to assure you that he is getting the best treatment available and we hope he will soon be able to receive visits from yourself and other members of his family.

We hope this telegram has not come as too much of a shock to you. We also urge you not to divulge the contents of this telegram to anyone else, for reasons of national and - indeed - global security.

Yours sincerely
Captain M. Yates
United Kingdom Liaison Officer
United Nations Intelligence Taskforce

EIGHTEEN

Dates unknown, 1971

It was the brightness that woke me up. I had been dreaming for what felt like forever, an intense fantasy where everything seemed real. The grass between my fingers, the sound of the gathering crowd, my feet slamming against the stairs as I raced upward, the heavy jerk of the wood against my shoulder as I pulled -

I blinked warily and immediately jammed my eyes shut again, struggling to adjust to the glare assaulting them. Everything was blinding white. I squinted, jamming my eyelids together to allow just the merest glimmer of light through. Gradually, painfully, I was able to relax the muscles of my face as I became used to the blazing whiteness around me. While I waited for my eyes to get used to the glare, I used my other senses to assess my surroundings.

I was lying in an unfamiliar bed - a thin single mattress on a sprung metal frame judging by the protesting squeak of springs every time I shifted. The sheets were brittle and roughly starched, the blanket thin and scratchy in my hands. The smell of disinfectant filled my nostrils - an acrid assault. Combined with the paper-thin gown I was wearing, all these details added up to one conclusion: I was in a hospital of some kind.

Gingerly I put my hands up to my face, lightly running fingers over the swelling on the side of my head, and across the bridge of my shattered nose. Although I could not remember how or why yet, I knew my face had been injured recently. But touching it caused no pain. My nose had been re-set and I could feel no contusion. The injuries had fully healed, yet I felt like I had only been unconscious for a few hours - how was this possible? How long I had been in this place?

Squeezing open an eye, I began to look around me for the first time. I lay in an old, cast-iron single-bed, one of two dozen identical beds lining opposite walls of a long, silent room. The beds were empty, all stripped bare bar one which was fully made up for another, unseen occupant. The floors were covered in black-flecked white linoleum squares, reaching out to the white-tiled walls. Above me the ceiling was made of clear glass sheets in a metal latticework, hence the glaring brightness. I was completely alone.

What the hell was going on? Last thing I could remember was going to New Scotland Yard, waiting to see a CID man... With a jolt of fear I recalled the appearance of the C19 operative from the secret doorway, the brutal beating I had received at his hands, and the intervention of a familiar voice. I knew I had heard the voice before but its identity remained frustratingly just outside the grasp of my conscious mind. It was lodged inside my memory, but right now everything was a jumble of images and sensations - it was hard to separate fantasy from reality.

Groping around by the side of the bed, I find a plastic cord ending in a small white box with a button set into it. A call switch? Not knowing the answer, I pushed it to see what would happen. A few seconds passed and then there was a rattling of keys from the doors at the end of the corridor. Perhaps I was in a prison hospital, I wondered. At least that would explain the other empty beds and the locked door.

The double doors swung open to reveal a stern-faced nurse in a crisp white uniform, pushing a metal medical trolley. On it I could see a range of pills, bedpans and medical equipment. I relaxed and smiled quietly to myself. For an irrational moment I had almost been expecting torture tools. The nurse pushed the trolley up to the edge of my bed and smiled at me.

‘Mr Stevens, awake at last! You had us worried there for a while, didn’t you?’ she said chirpily.

‘Did I?’

‘Oh, yes. My word, we weren’t sure if you would pull through.’

‘Pull through? From what?’

The nurse smiled as if she thought my thinking had been impaired by whatever ordeal I had been through. ‘From the accident of course! Still, you’re nearly better now. Here, let me take your temperature.’ She shoved a cold thermometer into my mouth. I tried to ask her another question but she hushed me to silence for the next minute. As she counted off the seconds on a watch fastened over her left breast she held my wrist and monitored my pulse rate. Eventually, the thin tube of glass was pulled from my mouth, examined and placed back on the trolley, rattling inside a kidney-shaped stainless steel dish.

‘Well, you’re nearly fully recovered, Mr Stevens,’ the nurse said. I examined her uniform carefully but could find no name badge by which to address her, just a curiously large white belt around her waist.

‘Does that mean I can go home soon?’ I asked.

‘Go home? Of course you can’t leave, Mr Stevens,’ smiled the nurse, slipping into her voice for simpletons again. Her next words sent a cold thrill through me. ‘You’re in the Glasshouse, Mr Stevens. Nobody ever leaves the Glasshouse!’

With that she bent over to look for something on the lower level of her trolley and I saw the handgun holstered politely behind her back. Turning my head I realized that the metal latticework on the glass ceiling was actually a series of bars to prevent escape; the heavy lock on the door to keep me in, not to keep others out. I was a prisoner in the Glasshouse.

‘Help! Somebody help me!’ I screamed over and over without response, my cries echoing around the empty ward before gradually dying away to nothing. The nurse straightened up, holding a large hypodermic needle in her right hand. Her thumb

pushed the depressor upwards and a short squirt of liquid shot out of the end of the needle.

‘Now, now, Mr Stevens, no need to shout. Nobody can hear you, you know,’ she said soothingly, but I was having none of it. I screamed even louder as she plunged the needle into my arm, but I was still too weak from weeks of constant sedation to fight back.

Within seconds I could feel the strength leaving my limbs, my arms thrashing uselessly about in impotent rage. As darkness engulfed me again, the nurse leaned over my face and smiled at me, her teeth like large, yellowing tombstones.

‘We can’t have you getting all upset now, not when the director will want to see you later. No, we can’t,’ she said.

Then, just blackness...

* * *

‘And how is Private Cleary doing today? Is the conditioning taking complete control yet? We have a very important task for him...’

The voice which awoke me was warm and rich, full of dark, mellow tones with just a hint of menace to its edges - a threat underlying its smooth, persuasive words. Keeping my eyes shut, I strained my ears to hear what was being said. Any information I could gather might be useful in helping me to get out of this place; to escape this nightmare.

It seemed ironic that I had been searching for months for hard facts about the Glasshouse, but now that I was being held captive here, I was desperate to escape its harsh realities. I concentrated on keeping my breathing even and regular while listening intently.

‘Yes, Director. The implants are working perfectly and the cover story is now well set in the patient’s subconscious,’ a female voice replied. My nurse from earlier, I realized immediately. She was talking with a man whose voice I knew, but from where did I know it? The sedative given to me earlier was still clouding my thoughts, impeding my search for the answer I knew was locked inside my own head.

‘That’s excellent. One or two more treatments and Private Cleary will be ready for the outside world. He’s making good progress, very good progress. Soon he can go back to UNIT,’ the director said. I was startled by this, but did my best not to show that I was conscious yet.

Had I heard right? Were soldiers from UNIT being held here against their will, being forced to undergo mental conditioning for some ulterior motive of the director? This was the man Dodo had described as controlling the Glasshouse through a reign of terror, yet his words were soothing, and his tone friendly and charismatic.

The sound of leather steps on the linoleum floor interrupted my furious thinking. They were coming over to my bed. I did my best to maintain the façade of still being asleep, but without success.

‘It’s alright, Mr Stevens, you can stop pretending now. We both know you’re already awake,’ the male voice purred. I opened my eyes and gasped as I saw the face of the director. The dark, gleaming eyes, the black hair swept back from the forehead, the neatly-trimmed goatee beard and moustache: it could only be one person.

‘Victor Magister!’

‘I am usually referred to as the Master,’ he said.

‘Is that right?’ I replied, trying to keep my voice casual.

‘Universally.’ Magister smiled, as if this were the punchline of some private joke. ‘But you can call me Director from now on.’

‘Aren’t you meant to be imprisoned at a top secret location somewhere in Britain, awaiting trial?’

‘True, and I will be imprisoned again soon. But one advantage of my line of work is the ability to slip away unnoticed, while the simple-minded fools meant to be guarding me maintain the pretence of my incarceration. Your kind are so easily manipulated,’ he sneered.

‘You were the one who came into the interview room at New Scotland Yard, just as I was passing out,’ I said.

‘Yes, that was taking a risk, but I had to take you out of circulation. You came very close to blowing my cover during your appearance on that ridiculous television programme, and then my associates failed to finish you with the firebomb attack on your home. Sloppy, very sloppy,’ he said distastefully, shaking his head. ‘I could ill afford another bungled attempt on your life so I had you intercepted and brought here instead.’

Finally, I knew where else I had heard Magister’s voice before. ‘You were the mystery caller - the person who phoned me with tip-offs while I was working at the *Chronicle*!’

‘I was wondering how long it would take for you to remember me. Yes, I was your mystery source. You have proved very useful to me over the last two years, Mr Stevens. You’ve helped me create no end of difficulty for those bumlbers at UNIT; I must thank you for all your assistance.’

I was outraged at his smug insincerity. ‘You used me.’

‘But of course, Mr Stevens. What else is your kind for but to be used?’ replied the director with a shrug. ‘But you wouldn’t be happy with acting as my conduit to the press, my mouthpiece in the media. No, you had to get above yourself with your petty

little investigation; your search for personal glory as an "investigative journalist", your ridiculous notions about UNIT and my operatives within C19 working together.' The director was laughing at me now. 'You really are a most amusing individual! I even tried to warn you off, remember? And still, you wouldn't take the hint. Now you will have to suffer for your stubbornness.'

I cursed at my tormentor until he stopped laughing. 'Why not kill me now? Why keep me here?' I demanded. I tried to get out of bed to attack him but was still too weak from the drugs to do more than sit up.

'Sadly, you still have a part to play in proceedings - one more pawn to be sacrificed before the endgame. I cannot kill you yet, so you've become a missing person for the meantime. I'll say goodbye now, as I doubt we'll see each other again.' The director turned and began striding out of the ward, followed by the nurse. 'Do enjoy your stay here at the Glasshouse, Mr Stevens. It will be a long one.'

I shouted abuse after him, but got no response. The director left, followed by the nurse, who locked the doors after her. I lay back in my bed, furiously going back over the events of the past two years. Had I really been acting as an unwitting agent of Victor Magister, or whatever his real name was? Was I just another pawn in a larger game, unable to see what was really happening beyond the narrow boundaries of my own vision? It was hard to accept yet I knew that the director had no reason to lie to me now. I was already his prisoner; I could be eliminated at his whim.

Something else was nagging at me. If Victor Magister was also the director of the Glasshouse, why had Dodo not recognized his face when it appeared on television after his arrest at Devil's End? She had always said her memories of the Glasshouse and its feared leader were vague at best, but were the director's powers so strong he was able to make her forget him completely? I put this insoluble problem aside to consider more pressing matters. What was happening in the outside world? How long had I been missing for? What was Dodo doing in my absence?

I had not seen her since leaving on that fateful morning to report the firebomb attack. I remembered kissing her as I set out for New Scotland Yard, and my arms ached to hold her now. I made a vow to myself to get out of this madhouse as soon as I could and get back to her. Knowing how fragile her grip on reality could be, I did not want to imagine what she was going through while I was 'missing'.

A moan from the other occupied bed in the ward got my attention. I slipped out of my bed and breathed in sharply as my bare feet touched the cold floor. Slowly, painfully, I managed to walk over to the bed opposite me, using the metal bedstead to support my still-weak legs. Slumbering on it was a man in his mid-twenties, heavy-set with closely cropped jet black hair and bushy eyebrows that nearly met in the middle. A smattering of freckles over his cheeks gave his features a boyish aspect. Like myself he was clad only in a white hospital gown.

I shook his shoulder, gently at first and then more insistently but without response. Whatever 'mental conditioning' the director was subjecting him to, it was obviously physically draining. I looked at the locker beside Cleary's bed. On top of it sat a

chunky metal bracelet with fine copper wiring worked into an intricate pattern around its outer ring. Inside the cupboard I found a full set of clothes and some other items.

The bulk of the locker had been taken up with an army uniform of khaki green: tunic, trousers, hat, socks and boots. Four letters were embroidered on an oval patch sewn on above the left breast pocket of the tunic: U. N. I. T. A clear plastic bag held more personal belongings, probably the contents of Cleary's pockets, I guessed. There was a simple silver watch, a signet ring, and a small billfold containing some cash, a family photo and an identity card. The family photo showed Cleary in the midst of a laughing throng of children, all with similar facial characteristics. Some of them were too old to be his own children - could they all be his brothers and sisters? A look at his identity card seemed to confirm that theory.

Beside a recent picture were typed a few details. His name was listed as CLEARY, FRANCIS PETER, his rank was Private, his religion was Roman Catholic, and he was on attachment from the regular Army to the United Nations Intelligence Taskforce. The card also listed his date of birth: 22 November 1948. He had the same birthday as me, but was three years younger. I was smiling at the coincidence when a rough hand grabbed me by the throat and pulled me backward on to Cleary's bed, keeping me down in a vicious choke-hold.

'Who are you? What do you want?' Cleary demanded, his voice a mixture of harsh Liverpudlian and softer Irish accents. I just choked, my hands clutching feebly at the grip around my neck. Eventually, as I began to feel blackness edging in around me, the young soldier relaxed his grip enough for me to breathe again. I gasped in great lungfuls of air, coughing and choking still. Finally I managed to prise his thick fingers from my throat and stagger away to collapse on the empty bed beside his belongings.

'My name's Stevens, James Stevens. I'm a captive here, just like you,' I said. 'I was trying to find out who you are.'

'How do I know you're telling the truth?'

'If I worked for the director, would I need to go through your belongings to find out who you are? I'd already know.'

He considered the logic of my argument. 'True enough, I suppose. But what are you doing here?'

'I told you, I'm a captive too. I was getting close to exposing this place for what it really is, so the director had me kidnapped and brought here. Now I'm a prisoner until they decide what to do with me,' I explained. 'What about you?'

Cleary smiled. 'They've been trying to brainwash me. They keep showing me pictures of killings and murders; I think they're trying to turn me into some sort of assassin. But I've been trained to resist, so I'm okay.'

'How did you get here?'

'I was a soldier, working for a special squad -'

‘UNIT?’

His eyes flashed at me suspiciously. ‘What do you know about UNIT?’ he demanded.

‘Only that it’s an international taskforce of some kind, fighting terrorism,’ I replied. I was not going to reveal what I really thought UNIT did. Cleary seemed volatile enough without my provoking him with tales about mind-control experiments and killer plagues. He seemed satisfied with my reply and continued his own story.

‘Anyway, I started having blackouts and dizzy spells. The medics said I was something called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and I needed a break away from the frontline. I went to a psychiatric hospital and then I got referred on to here.’ He looked around him at the bars on the windows and glass ceiling. ‘If only they knew what this place was really like!’

‘Look, Cleary, I’ve got to get out of this place. Do you want to come with me? I can’t make it on my own.’

‘Just say when,’ he replied. While he was talking I went to the locker by my bed and was gratified to find my clothes and belongings were inside it. My strength was returning at last, thanks to the adrenalin rush of Cleary’s attack. I quickly began slipping my clothes on and motioned for him to don his uniform as I asked another question.

‘Do you know when your next session is due to start?’

‘They usually take me away twice a day, three times if I fight them too hard. They’ll be back for me soon.’

‘Okay, finish getting dressed. We’re getting out of here while we still can.’ We only had to wait a few minutes for our opportunity. The keys rattled against the double doors as they were unlocked from outside. I positioned myself to one side, Cleary to the other and we flung ourselves at the nurse as she entered. She grabbed for the hypodermic needle on her trolley but I managed to smash it from her hand.

She retaliated by slamming the base of her hand into my face, sending me reeling backwards into a wall. Cleary had circled round behind her and ripped at her hair, pulling it backward. She clawed at his face with her fingernails but he was stronger and heavier, batting her hands away before grabbing her ears. With a mighty heave he drove his forehead into the bridge of her nose. There was a crack like a muffled firecracker and a single cry from the nurse as she slumped to the ground.

Cleary dropped to his knees and grabbed her hair again. Now he started slamming her bloody face into the white linoleum, thudding her wet features into the floor again and again and again. Red flecks of blood spattered from the floor, speckling the front of Cleary’s uniform. A crimson stain began to pool out across the white tiles.

‘Stop it! Cleary, she’s dead - stop it! Jesus Christ, you’ve killed her!’ I shouted at him, sickened by his brutal, animalistic act. I had never seen a person killed before, let

alone butchered in front of me. I choked down the vomit in my throat and pulled at Cleary's shoulder. He whirled his head round to stare at me, his eyes dilated, spots of blood mingling with the freckles on his boyish features. There was nothing boyish about the rage in his face now. 'Come on, we're got to get out of here!' I insisted.

'Yeah, right,' he said, almost as if the berserker inside him had been switched off again. He stepped over the red-stained remains of the nurse and began striding towards his bed.

'Where are you going?' I was exasperated and afraid.

'I'm taking this with me,' he said, snatching up the metal bracelet from atop his locker. He turned and ran past me into the hallway outside. I gingerly took a set of keys from the waistband of the dead nurse and ran after him as fast as I could, trying not to think about the murder I had just witnessed. Perhaps the director's mental conditioning process had been far more effective than the young soldier yet realized.

We encountered two more staff members in the Glasshouse and Cleary dispatched them quickly - dispassionately. Finally, we reached what appeared to be an outer door. I struggled with the keys and dropped them in my panic to get the door open. 'Come on!' Cleary yelled at me, a raw edge sounding in his voice.

'I've got it!' I pulled open the door to reveal a long, tree-lined gravel driveway outside. There were several parking spaces but each stood empty. Judging by the long shadows it was late afternoon - but where were we? Cleary burst past me through the door and ran into the heavily wooded grounds outside.

I ran after him, glancing back only to take one quick look at the place where I had been imprisoned. It was a tall, Tudor country house with a long, modern building built on to its west wing. From the outside the Glasshouse looked normal, even ordinary but I knew what horrors it held inside the unremarkable façade. I was determined to fix every aspect of this place in my mind. I would be coming back here, but next time I would be bringing a camera crew. The true horror of the Glasshouse would soon be revealed to the world.

Dodging a sentry patrolling the outer wall of the estate, Cleary helped me scale a low point in the perimeter wall. We dropped to the other side and ran on. All the time I fixed reference points and landmarks in my head to make the return journey simple, to make the Glasshouse easy to find again. Within twenty minutes we had reached the edge of a small town. I saw an old lady walking towards us, pushing her purchases for the evening meal in a shopping trolley. I stopped her, still thinking how best to put my question.

'Excuse me, my friend and I aren't from round this way and we seem to have got lost. Could you tell me where we are?' I asked, inwardly wincing at the awkwardness of my words.

She looked warily at my grubby clothes, still stained with smoke and blood from when I had been abducted. Cleary looked even more incongruous on this country path in his combat gear. 'You on an army exercise or something?' she asked.

‘Something like that, but we’re not allowed to tell you any more. Can you tell us where we are?’

‘Well, you’re obviously not very good at map reading otherwise you’d know. That back there,’ she said, pointing over her shoulder, ‘that’s Evesham. I just come from there and I think you’ll find -’

Cleary and I were already running towards the suburban area she had indicated. As we ran we decided what to do next. ‘Evesham! Christ, that’s out past Oxford - we’re nearly in Cheltenham,’ I gasped between gulps for breath. ‘We’ll have to get a train back to London - it’ll probably come into Paddington. How much money have you got?’

We managed to negotiate our way through the centre of Evesham - a strange mixture of old and new buildings. The town had long been a service centre for local milling but was now in the process of trying to find a new purpose as old industries died out. Finally, breathless and exhausted, we found the railway station and just caught the last train back to London for the night. As the locomotive wound its way to the capital, I put a proposition to the young private.

‘Thanks for getting me out of there,’ I said. He just nodded. ‘Look, I’m an investigative journalist and I want to expose the Glasshouse and the man who runs it. His name is -’

‘I know who he is,’ interrupted Cleary.

‘Oh, right. Well, would you be willing to help me some more?’

‘I won’t go back there. Not ever.’

‘Don’t worry, you won’t have to go back. But if I could get you on television to talk about what they did to you back there, would you do it?’

Cleary thought long and hard before answering. ‘Will it do some good? Will the world be a better place if I do this?’

I thought his questions were a little oblique, but I was willing to agree to anything to get him on television. My words, my testimony alone could be disputed but not the evidence of two people who had been held prisoner at the Glasshouse, especially when one of them was a member of the highly secretive United Nations Intelligence Taskforce. Besides, I believed exposing the Glasshouse could only be to the good. ‘Yes, the world will be a better place, Francis, I really believe that.’

‘Only my mum calls me Francis.’

‘Oh, well what should I call you - Frank?’

‘Private Cleary. Call me Private Cleary - that’s who I am now.’ He lapsed back into awkward silence and I let him, happy just to be free again. I already assembled in my

mind a long list of phone calls to make when we got back to London but the first had to be to Dodo, to tell her I was alright. Hopefully the phone would have been reconnected at our home in Wandsworth. I smiled, realizing I had said 'our home'. After all that I had been through, I knew I wanted to spend the rest of my life with Dodo. Cleary saw me smile and asked what was so funny.

'Nothing really, I'm just wondering how I'm going to explain all this to the woman I live with,' I replied. 'You've been pretty quiet - what are you thinking about?'

Cleary looked me in the eyes before speaking. 'If someone gave you a chance to change history, would you do it?' he asked.

'It would depend. How do you mean "change history"?''

'If you could go back in time and change one event to make the world into a better place, would you do it?'

'What, you mean like if I could go back in time and stop Hitler from ordering the systematic genocide of millions of Jews and other races - would I do it?' Cleary nodded. 'I guess I would.'

'But what if you had to murder Hitler to stop him? What if the only way to prevent Hitler was to kill him - would you still do it?'

I shook my head. 'You're asking the wrong person. You're the man of action; you're the one who has been trained to kill for Queen and country. I'm just a reporter - I report things. It's my job to write history: it's your job as a soldier to make history.'

'But that's just washing your hands of responsibility. You're no better than Pontius Pilate when the Pharisees brought Jesus before him,' Cleary insisted. 'If you refuse to take responsibility for your actions, you're no better than the Nazis who put people into the gas chambers and then said afterwards that they were only following orders.'

'All right, then I would kill Hitler,' I said. Cleary had touched a nerve and I wanted to change the subject quickly. 'Anyway, this is a ridiculous argument because it could never happen. Time travel is impossible, it's just science fiction, so I'll never have to make the decision.'

'What about a different example. What if someone offered you a chance to go back and change history by saving a good person from dying?'

'I'm not sure I understand.'

'What if someone gave you a chance to alter history for the better by saving a good person from dying? What if someone said they have the power to send you back through time to 22 November 1963, so that you could change history? What if President John F. Kennedy had lived?' Cleary's voice had dropped to a fervent whisper, his eyes full of passion. His fingers were holding the metal bracelet he had brought out of the Glasshouse with him, turning it over and over in his hands.

‘It can’t be done,’ I scoffed.

‘I can do it,’ the young soldier said. ‘I’m going to do it. I’m going to change history - forever!’

By now I was becoming seriously worried by the strange direction the conversation was going in. It was time to step away and let feelings cool down, I decided. ‘Look, I’m thirsty, I’m going to get myself a drink. Do you want anything?’

‘I’m going to change history,’ Cleary muttered to himself again, not even hearing my question. ‘I’m going to change history.’

‘Suit yourself,’ I said and headed for the buffet car. I was becoming increasingly worried about Cleary’s mental state. I just had to hope he could hold it together long enough to help me expose the Glasshouse.

Soon afterwards we were pulling into Paddington Station. I made sure I kept Cleary in my sight as I made a series of urgent phonecalls. The first was to Dodo, who was overcome with relief at the sound of my voice.

‘Oh James, it’s you! I thought you were dead, the police said you’d disappeared and nobody could find you. You’ve been missing nearly three weeks. Where have you been all this time?’ she said between sobs.

‘In the Glasshouse,’ I replied to a sharp intake of breath from the other end of the phone. ‘Look, I’ve managed to escape with the help of a UNIT soldier called Cleary. I’m going to try and contact Vincent at BBC3, get his help so we can expose the Glasshouse once and for all. We’re getting a taxi and we’ll be home in less than an hour, okay?’

‘Hurry home, James,’ Dodo cried. ‘I’ve got something important to tell you.’

My next call was to Vincent at BBC3. As usual he was working late to prepare that night’s edition of *The Passing Parade* and I managed to catch him at his office just before he left for the studio. ‘Look, Vincent, what have you got on tonight’s show?’

‘Some rubbish about the effects of decimalization on small shopkeepers. What can I say, it’s a slow news day -’

‘Look, I’ve got a scoop that’ll have your show splashed all over tomorrow’s front pages. Are you interested?’

‘Tell me more.’

‘The terrorist Victor Magister is secretly running a Government-funded psychiatric institution near Evesham and he’s using it to brainwash British soldiers into becoming his own private army. How’s that for size?’

‘Rubbish! Magister’s being held at some secret prison in the countryside - you know that as well as I do,’ Vincent scoffed.

‘Really? Well how do you explain the fact I saw him earlier today at the very institution I’m talking about?’ I replied.

‘How?’

‘Easy - he was holding me prisoner there. I’ve been investigating links between Magister, C19 and UNIT for weeks and he abducted me.’

‘I’ve heard some whoppers in my time but this one takes the biscuit, James. Upstairs is never going to believe this!’

‘Don’t just take my word for it. I’ve escaped with a UNIT soldier who’s willing to talk about his experiences on camera - and in his full uniform. If you want to know more, meet me at my place in 45 minutes. As for Victor Magister, I suggest you serve a writ of habeas corpus on the Government to make them produce him - that should stir things up a bit!’

‘You’re on, but this better be legit or else neither of us will ever be able to work in journalism again. You do know that, don’t you?’ Vincent asked, seeking reassurance.

‘Don’t worry, Vincent,’ I replied, ‘I’m about to give you the scoop of the century!’ With that I hung up and got into the nearest black cab with Cleary, and headed for home.

The drive through London was eerie, the streets surprisingly empty for a late summer’s evening. It was hard to believe I had been away nearly a month when it only seemed like a day or perhaps two at the most. Magister and his associates must have kept me under sedation for nearly three weeks without respite. I could never get that lost time back. It was another score I would have to settle with the ‘Director’ of the Glasshouse.

We were driven around Wandsworth Common and pulled up outside the house. I was not sure what to expect. When last I had seen it, on the morning when I went to New Scotland Yard, smoke was still rising lazily from the smouldering embers. I was pleasantly surprised to discover the outside of the building looked almost unscathed from the fire. All the windows had been replaced, new curtains could be seen hanging inside, and only a few tell-tale smoke stains at the top of the sills revealed what had taken place here.

While Cleary settled up with the cab driver, I went to the front door and knocked. There was the sound of running footsteps, then the door was flung open and Dodo embraced me in a hug that seemed to go on forever. We kissed feverishly like teenagers, with only an insistent coughing from Cleary behind me finally breaking our clinch.

‘Dodo, this is Private Cleary. He helped me get out,’ I said nervously, but Cleary was at his charming best. The further we had got away from the Glasshouse, the better his state of mind had become. It was frightening to realize what a grip Magister had taken on the poor soldier’s mind. Cleary offered his hand to Dodo who shook it gratefully.

‘I know what you’ve been through,’ she confided to him. ‘I’ve been locked up in - in that place - myself. Come inside, come inside.’

We entered to find out just how busy Dodo had been in my absence. Several of the rooms downstairs had already been re-decorated although the kitchen was still a burnt-out shell. ‘I took some money from the savings account - I hope you don’t mind,’ she admitted shamefacedly.

‘You’ve done brilliantly,’ I said. ‘Look, can you talk to Private Cleary while I go upstairs and get changed? I feel like I’ve been wearing the same clothes forever.’

‘You smell like you have too,’ Dodo said, crinkling up her nose in mock disgust. ‘Go on, get upstairs!’

I managed a quick wash-up and was pulling on a clean shirt when a car screeched to a halt outside. For a second I had a horrible image of the director emerging from the vehicle flash through my mind - Magister coming to take me back to the Glasshouse. But when I looked out the window I saw only Vincent emerging from his sporty soft-top, waving up at me. I ran downstairs and let him inside. ‘Well?’

‘Well, at least part of your story checks out,’ Vincent said happily. ‘We tapped a few contacts in the Lord Chamberlain’s office and when a habeas corpus writ on Victor Magister was mentioned they hit the roof - alarm bells ringing, the works. I really think you might be on to something. Strictly speaking I think only a defendant’s counsel is allowed to bring a writ of habeas corpus, but a QC friend of mine did enough to scare them anyway. So, where’s this soldier then?’

I took him into the next room to meet Private Cleary. Vincent grilled him thoroughly for ten minutes, then emerged again, apparently satisfied. ‘Okay, we’re doing it. Will smiling boy next door go back to the Glasshouse for the doorstep?’

‘No, no way. I promised he didn’t have to go back.’

‘Pity. Still, as long as you’re willing to go and he’s in the studios for the links back there, we should be fine. We’ll have an outside broadcast van following you and another one will be covering the fun and games at the courts - God only knows what’ll happen there. Better if they can’t produce him - gives your story more credence.’

‘My story? You mean you don’t believe me?’ I spluttered.

‘Let’s just say I’m waiting for all the evidence. Okay, let’s get going!’ Vincent bundled Cleary into his car while I said my goodbyes to Dodo. We had only seen each other for a few minutes and already I was leaving her alone again.

‘Don’t worry about it, I’ll see you soon enough,’ she said. ‘And when you get home, I’ve got a surprise for you.’

‘What surprise? You mentioned this before - what’s the surprise?’

'I'll tell you when we're alone,' she said, kissing me goodbye. She whispered a final farewell in my ear: 'I love you, James Stevens.' Then I was out the door and running for Vincent's car, which he was revving impatiently in the road. I looked at my watch - it was nearly midnight.

NINETEEN

August 1971

The drive through London was a blur as Vincent talked me through the format for the show. It would open in the studio with *The Passing Parade*'s new presenter, Andrew Gibson, outlining the allegations. 'We've got to call them allegations just to cover the Beeb's posterior legally, you understand,' Vincent said.

Gibson would do a short interview with Cleary in the studio and then the show would cut to OB where I would try to gain access to the Glasshouse. Alastair Fergus would be standing by outside the courts in case anything came of the habeas corpus writ. 'The judge will throw the writ out of court but that's to our advantage really,' Vincent said. 'It just makes the Government look like they've got something to cover up.'

'What if we can't get into the Glasshouse? I mean, I want us to get inside and show Magister working on one of the poor bastards inside that place,' I said vehemently.

'Calm down, James, calm down,' Vincent replied soothingly. 'That would be brilliant if we could manage it but let's be realistic. If this place is half as sinister as you make it out to be, you'll be lucky to get that camera crew within spitting distance of the front door! This show will cause such a stink they'll have to close the whole place down anyway - Magister or no Magister. Let's just hope we can make this work!'

We turned into the main drive of the BBC headquarters at White City to find an outside broadcast van waiting for me, ready to go. I turned in my seat to give a few final words of encouragement to Cleary. 'Look, just tell the truth and nothing can go wrong. I know you'll be nervous but just tell the truth. It'll all be over soon.'

He looked at me strangely, his eyes shining and happy, as if a great weight had been lifted from his shoulders. 'I know.'

I got out of the car and ran to the cab of the OB van, climbing in beside the crew. Less than a minute later we were on our way to Evesham, Vincent giving me a thumbs up sign as I left him with Cleary. Normally the drive to Evesham would have taken several hours in daytime traffic but the late hour of our trip cut the travelling time considerably. We were about twenty minutes away from our destination when Vincent's voice crackled through on the van's two-way radio.

'This is Vincent Mortimer to OB van six - can you hear me?'

I picked up the headset and acknowledged his call. 'How's it going at the studio? What's happening with the writ?'

'One thing at a time, James! We're nearly set up here - we'll be going on the air in 25 minutes. Your soldier boy is looking a bit nervous, but he should be okay, Andrew's a

very gentle interviewer when he wants to be. No word yet from the courts. It took us three hours just to get a judge to agree to leave his private members club and come down to sit on the bench! So, fingers crossed on that one. How are you doing?’

I relayed the question to the driver who shouted a reply. ‘Driver says we should be there in seventeen minutes, maybe less.’

‘Great! Call us when you’re in position.’

We were delayed by the lack of lighting in the country lanes around Evesham hiding the landmarks that I had fixed in my mind. But twenty minutes later we were parked down the road from the Glasshouse. I recognized the main Tudor-style building through a gap in the trees surrounding it, and led the camera crew into position outside the front gates. The director for the OB team, a thin-faced chain-smoker called Bill Jeffs, explained to me the procedure for the broadcast.

‘Basically, we’ll do the first insert with a fixed camera and lighting here. When we try to get into the building itself, we’ll be using one of the new lightweight video cameras. We’ve been testing them with some success for the Sports Department.’

‘Some success?’ I asked warily.

‘Don’t worry, it’ll be fine.’ He lit another cigarette while his crew set up the fixed unit. ‘Look, if you’re right about this place, are there likely to be armed guards? Any shooting?’

I had to admit I did not know. ‘To be honest, it hadn’t even occurred to me. I’ve just be intent upon getting back into the Glasshouse and showing the world what’s inside.’

Bill rolled his eyes. ‘Terrific!’

Before the conversation could go any further the monitors in the OB van flickered into life, relaying on screen what was happening in *The Passing Parade* studio as well as the broadcast signals for the various channels still on the air. I watched as a make-up assistant put the finishing touches to Cleary’s face. The young soldier sat uncomfortably in a swivel chair, facing the programme’s presenter, Andrew Gibson.

Gibson was one of Vincent’s protégés at BBC3. Poached from Radio Oxford, he had quickly mastered the art of television presenting and was already making a name for himself at BBC3. Rumours were circulating in media circles that he had been approached to read the headlines on the prestigious *Nine O’Clock News* for BBC1.

Watching him prepare, I could see why Vincent had taken Gibson under his wing. The presenter had a face the camera seemed to love, warm and friendly with intelligent eyes and a sardonic humour about the mouth. His voice could be heard from a speaker beside the monitor, words perfectly formed in that curious BBC accent yet still retaining their own individuality. I just hoped Gibson went gently with Cleary, as Vincent had promised, otherwise we could all be in serious trouble.

‘Okay, James, we’re ready for you!’ Bill shouted. I climbed out of the van and took up my position in front of the fixed camera. A black-and-white monitor had been set up beside the camera so I could see what was happening back at the studio. Running a hand through my hair, I cleared my throat and tried to concentrate on what I wanted to say, and on what were the most important points to get across. I would only get one shot at this, so I had to make it count. ‘All right, silence, everybody; we’re getting ready for our first link to the studio!’

On the monitor I watched the credits for *The Passing Parade* flash up on screen, to be replaced with the serious face of presenter Andrew Gibson, his name appearing in a caption below.

‘Good evening and welcome to *The Passing Parade*. Tonight, in place of our advertised programme about the effects of decimalization, we bring you a special report on claims made about a private psychiatric institution. It is alleged that the institution is being used by the anarchist terrorist known as Victor Magister - the Master - to brainwash British soldiers and form them into his own private army.

‘These shocking claims have been made by the controversial and award-winning investigative journalist James Stevens. He is in Evesham, standing outside what he alleges is a psychiatric hospital known only as "the Glasshouse". We cross over to him live now. Mr Stevens, can you hear me?’

Beside the camera Bill nodded at me to speak.

‘Yes, Andrew, I can hear you.’

‘Mr Stevens, what exactly are these allegations you’re making?’

‘Well, Andrew, these are not allegations, these are facts - as you’ll soon see when we go into the Glasshouse. I’m standing in front of the very building and we hope to gain access to it in the next few minutes. If successful, we plan to take the cameras of *The Passing Parade* inside to reveal this terrifying place of torture for what it truly is.’

‘What about your claim that the Glasshouse, as you call it, is run by the anarchist terrorist Victor Magister? Surely everyone knows that the so-called Master is currently being held in custody at a secret location awaiting trial for murder and other charges?’

‘I thought the same thing until I was abducted and brought to this place. I was confronted by Magister who revealed himself to be the director of the Glasshouse. He claimed he could come and go from his incarceration at will. I managed to escape from the Glasshouse earlier today, along with a British soldier who was being held captive here.’

‘And we have that soldier in the studio with us,’ Gibson said, picking up my link perfectly. He swivelled in his chair to indicate Cleary, who was sat nervously fingering his metal bracelet. ‘We’ll be talking to Private Francis Cleary later in the programme. We also have reporter Alastair Fergus standing by outside the courts

where a writ of habeas corpus has been brought to try and force the Government to produce the prisoner known as Victor Magister. Alastair?’

The image on screen switched to that of Alastair Fergus, standing smiling on the steps outside the crown court. I had not seen Fergus on *The Passing Parade* since the incident at Devil’s End, his career being sidelined by the rise and rise of Andrew Gibson. I could sense a crackle of tension between the pair as they exchanged links.

‘That’s right, Andrew. An unnamed party has brought a writ of habeas corpus against the Government, trying to force it to produce Victor Magister before the court. While the writ is expected to be thrown out, it will be interesting to see if the Government is willing to produce the Master anyway, simply to scotch these claims and allegations. Andrew?’

‘Thank you, Alastair.’ The picture on the monitor switched back to Gibson in the studio as he smoothly swung proceedings back to Cleary. ‘Now, Private Cleary, I understand you’re currently posted to something known as UNIT. What is UNIT?’

There was a long, uncomfortable silence, with Cleary just staring at the floor. Gibson prompted him with a further question. ‘I understand UNIT stands for the United Nations Intelligence Taskforce?’

After another long pause, Cleary nodded.

‘I’m told that UNIT fights terrorists. Have you ever seen this man, Victor Magister, also known as the Master?’

A photograph of Magister appeared briefly on screen. Cleary looked at it and nodded again. ‘He gave me a mission,’ the soldier whispered.

‘Pardon me?’ Gibson asked, desperate to have Cleary speak up. The interview was foundering and he had to turn things around quickly.

‘He gave me a mission. I’m got to save someone,’ Cleary mumbled.

‘Save who?’

Cleary just shook his head. From the earpiece Bill had thrust on me before we began the broadcast I could hear Vincent screaming at Gibson to cut away from the soldier. Now the monitor’s image closed in on the presenter’s face as he swivelled back to face the main camera.

‘Obviously, something has left this brave young British soldier very disturbed. We’ll be coming back to him later in the programme. Now we’re going back to James Stevens at Evesham. Mr Stevens, can you still hear me?’

‘I can hear you, Andrew.’ I looked beyond the dazzling arc light to find Bill’s face. He was nodding to me furiously. ‘We’re ready to go in.’

‘All right, Mr Stevens. Our cameras will follow you in.’

I turned and pushed at the heavy wooden gates behind me, which swung open freely. Striding in, I made sure I kept my pace even so the mobile camera crew could keep up with me. As we approached the Glasshouse, I kept up a commentary of how I had been abducted, brought to this place and what had happened to me.

Ahead of us every window in the building was ablaze with light. But how much resistance would we encounter? And would Magister himself still be inside? As we reached the front door, I turned to address the camera again.

‘We now stand outside one of the most evil and frightening places in Britain. Inside these walls are dozens, perhaps hundreds of men and women being held against their will, being tortured and subjected to mind-control experiments. Now, we shall expose this inhuman institution known as the Glasshouse for what it really is!’

I turned and hammered at the door. To my amazement, it simply swung open at my first blow. ‘What the -?’ Motioning for the camera crew to follow me, I stepped inside. We stopped in the lobby, which was empty. Nobody responded to my shouts; nobody came to stop us. Gradually, we went from room to room, finally finding the long ward in which I had been held prisoner for nearly three weeks.

Every single room was empty. There was no furniture, no people, and no sign that the building had been occupied for months or even years. Everything had been stripped bare and removed. Even the white linoleum floor that had been pooled in blood just hours before was now clean bar a light sprinkling of dust. The Glasshouse was empty - abandoned. It was as if what I had seen there had never existed.

I turned to face the camera, shaking my head slowly. ‘I don’t understand. It was all here, I saw it all - I was held prisoner in this very room just this morning. I saw a woman die here!’

I looked up at the pitiless lens of the television camera. ‘You’ve got to believe me, I saw it!’ In my ear I could hear Vincent swearing and screaming abuse at me. Behind the OB camera Bill reached forward and tapped the cameraman on the shoulder.

‘Cut it,’ he said quietly.

The camera light was switched off; the sound man turned off his equipment; the lens turned away from me. There was a long, sullen silence as Bill and his crew stared at me.

‘I saw it,’ I said feebly.

The drive back to BBC3 headquarters was cold and bitter. I sat in the back of the van, watching the rest of the programme on one of the monitors. In the studio, Andrew Gibson, trying to repair the damage to *The Passing Parade*’s credibility, was quickly distancing the programme from what was happening. The show cut to outside the courts where Alastair Fergus gleefully reported that the writ of habeas corpus had been thrown out as predicted but that the Government were going to produce Victor

Magister anyway, to put paid to what it described as ‘wildly inaccurate and defamatory allegations.’

I watched numbly as Victor Magister was brought out to stand on the steps of the courthouse. He smirked as a lawyer read out a prepared statement. ‘We understand that a discredited journalist called James Stevens has been making libellous allegations against our client; allegations which has been proven to be lies and vile slurs live on national television. We intend to ask for the heaviest penalty possible against this twisted individual who seems to be conducting a one-man vendetta against our innocent client. That is all.’

Magister was bundled away into a waiting prison van, chased by dozens of photographers and camera crews. *The Passing Parade* cut back to the studio where Cleary was conspicuous by his absence. Andrew Gibson was reading a prepared statement to the cameras.

‘This programme has been the victim of an elaborate hoax by James Stevens, a man we believed to have been telling the truth. He has lied to us and lied to you, the viewers. BBC3 wishes to apologize utterly and whole-heartedly to anyone who may have been offended by what happened on this show. You may rest assured that there will be a full internal enquiry into how this hoax was perpetrated on us and that measures will be put in place to make sure it never happens again. This is Andrew Gibson, for *The Passing Parade*. Good night.’

The screen faded to black - no credits, just a BBC3 copyright line. Obviously no one wanted their name associated with what was fast turning into a major fiasco live on national television. I tried to take some comfort from the notion that such a late-night show might avoid the attention of the rest of the media. I was wrong.

We arrived back at BBC3 headquarters to find it awash with camera crews, photographers, and journalists waving microphones, screaming questions over the top of each other, surging forward to pull a scrape of meat from the carcass of my ignominy. Now, at last, I understand why journalists and the media were considered to be vultures - parasites. Now I was their prey. Pushing through the throng I remained tight-lipped, having to use my fists and elbows to barge a way clear.

Inside the BBC3 building, I walked through the hallways like a leper, people recognizing me and stepping aside to let me pass, not wanting to be seen with me. I finally tracked down Vincent in the bar, making friends with a large bottle of vodka.

‘Vincent, Vincent I’m so sorry, I don’t know what -’

The bottle went hurtling past my left ear and smashed into the door behind me. ‘You’ve got some nerve to come back here, after what you’ve done!’ he spat at me. ‘You’ve got some brass neck, I’ll give you that!’

‘Vincent, where’s Cleary? What happened to Cleary?’

‘How the hell should I know? Halfway through the show, when it was all going wrong, he just wandered off the set and disappeared, mumbling something about his

mission.’ Vincent’s eyes were filling with tears of self-pity. ‘You’ve ruined me, you know that? Ruined. I’ll be lucky to get a job producing television for the blind after this!’

I left him in the bar, a lonely figure. It was time for me to go home. I managed to slip out of a side door and hail a black cab. Sitting in the back, I contemplated what had happened. Obviously, once Magister discovered Cleary and I had escaped he realized I would be coming back to expose him. Instead, he turned my moment of triumph into a final, damning ruination of my career. Nobody would ever believe what I said or wrote after what had happened tonight. Certainly my book about UNIT and C19 would never see print. What a mess.

I got the taxi driver to drop me off two streets from home, expecting there to be yet more camera crews and photographers outside the house. I had not been expecting the police cordon that surrounding the building. Pushing my way through the rabble of reporters, I slipped past the metal crash barriers holding the media back. An angry policeman approached me, his hand reaching for the baton at his side.

‘Look, if I told you bloody reporters once, I’ve told you a thousand -’ He stopped speaking as he looked at my face, recognizing me instantly. Was I now that notorious?

‘I’m sorry, officer, but I live here. If you could let me through...’

The constable stood aside and let me pass, then followed me up the stairs. I noticed him gesture to several other constables lining the barriers and they followed us through the front door. I walked into the hallway to find plainclothes detectives swarming all around me. Several were brushing fine black powder over the banisters of the staircase and around the door handles and door frames. A burly constable blocked my entry into the front room.

‘I’m sorry sir, you can’t go in there,’ he said.

‘I bloody live here - this is my house! I can go wherever I bloody want in it, thank you very much!’ I retorted and managed to shove my way past. Four men in long coats were standing around something crumpled on the floor, while a fifth was taking photographs. The flash of the camera dazzled my eyes for a second before I was able to focus on what was lying in a heap on the floor.

It was Dodo. She was wearing my white towelling robe, and there was a red stain on the left flap of material, along with black powder burns around the three dark holes where most of her blood had clotted. Another trickle of blood ran from the edge of her mouth down onto the carpet beneath her head. She was quite dead.

The detectives turned to look at me. ‘Ah, Mr Stevens,’ one of them said, a balding man in his late forties, a thin moustache spread across his top lip. ‘My name’s Goulding of CID. I was wondering if we could have a word with you.’ I just looked at him blankly, not really hearing the words, which he repeated. ‘It’s just that we need to discuss with you what happened here. Perhaps you could help us with our enquiries?’

Finally, I managed to mumble a few words. I knew Dodo was dead but somehow I could not get the idea fixed in my mind. This whole situation seemed like a nightmare which you know must end eventually. 'How can I help you?' I asked vaguely.

'I was wondering if you could identify this?' Goulding said, holding up a revolver in a clear plastic bag.

'That's my gun. It was stolen a few weeks ago,' I said numbly.

'Really, sir? Did you report to the police that it had been stolen?'

'No, I never got a chance.'

'You never got a chance. Someone steals a dangerous, unregistered firearm from your home nearly a month ago, and since then you say you haven't reported it stolen because you "never got a chance" - is that right, Mr Stevens?' Goulding raised an eyebrow at me before nodding to his colleagues. 'That's very interesting, Mr Stevens, because we believe this is the gun that was used to murder Miss Chaplet here. We understand that you were living together here - is that correct?'

I just nodded. I felt a hollowness in my chest that made it difficult to breathe, and bile was rising in my throat. I tried to choke it down, while my eyes just kept staring at the dead body on the floor. 'I was going to ask her to marry me,' I said.

'Is that so? Did you know she was pregnant? Was the baby yours?' Goulding asked. 'Had you been fighting lately? I understand there was a fire here recently - perhaps the result of a domestic argument? The report from the fire brigade seems strangely vague about your description of the cause. I understand you've been away for the past few weeks - was this just a temporary separation or were you living with someone else at the time? Well, Mr Stevens? Have you got answers for these questions?'

I ran for the bathroom but did not make, instead vomiting up a stream of green bile onto walls and floor in the hallway. Goulding followed me into the hall, accompanied by his dark-suited colleagues. I wiped my face and looked up at him.

'Are you trying to say I killed the woman I loved? Are you accusing me of murder?' I demanded.

'I didn't use the word murder, sir, you did. I think we'd better read you your rights before we get into a confession, Mr Stevens.' One of Goulding's colleagues stepped forward and began reciting my rights to me in a dull monotone. I could hardly contain my outrage.

'Confession? Are you clinically insane? I did not kill anyone, especially not Dodo!'

'We'll have to see about that, Mr Stevens. I think you'd better come down the station with us so we can talk further about this.' Goulding nodded to two constables who stepped forward and grabbed me by the arms. 'You better cuff him; he might get violent. Make sure you take him out the front way, past the cameras. Move!'

My wrists were forced together and handcuffs roughly snapped shut around them. I was shoved forwards out into the street and nearly fell down my front stairs. As I was led to a waiting police car, the constables made sure to pause long enough so all the photographers could get my picture. I tried to put my hands up in front of my face but they were slapped down again. As I was shoved into the back seat of the car, I heard a young man with a lisp addressing the gathered media.

‘Just after midnight police were called to this address after neighbours reported hearing screaming, following by three shots being fired. We arrived to discover the body of a young woman, a Miss Dorothea Chaplet, dead in the front room of this home. Miss Chaplet lived here with the owner of the property, a freelance journalist, James Stevens.

‘It seems Miss Chaplet, whom we believe was in the early stages of pregnancy, was shot three times with an old service revolver owned by Mr Stevens. Mr Stevens is being taken to the nearest police station where he will be helping us with our enquiries. No one else is being sought in connection with this crime, which is being treated as murder.’ The young man glanced over at me as I sat in the police car, and smiled, before turning back to the cameras. ‘Are there any questions?’

There was a barrage of shouting from the assembled media until the noise levels dropped enough for individual questions to be heard. ‘Was Miss Chaplet shot in the stomach?’ was the last question I heard before the car was driven away. For the second time in one night, I was ashamed to be a journalist.

The next twelve hours were a blur of police cells and interview rooms as Goulding and his team of detectives shouted, cajoled and threatened me to try and get a quick confession. ‘The word’s come down from the top floor - nobody’s going to help you. If we have to we’ll hold you here indefinitely on whatever trumped up charges we can find until we get a confession. I’ll beat it out of you myself if I have to,’ Goulding promised. ‘You make me sick, murdering a pregnant woman...’

I just remained silent, my mind caught in an endless loop of walking into the front room and seeing Dodo’s body, walking into the front room and seeing Dodo’s body, walking into...

It was nearly five o’clock in the afternoon when a single constable came to my cell and unlocked the door. I looked up at him wearily, expecting another long interrogation session. I had not slept for nearly two days, I was exhausted, and I was emotionally empty - hollowed out, as if someone had scooped out my heart, held it in front of my face, and then torn it apart slowly before my eyes. I did not care what happened to me any more, I just wanted to know who had murdered Dodo.

‘I didn’t do it, you know,’ I said to the constable, standing up.

‘I know, I’ve come to let you go.’

‘I couldn’t kill her - I loved her.’

‘I know,’ the young, fresh-faced policeman insisted. ‘I’ve come to let you go. You’re free to leave at any time.’

‘This is just another trick,’ I said numbly. ‘You’re trying to get my hopes up before you dash them - good cop, bad cop, I know the procedures.’

‘You don’t understand. The report from the autopsy came back and it stated the time of death as midnight. Since you were on live television at the time elsewhere, you can’t have pulled the trigger. Plus your fingerprints weren’t on the gun - it had somebody else’s dabs on it. You’re free to go, Mr Stevens.’

‘Whose fingerprints? Whose prints were on the gun?’ I demanded.

‘I’m sorry, I’m not allowed to tell you that. You’ll have to go through the proper channels if you want that information,’ he replied. The young constable held open the cell door and watched me walk slowly out of the cell. He escorted me to the front desk where I was given back my belt, shoelaces and the contents of my pockets. The young constable said he had ordered a black cab for me and it should arrive within the next three minutes. Finally, the front door was held open and I walked out to face the waiting media.

The questions came in a blizzard of noise: camera motor drives whirring; people shouting at me or at each other; sound men jostling for better positions; shoes scuffling on the gravel garden in front of the police station. I held up a hand and waited until finally there was enough silence to hear myself speak. Once I had everyone’s attention, I began talking.

‘I have something to say and then I will take a few questions. Please wait until I am finished before you ask any questions and only ask one question at a time, otherwise I won’t be able to hear what you’re asking. First of all, I am innocent. I did not kill the woman I love, Miss Dodo Chaplet. She was murdered by a person or persons unknown to me and the police have finally acknowledged that by releasing me without charge after more than twelve hours of brutal interrogation.

‘Secondly, I intend to sue any and all media reports that state that I was arrested for the murder of Miss Chaplet. I was never arrested for this terrible crime and I am willing to go to court to clear my name and that of Miss Chaplet. Thirdly, I will use every means at my disposal to help the police find the person or persons who did murder her. I would appeal for the help of the public in finding the killer, before they strike again.

‘Finally, I ask you for some peace and solitude. The woman I love has been murdered; please show respect for her memory and leave me in peace to bury her alone.’ I stopped, to try and contain my feelings before answering any questions.

‘Mr Stevens, did the police give you any clue who they were seeking in connection with this killing?’ The question came from a newspaper reporter I vaguely recognized. Probably from the *Chronicle*, I thought idly.

‘No, you should ask them for any details you want about the case.’

‘Mr Stevens, will you bringing a civil case against the police for wrongful arrest?’ another voice demanded.

‘As I have already said, I was never arrested or charged with murder so that situation does not arise. Next question please.’

‘Mr Stevens, how do you respond to reports that you are being sued by Victor Magister for defamation and by the BBC for deliberately misleading them into defaming Mr Magister?’ a familiar voice asked. I turned to see Alastair Fergus and a camera crew from *The Passing Parade* waiting expectantly for my answer.

‘Since that matter is apparently before the court it is sub judice, as you should well know, Alastair, and I could not possibly comment upon it. That is all I have to say.’ I turned away and saw my cab pull up. The cacophony of voices shouting began again as I dived inside and told the driver to get the hell out of there.

I knew I would have to disappear for a few days until media interest in the case was replaced by another, fresher story. But first I would have to go home and get a few things. I had the cab driver drop me in the street behind the house and wait while I went through the property backing on to mine to gain access. I had no stomach for another run through the gauntlet of media waiting outside my front door.

I went upstairs first, throwing a few items of clothing and toiletries into a bag along with my passport and the keys to my safety deposit box at the bank where I had kept all my most important notes on UNIT and C19. Even if nobody would publish my book now, maybe in the future it could still see print. Perhaps when the truth had finally been separated from fiction, what had truly been going on in Britain might be revealed...

Coming down the stairs I knocked over a potted plant, inadvertently alerting the media to my presence inside. As I had suspected, they were scuttling around the front door like vermin, trying to scratch and claw their way inside. ‘Mr Stevens, is that you? Mr Stevens, we just want a few words for the evening bulletin. Come on, be a sport!’

I gave them a few choice words through the letterbox, which I doubted they would be able to broadcast on any bulletin - not without censoring them first. Then, bracing myself inwardly, I stepped into the front room, glad that the police had left the curtains closed. I flicked on the black-dusted light switch and looked down at the crimson stain on the carpet. How long had Dodo lain there dying? Had her death been quick and painless, or long and drawn-out over minutes, even hours? I hoped for her sake she had not suffered.

Now, nearly 24 hours after her death, I cried. The only woman, the only person I had ever really loved was dead, murdered because of me, because of my stupid, petty, self-aggrandizing crusade. What good had it done anyone? What had my efforts achieved? Nothing but pain and suffering. Now Dodo was lying in a morgue somewhere, gutted by a police pathologist just so they could prove beyond reasonable doubt what had killed her.

Realizing that my self-pity was helping no one, I wiped the tears from my blurring eyes and turned away. I stopped and looked back. Something was different about the room. Something had caught my eye. Something had changed but I could not immediately identify what. Nothing was missing, it was almost as if something had been added. Then I saw it, pushed into a space on a bookshelf over where Dodo had lain. I strode over and picked it up to make sure I was not mistaken.

It was a metal bracelet, the same metal bracelet Private Cleary had brought out of the Glasshouse. The same metal bracelet he had been fidgeting with while appearing on *The Passing Parade*, just before Dodo had been murdered. That meant Cleary had come here from the BBC3 studio, arriving before the police. Now, the pieces started falling into place before me. I could see the murder taking place before me.

The knock at the door as Dodo prepared for bed, her cautiously opening it and then recognizing Cleary as a friend of mine and letting him in. Leading him into the front room. Asking him if he wanted a drink while he waited for me to get back. Perhaps that was when the gun came out and Dodo started screaming.

Cleary was a trained killer: I had witnessed his brutal slaughter of the nurse in the Glasshouse. This slaying was quicker, less messy - dispassionate even. Just three shots into the chest, all neatly grouped together in a classic wounding-pattern. Perhaps Cleary had not been alone; maybe it was the blond man with the tan who had brought him here from the studio. Perhaps Cleary did not even fire the fatal bullets, but somehow I knew he had. Magister had been training the young soldier for a reason - he had a mission to carry out.

Was this part of the mission? Was Cleary solely under Magister's control when he killed Dodo? Or could he have been aware of what he was doing, but unable to stop himself, unable to overcome the mesmerizing hold Magister had on his mind? Perhaps by leaving the bracelet here Cleary was leaving me a clue, or a warning, or something else - something I could not yet see.

I did not know the answers to these questions; I did not know which of these scenarios was correct, or if any of them were. All I knew was I had been given another piece of the larger puzzle - it was up to me what I should do with it. Pushing the bracelet inside my jacket pocket, I walked out of the room, out of the house, and out the way I had come, returning to the waiting taxi.

'I wasn't sure if you were coming back,' the cabby said nervously.

'I had to,' I replied. 'Unfinished business. Take me to Victoria Station - I've got a train to catch.'

As he drove away I looked back between the gaps in the buildings to see the house that had been a home to Dodo and me. I knew I could never set foot inside that house again; that it would always be tainted with the memory of her murder. I would have to make a fresh start, begin again.

But first I had to get away.

TWENTY

7 September 1971

Dear Mum

I can't tell you where I am. I can't even phone you to tell you that I'm all right. If I do, they'll trace the call and then we'll both be in big trouble. So I'm writing you this letter, trying to say all my feelings in a few words when a thousand pages would never be enough.

I've been sick for a long time - months, perhaps even a year. It started with the thing that I saw at the power complex. I still don't know if I really believe what I saw, but the electric shock I got left me a bit unbalanced. I stayed on with UNIT but I guess my problems just kept getting worse, not better.

A few months later we were involved with a terrorist incident at a small village. I thought I saw the Devil and that he was going to punish me for all the wrong things I had done, like killing that man when we had to stop the riot. I can't remember much for months after that - I guess my mind finally gave way.

I know I spent a lot of time in hospitals: being asked questions and doctors telling me that I had imagined seeing the Devil and that thing at the power station. But did I also imagine going to Billy's funeral? Did I also imagine killing that rioter?

For a long time the doctors kept telling me what I should be believing and thinking and feeling, and I just felt nothing. Then they sent me to the Glasshouse. That's not its real name, of course - Glasshouse is slang for military prison. But this was a mental hospital, not a prison, dealing with special cases like me. Some of the other patients there were UNIT soldiers like me who had suffered breakdowns.

The director was an amazing man. In just a few weeks of sessions with him I began to see things far more clearly. I know now where my problems have been. The director said I needed to open my mind to all sorts of possibilities and new ideas.

He has given me a mission, a task I must carry out to prove my belief in him. If I succeed, the world in which we live will be a different place - hopefully a better place. I am going to kill a man, but by killing that man I will save so many others.

I know that murder is wrong, but I have killed before and now I must kill again. I hope you can forgive me for what it is I've got to do. I pray to God that he will forgive me also, because this is the right thing to do. I know God will understand when I face Him on the final day.

I may well die on my mission; there are no guarantees of success, but I believe in what I am doing. I believe it is worth dying for. I can only hope history proves me right.

I am sorry, Mum, that I may never see you again. This is not the way I wanted to say goodbye, but it is the only way available to me now. Try and explain to the rest of the family what has happened to me. Give the little ones a hug each from their older brother Francis. Most of all, please pray for me. I know that with God's help I will succeed.

Your loving son, now and forever
Francis

TWENTY-ONE

September 1971

The days and weeks after Dodo's murder were the most painful of my life. I caught a train to Brighton and then wandered along the coastline for hours, walking through the night before finally stumbling into a tiny seaside bed and breakfast. The only available room was a small, maudlin chamber of mothballs and mould, with a narrow single bed, a wooden chair that had seen better days, and a bedside lamp. There was hardly enough space to squeeze in, but I took the room anyway. I was exhausted. I needed to sleep.

Thrusting a twenty pound note into the ageing proprietor's grubby hands, and writing my name in the register as Simon Gartside, I asked to be left alone until I came out again of my own accord. After locking my door and pushing the chair beneath the handle to bar all intruders, I collapsed into a dreamless sleep.

Twice during my slumber I was woken by a hammering at the door but simply rolled over and went back to sleep. Finally, after seemed like a lifetime in that cramped, fetid room, I emerged blinking into the hallway to find the owner standing outside looking anxious.

'Oh, Mr Gartside, you had me so worried. I didn't know whether to call the police or the undertaker. You seemed to be dead to the world in there!' she fussed.

Her words reminded me of the difficult task that still lay ahead. Pulling on a jacket I stumbled outside in search of a public call box. After walking for nearly a mile along the coastline I found a telephone that had not been vandalised. A call to Directory Enquiries secured the number of a local firm of funeral directors. We quickly arranged terms for Dodo to be collected from the police morgue in London and brought to south for a funeral. 'Will there be any relatives attending?' the undertaker asked.

'No, just myself,' I said, sadly. Dodo had once told me she had no living relatives, and two years living a transient existence on the streets, in hostels or psychiatric hospitals had left her with few, if any, friends. It did not seem right that such a lovely, happy person should be murdered and then buried forever with no one to mourn her, except me.

The funeral took place two days later at a small church on a hillside overlooking the sea. Dodo was buried in a grave atop the hill, with magnificent views out over the sea. Once the pall-bearers had left, I remained alone to say my own farewell. Afterwards I sat on a wooden bench looking out beyond the coast.

'It's a beautiful spot, isn't it?'

I turned to see a man walking towards me, carrying a single white rose in his hand. 'Yes,' I agreed hesitantly. The man was short and slightly dishevelled, with a sadness about his face that matched my own mood.

'Do you mind if I sit here?' he asked. I just shrugged, so he sat down beside me on the bench. Together we watched the ferries and tankers sail by, a gentle autumn breeze shifting white clouds lazily across the sky. 'Do you have a friend here?' the small man inquired.

'Yes. I loved her very much.'

'It's always sad to lose someone you love. I seem to have lost so many of my loved ones. Yet, I like to think of death as not being an ending, but the beginning. The start of a new adventure. Who knows what lies beyond our own lifetimes?'

'I suppose you're right,' I mumbled, a single tear rolling down my right cheek. 'I'm sorry, I've got to go now.' I got up and began walking away, not quite holding back my tears. As I reached the cemetery gate I looked back, but the small man had disappeared from view. I was not sure, but I thought I could see a single white rose lying by Dodo's grave. Then again, it could have just been the sun in my eyes.

I turned away and walked on. Dodo was gone and nothing could bring her back. Worst of all, I knew her death was my fault and there was nothing I could do about it.

* * *

The next few weeks I spent wallowing in self pity and alcohol. Every day I would spend in the corner of a tavern, drinking myself insensible to forget what had happened. I blamed myself for Dodo's murder - believed I might as well have pulled the trigger myself. I was trapped in a destructive spiral.

Outside, the whole world seemed to be going through the same frenzy of self-destruction, lurching ever closer to a nuclear holocaust. I watched the evening news, hardly registering the growing international crisis because of my own problems. The escalating conflict between the Soviet Union and China was at breaking point, with troops massing on the border between the two superpowers. With fighting already breaking out in South America, pundits said a world war could start out at any time. Even this could not get my attention. But, finally, the world crisis snapped me back to reality, thanks to an old and familiar face.

It was an early evening bulletin on BBC3, and Alex MacIntosh was explaining about efforts to set up a new peace conference by Sir Reginald Styles. The dapper presenter was profiling Styles, who had a long and distinguished career in the diplomatic service and at the United Nations. Now Sir Reginald was using his twenty years of Foreign Office expertise to persuade the Chinese leaders to attend the conference.

'If the conference goes ahead, it will almost certainly be held here, at Sir Reginald's private residence, Auderly House.' MacIntosh pointed behind himself at a stately white Georgian mansion; it was on a slight rise and overlooked a well-wooded country estate. 'If it does take place here, security for the conference will be very

tight. Head of the security for the event will be Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart, who has been seconded to the UN from the British Army.'

MacIntosh turned to his left to interview the brigadier. My old quarry had hardly changed since I first saw him at the Ashbridge Cottage Hospital with Professor Liz Shaw two years previously, just before the events of Black Thursday. Perhaps Lethbridge-Stewart was now a little heavier of frame, and the UNIT uniform had been modified from a mushroom colour to a more traditional khaki green, but he still had the same stern face and bristling military moustache.

'Now, Brigadier, the fate of the world could rest on this peace conference going smoothly. What special security plans have you put in place?' MacIntosh asked.

The brigadier snorted his derision. 'I am hardly going to reveal our plans to prevent any terrorist attacks on this conference on national television now am I, Mr MacIntosh?'

For a delightful moment I thought the usually unflappable reporter was going to blush, but he was rescued from his embarrassment by Lethbridge-Stewart. 'Rest assured, we are taken every precaution possible to ensure the safety of those attending the conference. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have a lot of work to do,' he said and stalked off camera, leaving MacIntosh quite bemused.

'Err, back to you in the studio?'

Someone switched the television set over to football highlights and I began thinking to myself. The fiasco concerning the Glasshouse had ruined any chance I had of exposing the truth about Victor Magister, but the insidious work of UNIT could still be revealed for what it really was. Even if I could not salvage my career, I might be able to salvage some self-respect from all that had happened. Perhaps Dodo had not died in vain.

I caught the next train back to London and started working the telephone, calling in the last few favours I still had outstanding. First I contacted Catherine at the *Chronicle* for the location of Auderly House. Next, I tapped an old friend in the East End for his contacts in gangland. Less than three hours later I was in possession of a loaded revolver. 'Ex-Army issue, top-grade shooter,' said the heavy-set individual who sold it to me for a princely sum.

Finally, I returned to my house in Wandsworth. I had no intention of going into the building: it was no longer my home. Instead I had come to collect my car, which had been parked down the street, abandoned and ignored, for the past three weeks. I walked around it, checking that the tyres were still inflated and nothing had been damaged or tampered with on the vehicle. It all seemed fine. Slipping the keys from my pocket of my jacket, I opened the driver's door and slid behind the steering wheel.

The engine caught on the second turn of the key and I slowly drove away, heading for the nearest petrol station. I had a long journey ahead of me and I had no wish to break down on my way to Auderly House. I had a rendezvous with UNIT and I was not going to be late.

It took several hours to drive from London to Sir Reginald's country estate and by the time I arrived dawn was breaking. I knew the delegates for the peace conference were due to arrive at about midday so I pulled off a lane about a mile west of the house and got some sleep.

* * *

Gunfire awoke me, along with the dull clump of mortar bombs exploding. What the hell was going on? It sounded like the peace conference was under attack, but from whom? Terrorists intent on plunging the world into chaos? Perhaps Victor Magister was still manipulating events from his isolated prison cell.

While I had been wallowing in my own guilt, the so-called 'trial of the century' had taken place behind closed doors. Magister had been convicted of murder, high treason and numerous other crimes and was sentenced to life imprisonment, with no hope of remission. He was now incarcerated at a specially constructed jail somewhere off the coast of England. Apparently the judges presiding over the case had been considering giving Magister the death penalty, which was still applicable for treason convictions. But reports that leaked out from the secret trial stated that the three men judging the case had been swayed by an impassioned plea by a member of the intelligence services. I had considered contacting Cassandra to discover the real story behind this rumour but guessed I would not be a welcome caller anymore.

I dismissed Magister's possible involvement in this attack on the peace conference; it seemed too far-fetched even for me to believe. But if not him, then whom? Making sure I had the revolver firmly jammed into my jacket pocket I got out of the car and started running towards the noise. As I crashed through the undergrowth, I remembered something Tubbs at the *Chronicle* had once told me.

'I've photographed three different wars and enough skirmishes to notice one important fact. Whenever there's an explosion, we always run towards it while everybody else runs away. Sometimes I don't know who's right and who's wrong in that situation!'

I smiled at the memory. When I called her in the archive department, Catherine told me that Tubbs had just retired after more than thirty years at the *Chronicle*. Right now even Tubbs would probably think twice before running towards this firefight. But I had lost too much, come too far to turn back now. I pushed onwards and emerged on to the gravel driveway approaching the front of Auderly House.

Immediately I flung myself back into the bushes as a convoy of limousines sped straight at me. They flashed past, flags of the superpowers fluttering on their bonnets. The peace conference delegates were being evacuated to a safer location, I surmised. But just what was going on? Another loud explosion behind Auderly House grabbed my attention and I ran towards the white mansion.

Suddenly a hulking figure hurled itself at me, throwing me to the ground. I looked up to see something inhuman towering above me, its face a mass of heavy bone ridges, its eyes tiny and sunken. Its skin was almost green-black in hue and long wisps of

lank hair hung from the sides of its face. The creature was clad in leather and a rough synthetic fabric stretched over its bulky frame, which stood nearly seven feet tall. It pulled a jagged-edged knife from a sheath and drew the blade back, ready to plunge it down into my chest.

‘No! I screamed.

But before the beast could deliver the killing blow, it crumpled and fell to my side. A lone man stood over the fallen creature, his hand still poised from delivering the knockout blow. ‘Are you all right?’ he asked, pulling me to my feet. I just nodded, unable to speak.

It was the Doctor. Without a grand cape he looked quite ordinary, despite his white ruffled shirt and velvet burgundy jacket. Satisfied I was okay, he pushed me away from the house and ran on in front. ‘Come on, we’ve got to get clear of the building before it blows!’ he shouted to give my legs extra impetus. Around us UNIT soldiers were also running away from the building towards the main road.

An enormous explosion threw us all to the ground. I turned to see a huge mushroom cloud of smoke billowing up into the air, my head still ringing from the concussion wave. An authoritative voice bellowed nearby. ‘Come on, get a move on! We want to mop up any of the invaders who escaped the explosion!’

It was Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart, sending his troops back towards the remains of Auderly House. Sporadic gunfire could be heard for a few minutes afterwards, then silence. Eventually one of the UNIT soldiers paused long enough to realise I did not belong.

‘Who the bloody hell are you?’ he demanded, sergeant’s stripes prominent on the sleeve of his tunic.

‘My name’s Stevens, James Stevens. I’m a journalist.’

‘Reporter, eh? Well, the Brig’ll probably want a word with you.’ The sergeant looked around and called the two nearest soldiers to his side. ‘You two - get over here! Keep this man under armed guard until the Brig gets a chance to talk to him. I’ll have your guts for garters if you let him out of your sight for a moment, got that?’

The pair nodded and led me away to sit in the back of an army truck. I waited there for nearly three hours before the sergeant reappeared to take me before Lethbridge-Stewart. I was led past the smoking remains of Auderly House and made to wait another five minutes before finally being ushered into a small khaki tent near the rubble. Inside was a command post cluttered with maps, tables and radio equipment. The brigadier sent everyone else out of the tent and invited me to sit down before sagging into a foldaway chair opposite me.

He took off his peaked cap and rested it on the rickety wooden table between us, before rubbing the top of his nose with his thumb and forefinger. ‘Would you like a cup of tea?’ he asked quietly.

I was surprised by the question but managed to stammer a yes. The brigadier called for two mugs of tea from the soldier standing guard outside the tent before regarding me. 'So, the infamous James Stevens. You've been quite a thorn in our side, Mr Stevens.'

'Just doing my job.'

'And we're just doing ours, but that hasn't stopped you harassing us for nearly two years, has it?'

'If you want to talk about harassment, I can tell you -' I began, but the Brigadier held up a hand to stop me going any further.

'I know what you're about to say. We know all about certain individuals within the ranks of C19 and their campaign of terror against individuals like yourself. We here at UNIT have encountered them before and thought them defeated. It seems that was just a battle won, not the war against such elements. We also now recognize that you have been the pawn of one of our principle enemies.'

'Victor Magister.'

'That's right,' replied the brigadier. The tea arrived in two large enamel mugs, hot and sweet when I sipped at it. I noticed the brigadier made sure he took the chipped mug. He drank heartily and finished his tea within a minute, while mine still felt scalding to my mouth. The brigadier stood up and began to pace back and forth inside the tent, almost as if he were counting off the steps.

'I think better on my feet - too many years in the field, I suppose,' he said as he paced. 'Mr Stevens, I don't want to know your motives for coming to Auderly House today. Frankly, I don't really care. Somehow you've managed to cast UNIT as the villains of your investigations, but I have to tell you that you're wrong. We managed to avert a tragedy today which could have easily led to a world war, but I doubt you'll believe that.' He stopped to look at me. 'So I'm going to show you something that will make you believe, something that will show you the sort of thing UNIT is up against. Come with me.'

He stalked from the tent and I had to run to catch up with him, leaving my tea on the table. We strode through the chaos surrounding Auderly House before slipping into another, much larger tent. Inside, a pair of surgeons in UNIT garb were hunched over a figure atop a table. They snapped to attention and stepped back from the bench. The brigadier gestured towards the corpse on the table.

'Take a good look, Mr Stevens. Take a look at the sort of foe UNIT was created to fight,' Lethbridge-Stewart said.

I stepped closer to the table. On it lay the creature that had almost killed me earlier. It was not human. In death it seemed even more menacing than it had done alive. The skin was tough and leathery to my touch, the open eyes soulless and black. The hands were huge, nearly twice the size of my own when I compared them. I poked and

prodded but there was no question that this creature was authentic and not of this world.

‘It’s an alien,’ I said quietly.

‘Exactly,’ the brigadier agreed. ‘Called an Ogron, apparently. I’m told they’re rather slow-witted but highly dangerous mercenaries. It took nearly a full clip of ammo to bring this one down. We were lucky - bullets usually have no effect at all on the foes we face.’ He looked to the two army surgeons. ‘All right, carry on.’

They returned to the table and began cutting open the alien corpse, stripping away the strange synthetic clothing to reveal the green-black skin beneath. As they cut open the creature’s chest a nauseating aroma of rotting filled the tent. I had seen enough and stepped outside, followed by Lethbridge-Stewart. He cleared his throat to get my attention.

‘I hardly need remind you that what you have seen here today is highly classified and any attempt to tell anyone else about this is punishable with a lengthy prison sentence,’ he said formally, before relaxing the tone of his voice. ‘Frankly, I doubt anyone would believe you if you told them anyway. Sometimes I can hardly believe the sort of menaces we have to fight.’

I said nothing, numbed by what I had witnessed. The brigadier had one of his men drive me to a nearby hotel where a room had been booked for me. ‘Our way of thanking you for your cooperation,’ the sergeant explained before driving away. ‘Also, we might want to interview you further tomorrow.’

I checked in and went up to my room, utterly despondent. I had been wrong all this time. I had become so fixated that UNIT was a force for evil that the idea it could be doing good had never occurred to me. When people whose testimony I trusted about other matters, like Greg Sutton, Isobel Watkins or Professor Shaw, tried to tell me UNIT was not part of some elaborate plot, I had refused to believe them. If what they said did not fit into my carefully constructed conspiracy theory, I simply discarded the information as erroneous - just another red herring.

All the time I was leading my crusade against UNIT, I had been persecuting and pursuing the wrong people, unwittingly playing my role as a black pawn in the machinations of Victor Magister. Everything I had done for the past two years had been for nothing. There was no elaborate conspiracy, no all-encompassing cover-up.

Sure, there were secrets and things the Government or UNIT did not want the world to know, but the same was true of all organizations, I now realized. Hell, after seeing the creature at Auderly House, I was hardly likely to tell everyone in the world what had happened to me. That did not mean I had started my own elaborate conspiracy, just that I could not easily explain what had happen to me and doubted anyone would believe me if I did talk about it. UNIT was obviously faced with the same problem nearly every day.

All this time I had been chasing ghosts and phantoms, doing Magister’s dirty work and playing into his hands. Looking back now, I realized my escape from the

Glasshouse had been all too easy, the nurse that Cleary killed just another pawn to be sacrificed in a greater game.

I had convinced myself 'the Doctor' was some kind of codename for a whole range of operatives operating in the shadows of British society, doing the dirty work of some covert agency. How did I square that with the fact that the Doctor - a person I had believed to be the quintessence of evil - had saved my life today? Indeed, he and UNIT had helped save the entire world today.

All this time I had been getting it wrong, reacting to the actions of others, and never seeing the truth for what it truly was. I remembered my words to Cleary on the train after we escaped the Glasshouse: 'I'm just a reporter - I report things. It's my job to write history: it's your job as a soldier to make history.'

He accused me of washing my hands, of denying my responsibility as a human being - now I saw he was right. All my career, all my working life, I had been content to stand on the sidelines reporting what others did. Never get involved, I told myself, never let the facts get in the way of a good story. I had certainly done that. I had been a parasite, preying on the misery of others. And when that parasitical media was directed at me, I was unable to take the medicine I had so willingly dished out to others.

I slumped on to my bed and felt something in my jacket pocket jab into my side. I reached into the pocket and pulled out my revolver.

I thought about the world peace conference that had so nearly ended in disaster. Imagine if the terrorist attack had been successful, I told myself. Imagine if the world had been plunged into nuclear war, or what if that creature had plunged its blade into my heart - what legacy would I have left behind me? All I had ever created was pain and criticism and ill-feeling. Anyone who had ever loved me had been rewarded with deceit and hatred. The only person I had ever loved had been brutally murdered because of my blindness to reality.

If I died right now, I wondered, would anybody mourn my passing? Would anyone even remember, except as the fraud who tried to fool a nation into believing his wild stories? I could almost see the obituary headlines before me: KIWI HOAXER STEVENS, 25, DIES IN MYSTERIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES.

There was no reason to go on. Dodo was dead because of me. My crusade for the truth had turned into a sad, sick joke at my expense. It was all over. I looked down at the revolver in my hands. Closing my eyes, I brought the barrel up and pressed it against my left temple. Time to finish what others had started. Time to end it all. I began to squeeze the trigger.

PART THREE: WHO KILLED KENNEDY

A man may die, nations may rise and fall, but an idea lives on. Ideas have endurance without death.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy

TWENTY-TWO

14 September 1971

‘Mr Stevens? Mr Stevens, are you there?’ I cursed and put the revolver back in my jacket pocket. The voice was female and sounded like the chatty receptionist from the hotel’s front desk. I went to the door and opened it a crack. ‘Mr Stevens, the soldier who dropped you off earlier came back and left this envelope for you. He said it was urgent.’ She passed the white rectangle of paper through the gap in the door.

‘Thank you,’ I said and slammed the door shut on her. Returning to the bed I sat down and looked at the envelope. Made of plain white paper, it was sealed at the back with red wax, an elaborate ‘D’ pressed into the melted seal. I broke open the envelope and removed the contents, a single sheet of white paper. On it were scrawled four words - ‘Call me, The Doctor’ - and a telephone number.

Picking up the receiver by the bed, I dialled the digits on the note. It was answered after three rings by an imperious voice. I recognised the haughty tones from his heckling at the demonstration of the Keller Machine at Stangmoor Prison: it was the Doctor.

‘Mr Stevens?’

‘Yes,’ I replied.

‘I thought I recognized you at Auderly House. I’ve been meaning to get in contact with you for some time but you’re a very difficult man to pin down.’

‘Speak for yourself.’

‘Quite. Look, first of all, I wanted to give you my condolences for the death of Miss Chaplet: I know the two of you were very close. Dodo was a friend of mine a long time ago, and I still feel responsible for her in a way. Anyway, she died before her time and I’m very sorry.’

‘Fine. You’ve said you’re sorry, now leave me alone,’ I said. Despite everything I had been through, despite the fact that he had saved my life only hours before, I still found it hard to trust the Doctor.

‘I’m afraid I can’t do that, Mr Stevens. You see, I need your help. I was very interested by what you had to say on that wretched television programme, *The Passing Parade*.’

‘Oh really?’ So much had happened to me since my humiliation live on national television that it seemed like something from decades ago rather than just a few months.

‘We know for a fact that the Glasshouse was real, it did exist. In fact several UNIT soldiers were sent there for treatment, including your Private Cleary. All of them had been suffering from mental or nervous breakdowns. Life as a UNIT soldier is stressful and highly dangerous, like no other job, as you no doubt saw today.’ I murmured my agreement, so the Doctor continued.

‘It seems the Glasshouse was a front for the Master, or Victor Magister as you know him. You were absolutely right - he has been using it to mentally re-programme UNIT soldiers to do his bidding. Can you tell me anything that Private Cleary said after you escaped from the Glasshouse together? Anything at all?’

I described our argument on the train to London after escaping from the Glasshouse, how we had talked about going back in time to kill Hitler.

‘Who suggested killing Hitler? Was it Cleary?’

‘No, I made up that example. Cleary seemed more obsessed with the assassination of John F. Kennedy,’ I explained. ‘He kept going on and on about how everything would be different if only Kennedy had lived, about how he had been given a special mission -’

‘That’s it!’ exclaimed the Doctor. ‘Of course, that explains it all!’

‘Explains what?’

But the Doctor only answered my question with another question of his own. ‘Did Cleary bring anything peculiar with him when you escaped from the Glasshouse? Anything out of the ordinary?’

‘Yes, a metal bracelet,’ I replied. I had been carrying the bracelet around with me since discovering it near Dodo’s body. I went to retrieve it from my jacket, which was draped over a chair. As I crossed the hotel room I caught sight of myself in a mirror. My face was haggard with dark circles beneath my eyes and a few strands of grey visible in my hair. I looked a wreck. Having recovered the bracelet, I went back to the phone and described the metal circle to the Doctor, mentioning the intricate wiring around its exterior surface.

‘A Time Ring! That clinches it!’

By now I was becoming exasperated. ‘Would you mind telling me what the hell all this is about? I think I’m entitled to know.’

‘Yes, of course you’re right. You’ll need to know where you’re going. A Time Ring enables the person holding the device when it is activated to travel through time and space,’ the Doctor said, his voice entirely matter of fact.

‘You’ve got to be kidding me.’

‘Look, I don’t have time to explain this properly,’ the Doctor replied, ‘but I believe the Master is brainwashing UNIT soldiers to turn them into assassins. He plans to use

primitive Time Rings to send them backwards and forwards in time to kill key figures in your world's history. My guess is he's out to destabilize the space-time continuum on this world to such an extent that it collapses in on itself completely. Or maybe if he changes one recent event enough, he can trigger a worldwide nuclear war and destroy the human race altogether. Either way, Cleary is almost certainly the prototype for an army of time-travelling assassins.'

'You can't expect me to actually believe any of what you're saying,' I protested.

'You probably didn't believe in the existence of aliens until that Ogron attacked you this afternoon either.' His voice had the smack of authority, despite the fantastic things he was saying. The Doctor truly believed what he was telling me and I quickly found myself believing too.

'Mr Stevens, we're already starting to get strange anomalies in the space-time continuum - reports of cavemen on the streets of Croydon, Elizabethan noblemen winking in and out of existence around St. James' Park. Unless you can put a stop to this, the problems will only escalate.'

'Why me? How?'

'By going back and stopping Private Cleary,' said the Doctor. 'You're the only one who can recognize him in a crowd, the only one he might listen to. And you're an expert on that time period - I know, I've seen your book about it.' My Kennedy had been published just before my shaming on BBC3 and was immediately withdrawn from sale. Obviously a few copies had been sold before the book was pulped.

'You really believe he's going to Dallas in 1963 to prevent the assassination of JFK?!'

'Either that, or alter the circumstances of the killing to change history. The Master will have brainwashed Cleary into believing what he is doing is for the good of mankind - that's typical of the Master, twisting people's good intentions to suit his own evil goals.' I found myself nodding in bitter agreement. I had too had been a patsy for the Master, thinking my crusade to expose UNIT would help the world when in reality it only aided the Master's evil goals. Still, I had my doubts about the Doctor's theory and gave them voice.

'But Kennedy is already dead, surely that history can't be altered?'

'I used to believe the same thing but now I'm not so sure. Perhaps free will is not an illusion after all. If that is the case, then history can be changed - or, at least, it can be perverted.'

'Why Kennedy? Why not assassinate someone else?'

'I'm not sure. His murder is obviously such a key event in history that if it were changed the ripple effects could be enormous. There was a lot of tension between America and the Soviet Union at the time. But there's more to it. The Master and I have a personal vendetta against each other. That moment in Earth's history is a crucial one in my own personal history. By this manipulation he hopes to destroy me.'

The Doctor fell silent for a minute, obviously thinking to himself - perhaps remembering whatever had happened to him on 22 November 1963. I ran a hand over the stubble on my chin and realized I had not shaved for several days. Finally, the Doctor spoke again.

‘I can’t use the Time Ring myself, but you may be able to safely go back to 1963. Where were you on the day Kennedy died?’

‘In New Zealand - it was my eighteenth birthday.’

‘Perfect! All you have to do is use the Time Ring to get back to 1963 and make sure history follows its proper course. But you’ll have to be careful - the Time Ring you have is almost certainly just a prototype, so there’s no guarantee it will work. You might die in the attempt.’

‘I’ve got nothing left to lose,’ I said, looking at my revolver on the bed. Its dull-black metal offered a quick solution to my problems but I knew I still had work to do.

‘Cleary will probably already be there when you arrive - you have to stop him intervening in history. But don’t attract the attention of anyone else, or you might make matters worse, not better. And beware the Master - he’s a very persuasive fellow. He’s bound to be there as well, exerting his will over Cleary. He’ll stop at nothing to make sure his plan succeeds.’

‘Even if I believed a word of this, which I don’t, why should I help you?’ I asked.

‘You’re not doing this for me, you’re doing it for yourself. Remember everything the Master has done to you. This is your chance to lay to rest the ghosts of your own past. Your chance for redemption, Mr Stevens. Your chance to avenge the death of Dodo.’

I remembered the smiling face of my dead lover, remembered her bloody body sprawled on the floor surrounding by policemen who did not know her and did not care about her. The Doctor was right - she deserved better than that and perhaps by doing this I could finally put her murder behind me.

‘How do I know where and when I’ll turn up?’ I asked.

‘The Master will have thought of that. The Time Ring will have pre-set coordinates built into it. If you’re lucky, there’ll be enough power in the ring for the return journey. It should bring you back to the same point in same and time where you first activated it.’

I looked long and hard at the metal bracelet in my hand. This was supposed to project me across time and space? A ridiculous notion. And yet, after all I had seen and experienced, what right did I have to be cynical anymore? That cynicism had cost Dodo her life, and had cost me my job, my reputation, everything. I had just been about to commit suicide - what did it matter what happened to me now?

‘All right, what do I do?’

‘Look at the inside of the Time Ring. You’ll see a series of hollows in the metal. Press your fingers into the hollows. Whatever you do, don’t lose the Time Ring - it’s your only way back. And be careful!’ the Doctor said, genuine concern in his voice.

‘All right, I’m pressing them now but nothing’s happ -’

As I spoke the room began to spin around me, fading away into blackness. I felt the phone slip from my fingers as all strength left my body, with just a disembodied voice hanging in the cold air whirling around me:

‘Good luck, Mr Stevens. You’re going to need it!’

Then, just darkness...

TWENTY-THREE

22 November 1963

The first sensation I felt was heat, a sultriness in the air I was breathing, clogging my lungs. My face felt hot and my clothes were stuck to my skin with perspiration. I tried to open my eyes and was dazzled by the brilliance of the sun. I brought a hand up to my face to shield it from the glare.

The air was humid, as if it had rained earlier, and the moisture brought the scent of the recently mown grass alive in my nostrils. Around me I could hear the chatter of people's voices - excited and loud, raised to be heard above the harsh noise of nearby traffic. Strangely, I thought the voices had American accents. Could the mad theory put to me by the Doctor have actually been correct? Had I somehow been transported across time and space by the thin metal bracelet I was clutching in my hand?

I pulling myself up into a seated position and looked at the surroundings, hardly able to take in what my eyes were seeing. I recognised the location immediately, having looked at dozens of photographs of it while researching my JFK book. I was sitting on the infamous grassy knoll at Dealey Plaza in Dallas, Texas. I was at the site of President John F. Kennedy's assassination!

'This is impossible,' I muttered to myself as I got up, turning in a slow circle to get a better look around me, trying to get a grasp on the situation. 'This can't be happening, it just isn't possible.'

I was standing on a gentle grass slope. Before me was Elm Street, which dropped away to my right and disappeared below a four-lane overpass. Already residents of Dallas were gathering on both sides of the street, chattering loudly about seeing the president and his wife. Many of the spectators had brought cameras along and were checking their settings and films were okay. Directly in front of me was a family, two young parents and their children, the infants playful and excited. Their clothes and hairstyles certainly seemed to indicate America of the early 1960s.

To my right a five-foot high wooden picket fence extended up from the concrete overpass, trees casting a canopy of shade over the fence-line. Directly behind me on the grassy slope stood a white stone memorial, built in the shape of a semi-circle. At the two ends of the memorial, where it reached closest to Elm Street, two blocks of the white stone jutted out.

An overweight businessman in his early fifties was clambering up onto one of the blocks, one hand desperately trying to steady himself, the other clutching a Super-8 amateur home-movie camera. A younger woman was doing her best to help him but seemed amused and a little exasperated. 'Oh, Mr Zapruder!' she giggled as he nearly lost his glasses.

To the right of the memorial was another group of trees, towered over by a tall red-brick building, seven storeys high. Clearly visible along the top of one side of the

building were the words TEXAS SCHOOL BOOK DEPOSITORY. On the roof stood a giant yellow and red Hertz Rentals sign with a digital clock display built into it. From the clock's black display face the time shone out in red numerals: 12.18.

'Jesus Christ, it's all real. Twelve minutes. I've got twelve minutes until the first bullet is fired. Until JFK dies,' I stammered out, my voice choked with emotion. In a few minutes I would be a witness to the most famous murder this century.

I looked up at the gloriously blue sky, a sick feeling in my gut. All my life I had been reading articles and books about this day, listening to interviews with eyewitnesses. Now I was going to see it all for myself. Meanwhile, thousands of miles away, a young man celebrating his eighteenth birthday in New Zealand was about to get his first taste of journalism, was about to begin a life-long interest in the killing of JFK. I had come full circle.

I tried to focus on what to do next. Traffic was still rolling down Elm Street as the bystanders gathered. This was the edge of downtown Dallas. The presidential motorcade would come down Main Street towards Dealey Plaza, turning right into Houston Street past the Dallas County Criminal Courts Building. The inmates held in the cells at the courts building would have a grandstand view of the assassination.

Once into Houston, the motorcade would have to brake to make a difficult left-hand turn into Elm Street in front of the Book Depository. That loss of speed would dramatically extend the length of time necessary for the journey down the gently curving Elm Street towards the underpass. The president's open-top limousine and its passengers would be much easier targets for the assassin's bullets I knew must come.

Up on the roof of the Book Depository, the clock display changed to read 12.21. Less than ten minutes to go. I began walking quickly towards the building, mindful of the Doctor's warning not to attract attention to myself. My clothes and hairstyle were incongruous enough in this time and place, running would only make me more noticeable.

I was nearly at the front steps of the building when a quietly sinister voice stopped me.

'Mr Stevens? What a pleasure it is to see you again.'

I turned to look at the speaker, already knowing his identity. He was clad in a black suit, black tie and white shirt, carrying a rolled black umbrella, but his eyes flashed with familiar evil, his face was still the same mask of lies and deception masked in a smile.

'Magister!'

'Shhh, not so loud, we don't wish to attract attention on today of all days. This is someone else's big moment.' His thin lips smiled mockingly. 'I was wondering whether you would accept my invitation. Come now, you hardly thought I would actually let Cleary leave the Time Ring behind unless I had already planned for this moment, did you?'

‘What are you talking about?’

‘Poor Private Cleary. His heart’s in the right place but I’m not sure he’s up to the task ahead. That’s why I made sure you would be here if I needed any assistance.’

‘I’m not helping you, you evil bastard!’

The Master stepped close to me, his eyes boring into mine, his left hand clutching at my arm, his words low and persuasive. ‘You didn’t believe anything that fool the Doctor said, did you? He’s just using you, like he’s always been using you. Don’t you understand, your world has been following the wrong destiny ever since this day in 1963, ever since the assassination. Kennedy wasn’t destined to die here in Dallas, but something went wrong. It’s up to us to save the president; it’s up to us to save history! Think of all the good Kennedy could do if he survived today, think of what it could mean to the world. Think, Stevens, think!’

His words slid into my mind like silk, nestling inside my thoughts, filling my brain with images of what could be if Kennedy lived. The glorious era of Camelot extending ever onward... But another image nagged at me - Dodo lying dead on the floor, dead because of this man.

‘No!’ I pulled my arm away from the Master. ‘No, I won’t listen to you. You’re trying to trick me, like you’ve tricked so many others. I won’t do your dirty work any longer!’ I started running towards the Book Depository, the Master’s words hissing after me.

‘Hurry, Mr Stevens, hurry! You might still have time!’

I brushed past a crowd of employees gathering on the front steps of the Book Depository, slipping inside without being challenged. Everyone’s attention was focussed on the end of Main Street where the motorcade would come into view.

Two women were standing in the doorway discussing what Jackie would be wearing, hoping they could get a good look. I stifled an urge to describe the First Lady’s pink outfit with matching hat to the women. They would see it soon enough, covered in the blood of the president. Those blood-stained clothes, which Jackie would refuse to take off for hours after the assassination, would become one of the enduring, unforgettable icons of this day.

I quickly found a staircase inside the Book Depository building and began climbing. As I moved up through the floors I racked my brain for every piece of knowledge I’d ever read or heard about the next few minutes. At the same time I felt a massive, giddy rush of *déjà vu*. It was as if my actions were not my own, as if I was merely playing out a role like an actor on a stage. I remembered the dream which had haunted when I first awoke in the Glasshouse.

Now that dream seemed to be coming true. Every step upward matched a growth of the terrible dread inside me, yet I also felt unconnected with what was happening. It was as if I was outside my body, watching myself go through the motions of

something I had rehearsed many times before. The inevitability of it all was overwhelming.

Finally I reached the sixth floor, gasping for breath and cursing my lack of fitness. I waited a few seconds to let my breathing settle before exploring further. I had seen no one coming up the stairs. The noisy chatter of the people gathering outside wafted up through the open windows. I could hear the sound of scuffling and stepped into the large, dusty room which I knew occupied the whole of the sixth floor.

In the centre of the room two men were fighting. The larger man was wearing down his opponent. Dressed in a white shirt and denim trousers, his face was a mask of concentration. The smaller man was wearing a red-checked shirt over his trousers, his face crumpled with the strain of the battle. I recognized him instantly from dozens of different photos I had seen while researching my Kennedy book - it was Lee Harvey Oswald. It was the man history recorded as the lone assassin who murdered President Kennedy. He was fighting Private Cleary.

The pair of them had locked hands on a rifle and were wrestling for control of it. As they scuffled, Oswald flailed at Cleary and managed to tear at his shirt. The buttons popped off to reveal a soldier's uniform underneath. But instead of UNIT insignia, it had Soviet symbols visible on it. Oswald staggered backwards in shock, cursing in Russian.

Seeing his chance, Cleary swung the butt of the rifle through the air and smashed it into Oswald's head. The Book Depository employee clattered to the wooden floor, unconscious. Cleary stepped over his prostrate opponent and marched towards the eastern corner of the building. Boxes were stacked around that corner, shielding whoever sat behind them from a casual glance into the room.

I ran after Cleary, trying to get the UNIT soldier's attention, but he seemed to be a man possessed, like a puppet with invisible strings manipulating his movement. 'Cleary! Cleary!' I shouted at him but he ignored me, crouching down behind the boxes to take up the assassin's firing position. I shook his shoulder but he just batted my hand away.

There was nothing else for it, I would have to stop him by more violent means. Looking around, I spotted a broken pipe hanging from the wall nearby. I twisted the corroded metal until a length snapped off in my hands before going back to the corner of the room where Cleary crouched, waiting. There could only be moments left before the motorcade would drive round the corner and come into his firing line.

'Forgive me, Cleary, but I've got to stop you,' I whispered and smashed the pipe down on the UNIT soldier's head. He cried out and crumpled, the rifle smashing against the wall and floor before coming to rest. I began dragging the unconscious soldier away from the window when I heard a faint voice.

'Cleary? Cleary, are you there?'

The voice was coming from the soldier's ear. From inside it I pulled out a tiny device like a hearing aid. A transparent wire led from this to a minute microphone at his

throat. Removing the device from Cleary, I fitted it to my own head and listened. I could hear a familiar voice through the earpiece, dark and sinister.

‘Magister!’ I said and cursed him.

‘Come, come, Mr Stevens, don’t sound so surprised. You didn’t think I could trust Private Cleary to do it all by himself, did you?’ Clutching the rifle to my chest, I crouched down amid the boxes and used the telescopic sight to scan the crowd for the evil manipulator who had brought me to this place.

‘Your little plan has failed, Magister. Cleary is out cold and history will take its natural course.’

‘What a shame,’ the Master replied mockingly, then paused as a ripple of excitement went through the crowd. ‘Ahh, I see the soon-to-be-late president is arriving.’

I looked over at the bottom of Main Street in time to see the motorcade start sweeping around the corner. Two motorcycle policemen came first, making sure the road was clear ahead, followed a few seconds later by the black presidential limousine and several similar vehicles following it. Two flags with the presidential seal attached fluttered at the front of the lead vehicle as it turned right into Houston Street.

‘Now, Mr Stevens, since you are up there in the sniper’s nest instead of the unfortunate Private Cleary, you are the one who must choose which is more important - saving history or saving the president.’ I could almost hear the smirk in the Master’s whispered words.

Scanning the killing zone in Elm Street through the rifle’s telescopic sight, I saw the Master standing on the grassy knoll close to the road’s edge. He was close to the Stemmons Freeway sign and holding up an open black umbrella - a bizarre action on such a sunny day. Peering through the sights I could see him far more clearly. In his spare hand the Master was clutching a weapon of some kind, readying it for use.

‘Your choice is quite simple, Mr Stevens. Either you kill me and save the president, thus endangering the entire space-time continuum. Or else you kill the president yourself, thus saving history but knowing you have murdered the world’s most powerful man.’

‘You bastard!’ Below me the lead limousine had safely negotiated turning the difficult corner and was starting to accelerate down Elm Street towards the underpass, towards the Master.

‘I’m sorry, I’ll have to hurry you.’ I could hear the Master’s callous laughter in my ear. ‘So sad about your poor friend, Miss Chaplet, but I had Cleary eliminate her. Don’t blame him, he was only acting under my orders. She might have been able to corroborate your wild allegations against me, once her mental conditioning started to break down.’

‘What are you saying?’

‘She was working for me the whole time you were together. Or hadn’t you worked that out yet? Still, it hardly matters now, does it? She’s - how do you humans put it? - as dead as a dodo.’

The Master’s mocking laughter rung in my ear, before fading away to be replaced with my heart’s pounding. Had Dodo really been just another of the Master’s puppets all the time we were lovers? No, I would not, could not believe that. This was just another of the Master’s mind games to try and turn me away from what I must do.

Time seemed to slow down around me. It was now or never. There were only seconds left before the first shot was due to be fired, had to be fired if history were to be saved.

All my life I had been a bystander, reacting to what others had done, reporting the deeds of others but never doing anything myself. All my training had hammered into me a basic tenet of journalism: be objective, don’t get emotionally involved in your stories, always show both sides of what happens. And make sure you never mention yourself in a story.

But here I was: forced to take an action, forced to make a real decision for the first time in my life. Even if that decision was to take no action at all, even if I simply let matters run their course, I still had to choose. I had to decide what was right and wrong, not simply present both sides of a case. No one else could make the decision for me.

Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, I knew what I must do. I put my fingers to the trigger of the rifle, took careful aim through the telescopic sights and fired.

* * *

The bullet spat out of the Italian-made rifle and flew towards its intended target. But the sights on the rifle must have become slightly misaligned when Cleary dropped it and the bullet smashed into the sidewalk and bounced up into the air harmlessly.

I had missed my target. I had missed the Master.

At the sound of my gunshot, a flock of pigeons flew up into the air from the roof of the Book Depository. Within a few seconds of my shot, another rang out, then a third almost on top of the second. By now the limousine was past the Master’s position on the edge of the grassy knoll, accelerating away from me.

I watched in horror as history unfolded before me. John Fitzgerald Kennedy’s head exploded, a spray of blood, bone and brain matter flying up into the air like a fine pink aerosol as his body jerked backwards towards me. A gaping scrap of scalp and hair flapped from the right side of his head as he slumped over into his wife’s lap, blood still pumping out of the fatal wound, pouring over his suit and shirt, matting his hair.

President John Kennedy was dead. His heart just didn’t know it yet.

Jamming my eye against the telescopic sight, I swivelled round to see where I thought the shots had come from - the tall wooden fence behind the grassy knoll. I glimpsed a puff of gunsmoke still hanging in the air and for a second a face appeared above the line of the fence, looking up at my position in the Book Depository. Then the face withdrew again. I had recognized it, but could not believe what I had seen.

I slumped to the floor in shock, the rifle falling from my hands. I had failed. I had made a decision for the first time in my life, I had carried it through and I had failed. My attempt to save JFK had proved to be just as futile and meaningless as the rest of my life. It all came flooding back to me now: how the sights on Oswald's rifle were later proved to be misaligned and how he would have had to adjust his aim to take account for this factor. Worst of all, I now knew the true identity of the assassin and there was nothing I could do about it.

From the window I could hear chaos in Dealey Plaza. I looked outside to see people screaming, crying, shouting. Some had thrown themselves to the ground after the first shot; others remained standing, as if unable to believe what they were witnessing.

In the open-top presidential limousine the First Lady had climbed out on to the wide black boot and clutched at a piece of her husband's brain which had been flung backwards by the fatal bullet's impact. A Secret Service agent threw himself on the back of the vehicle and pushed her down into her seat, at the same time slamming his fist into the boot lid in apparent rage and frustration. The limousine began to speed away from the site of the shooting, down towards the underpass.

It was over. History had repeated itself. The 35th president of the United States of America was dead.

I was blankly aware I should get myself and Cleary out of the building now. But the scene below held such a morbid fascination, it was almost impossible to tear myself away. Some of the spectators had started running up towards the grassy knoll and the wooden fence beyond it, believing they had heard shots coming from there, while others pointed up at my window in the Book Depository. The Master had disappeared in the mayhem following the shooting. Now, the police were starting to gather on the street below me - soon they would begin searching the Book Depository. We had to leave. Finally, it was a moan from Cleary himself that snapped me back to my senses. The young soldier was coming round again. We had to get out of there.

First of all, I had to make sure history would continue to repeat itself. Hiding the rifle behind some boxes, I slapped Oswald back to some sort of consciousness. In a minute or two he would stumble down the stairs and into history, all the while proclaiming his innocence. A man wronged by destiny, I thought to myself.

Clutching the Time Ring in my left hand I walked over to Cleary and clasped one of his hands to the Time Ring as well. 'I don't know if this thing can take both of us back, Francis. Hell, I don't even know if it can take one of us back. But here goes nothing.'

I pressed my fingers into the hollows of the bracelet and closed my eyes as the room began to swirl around me. We were going, but to where? More importantly, when

were we headed? As the darkness engulfed my senses, a single nagging thought came to me: what would have happened to John Fitzgerald Kennedy if the Master, Cleary and myself had not intervened?

TWENTY-FOUR

14 September 1971

I awoke on the floor of my hotel room. My head ached and pain seared my wrist where the Time Ring had burnt the flesh it touched. Looking around me, the room was exactly as I had left it. I could almost believe the whole incident had been some waking daydream but for the young soldier lying on floor next to me, a trickle of blood dripping from his left ear.

I had seen injuries like this before. He was suffering from some kind of decompression, like a diver who comes up to the surface too fast. But that was impossible, wasn't it? Unless it was a side-effect of using the Time Ring to get two of us back to our proper era. I phoned down to reception and demanded an ambulance immediately.

While I waited for its arrival, I removed the Soviet uniform Cleary was wearing and dressed him again in the clothes he had worn over the uniform. Explaining his injuries was going to be difficult enough without trying to account for why he was wearing a Soviet soldier's uniform.

Once the ambulance had taken Cleary away, I sat on the bed, staring at the note I had received earlier. Before 1963. Before I saw the face of the assassin. 'Call me. The Doctor'. I dialled the number and it was answered after three rings.

'Yes?'

'I made it back.'

'Tell me what happened.'

I described the trip back to 1963, the confrontation with the Master, the fight on the sixth floor, the limousine coming around the corner, the smell of cordite after I fired the bullet, the face of the assassin -

'Who was it?' he asked. I was about to say the killer's name when he stopped me. 'No, don't tell me, it's better that I don't know. I'm sorry, but that's a burden you'll have to carry alone. What else?'

I described my panic and shock after the shooting, and then the final steps to get Cleary and myself back to 1971. Now, Cleary was on his way to hospital and the ambulance medic who examined him briefly in the hotel room had said the young soldier could have brain damage.

'Lack of oxygen to the brain, probably,' the Doctor agreed. 'It's incredible the two of you made it back at all. You should destroy the Time Ring - certainly never use it again, otherwise you could suffer the same fate as Private Cleary.'

‘What about the Master?’ I asked.

‘He knows I’m on to him, so I doubt he’ll continue with this plan,’ the Doctor replied. ‘But if you saw him in 1963, it strikes me that the Master’s so-called incarceration at his private island prison is not having much effect on stopping his scheming. I think it’s time I paid him a visit.’

‘What about me, what do I do?’

‘Look, I’ve got to go. Thank you for all your help, Mr Stevens. Sadly, I doubt you will ever get the credit you deserve for this. Goodbye.’

The receiver went dead so I placed it back on its cradle. So that was it. I had saved the world, saved history itself, and now I was back where I started - a discredited journalist facing several major law suits that would probably bankrupt me. Nobody would ever employ me as a journalist again, even if I wanted to start my career afresh. Dodo was still dead, and the only person who could ever testify to what I had done was in hospital with brain damage. I was alone again. Alone with the awful knowledge about who really killed President John F. Kennedy.

I picked up the revolver from beside me on the bed and looked into the barrel, my left index finger toying idly with the trigger.

EPILOGUE

The world is very different now. Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy

January, 1996

Nearly a quarter of a century has passed since I sat in a hotel room near Auderly House, contemplating suicide. Needless to say, I did not pull the trigger, although I seriously contemplated ending my life. There seemed so little left to live for, yet I knew I had a duty to go on, with tasks I still had to perform before I could truly contemplate ending my life. I have spent the two and a half decades since that day fulfilling those tasks, watching what has happened to the others whose lives mine has touched upon.

Private Francis Cleary never recovered from the brain damage he suffered travelling back from 1963. Occasionally a muttered word or two would be thrown clear from the wreckage of his mind, like someone talking in their sleep. The young soldier would grow into a middle-aged soldier and finally into an old soldier. He was shifted from hospital to hospital and finally through a series of institutions. UNIT kept supplying his full wage-package to his family in Liverpool every month, and all Cleary's hospital costs were paid for by an outside benefactor, whose cheques were drawn from Coutts Bank in the name of R.J. SMITH.

I visited Cleary in hospital each week of his life. Just before he died on 5 April 1995, he achieved a rare moment of lucidity. Recognizing me, he spoke his first sentence in more than two decades. 'James, promise me - promise me you'll write about what really happened.' I made him that promise. He died in his mother's arms a few hours later. It was she who supplied me with Private Cleary's letters home from UNIT that are interspersed throughout this book.

UNIT itself continued to be active on the fringes of Britain well into the 1970s but went underground during the 1980s when Government cut-backs started to affect the military. It has recently re-emerged as a truly international force after the global upheavals in Africa and the Balkans proved the need for the United Nations to field something stronger than just a peace-keeping force.

C19 was the subject of several purges in the late 1970s to remove the darker, more dangerous elements from within its ranks. It is rarely if ever mentioned now but survives as a shadowy presence at the edge of society.

Henry Spencer died in 1983, one of the first British men to be killed by complications due to AIDS. His wit and flair for publishing are still sorely missed by his industry.

Cassandra, my friend within the intelligence services, is still active in that field. When he heard I was writing this book, he came to my home in person and officially asked

me not to go ahead with it. He warned me the Government would do anything to stop it coming out. Privately, he wished me well and we shared a drink together for old time's sake.

Brigadier Alastair Gordon Lethbridge-Stewart retired from UNIT without fanfare in the mid-1970s, and took up teaching mathematics at a minor public school for boys. Friends in high places tell me he is occasionally wheeled out when things are going very wrong somewhere in the world. Old soldiers, it seems, never fade away...

The Master (or Victor Magister as his criminal record called him) escaped from his special prison cell in the autumn of 1971, causing a great scandal in the prison service. He was blamed for several more incidents involving matters of national security but seemed to slip from view as the years passed by. His terrorist activities are a distant memory for most people today, but the intelligence services maintain an active file on him.

The Doctor continues to reappear at the scenes of crisis and great disasters. The title is still used by a variety of individuals, each accompanied by different assistants, although the person I consider to be the Doctor has not been seen publicly since 1973.

I have spent the past 25 years trying to repair some of the mess I had made of my life. I have supported myself by working as a journalism tutor, trying to instil young reporters and cadets with a crusading spirit to go beyond what people tell them is true, to search for their own truths. Among the pupils of which I am most proud, my favourites are Ruby and Sarah Jane.

In my spare time I have campaigned for better recognition of the effects of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder on Britain's armed forces and set up a charitable trust to help that cause. Two halfway houses have been established by the trust for those leaving the army, to give them a safe transitional home as they move back into society. I named the charitable foundation the Francis Cleary Trust.

I never married again but after her father died in 1986, I managed to get Natasha to talk to me. She had remarried but was willing to let me see my son, William. We gradually grew to be friends and I watched with some pride his progress through law school.

It has taken me more than eight months to complete this book, and then only thanks to the help of David Bishop. The notes I kept in the safety deposit box at the bank have proved invaluable in trying to piece together the elements of the past, along with Francis's own letters. I have written the book as I remember events happening. If some of my dates are wrong or my interpretations of events seem inaccurate, I apologize. I have tried to write this volume as events seemed to me at the time they were happening, rather than with the benefit of 25 years' hindsight.

It is unlikely this book will ever see print in Britain: many of the incidents it recalls are still considered highly classified by the Government. But I made a promise to Francis Cleary that I would make sure the truth was published somewhere, some day. Once this manuscript is finished, I will be sending it to William who has already got a partnership in a publishing law firm. If anyone will be able to get this story into print, he

will. He tells me there is a big market for conspiracy books in America, and the Kennedy angle is bound to pick up a few extra sales. He reminds me of Henry when he says things like that. This is the book I was writing for Henry nearly quarter of a century ago - now it is nearly finished.

* * *

I know what really happened that day in Dallas, on 22 November 1963. I know who fired the fateful, fatal shot. I saw the sad face of John Fitzgerald Kennedy's assassin. The face was old, worn and weary. The hair was grey and thinning on top, and just after the bullets were fired, the killer turned and looked up at the east window on the sixth floor of the Book Depository building - looked up at me.

I recognized the assassin because his face was my own, aged and lined, the face of a fifty-year-old man. I shot the fatal bullet.

For nearly 25 years I have lived with this secret, every morning getting up to see my features get older and ever closer to resembling the face I saw through the telescopic sights of Oswald's rifle that day in Dallas.

For nearly 25 years I have kept the Time Ring in my safety deposit box at a bank in London, ready and waiting for one final journey. Now I have reclaimed the metal bracelet and have it beside me as I type these words, along with the rifle I will take back with me.

I know I will probably never return from this journey. The Time Ring only just got myself and Cleary back before, and it cost Francis his sanity. Now I must trust the Master's invention has enough energy still stored within it to take me on one final trip.

The weight of destiny has hung heavy around my shoulders for nearly quarter of a century. It is a relief to finally face up to what I have to do, to exorcize the ghosts of my past and of my future.

Although this book has no question mark in its title, the very name begs the question: Who Killed Kennedy? Now, you know the answer - I killed JFK. But I believe John Fitzgerald Kennedy's own words give me hope for redemption:

A man does what he must, in spite of personal consequence, in spite of dangers - and that is the basis of all human morality.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy

April 1996

I never intended to write this. The epilogue you just finished reading - the sentences I typed three months ago, with the Time Ring and a rifle by my side - those words were meant to be my last. Instead I find myself adding a new conclusion, a new ending to the story of my life. It may be folly, but the truth must be told. Here, at the last, I can only hope you will believe me.

Having completed the original epilogue, I set about putting my affairs in order. A life accumulates so much clutter, scraps of paper and keepsakes that mean little to anyone else. After such a disorderly, often chaotic career I was determined to impose some semblance of sense on what I left behind.

I burned dozens of notebooks and hundreds of documents, things that had seemed so precious once. I gave most of my clothes to charity shops, along with the few garments I still had that Dodo wore. It was while sorting her things I found four pictures of us together, taken in a tube station photo booth. Her smiling face, my arms round her. We were broken in our different ways, but looking at the photos it was clear we were in love.

I stared at those images for hours, remembering the smell of her hair, the sound of the world rushing by outside the booth, the faces I pulled to make her laugh. She loved to laugh, to escape the misery of what we had been through. A few days after the photos were taken, Dodo was dead - murdered by the Master's mind-controlled puppet Francis Cleary - and I was disgraced, distraught. Destroyed, in fact.

I would give anything to change that, I told myself. Anything.

One of the last documents I burned was a folder of JFK quotations. I had collected hundreds of them, searching for the perfect words to match each section of my book. As I dropped the file's contents into the fire, one page fluttered away, escaping the flames. I picked it up and read this:

History is a relentless master. It has no present, only the past rushing into the future. To try to hold fast is to be swept aside.

The words set my mind alight, thoughts tumbling over themselves. I was preparing to die, resigned to the fact that my future and JFK's fate were bound together, a destiny I had to fulfil for history to be satisfied.

And yet...

Something else was nagging at me, the words of someone who had loomed large in my life: the Doctor. I devoted years to investigating the many men who bore that name. There was something one of them had said that gave me hope: 'Perhaps free will is not an illusion after all. If that is the case, then history can be changed...'

I had travelled back in time once, using the Time Ring to intervene in the events at Dallas on November 22nd, 1963. What I saw that day convinced me I would have to

return there, to fulfil a path chosen for me by the Master. He had manipulated me for years, and even now I was still performing his bidding, even though I knew he was pulling my strings.

But what if I refused? What if I chose a different path? What if the Doctor was right, and free will was not an illusion? I could change history, if I wanted. Not the history of the world, but my own personal history. I could go back and make things right. I could undo the greatest mistake of my life.

The idea was so simple, so tempting - and yet so impossible.

I did not have the means, or the ability to make this fantasy happen. Yes, I could go back in time - I had seen the older version of myself in Dallas, I knew it was possible. But the Time Ring was a one-way ticket, with the destination of Dallas, 1963 already fixed by the Master. I had no way to change that, neither the skills nor knowledge to rewire the Time Ring.

But I knew someone who might: the Doctor.

By now my weary heart was racing, as the excitement and the impossibility of what I was contemplating threatened to overwhelm me. I had spent twenty-five years convinced I had to complete a circle, mourning the life I could have had, blind to the fact another life might be available to me. It couldn't be that simple, could it? Perhaps not, but I decided to try. I still had the Time Ring; my challenge was finding the Doctor.

I had kept a distant watch on UNIT, its rare forays into the spotlight and more frequent interventions from the shadows. Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart had long since retired but still appeared sometimes when required, such as an incident involving a nuclear missile transport near Lake Vortigern.

But the operative known as the Doctor had vanished.

Different men with different faces calling themselves the Doctor were active across Britain during the 1980s. But all mention of the Doctor stopped after a supposed sighting in 1989 during a spate of domestic disappearances from the London suburb of Perivale. It was as if he had ceased to exist.

I scoured the news for any sign of the Doctor, looking for oblique references to a mysterious stranger who appeared at a time of crisis and slipped back into the shadows as soon as the worse was over - but there was nothing.

The realisation I might never find the Doctor was crushing. I had dared to hope for another end to my story, and it was slipping away. My health was failing, too many years and too many bad habits taking their toll. I had to make my last journey soon, while I still could - while it still mattered.

Then, a few days ago, an old, yellowed envelope fell from inside a book I was packing to deliver to a charity shop. No name was written on the envelope, but it still had the remnants of a red wax seal, a single letter D just visible in the wax.

I opened the envelope for the first time in a quarter century, hands shaking. Inside was a single sheet of white paper. On it, a telephone number and four words: Call me. The Doctor.

If this were some Hollywood version of the truth, I would have dialled the number and the Doctor would've answered within three rings. But reality is less co-operative than fiction. It took nineteen days of insistent calling to get a reply. Nineteen days of phoning the number at least five times every hour I was awake, my hopes growing fainter with each failure. I checked that the number was still working, still active - it was - but nobody was home.

When someone finally answered, I almost dropped the phone from surprise. Here is our conversation, as best I can remember it:

'What do you want?' a brusque voice demanded in a well travelled Glaswegian accent.

'Is that... the Doctor?'

'Who are you? How did you get this number?'

'I--'

'Spit it out, man!'

I'd spent so long rehearsing the conversation. Now it was finally happening, all my careful preparation eluded me.

'My name is James Stevens--'

'Never heard of you.'

'You gave me this number.'

'When?'

'Twenty-five years ago.'

'Hmm, doesn't sound like me. Goodbye --'

'No, please! It's about the Master!' A long silence. 'Are you still there?'

'The Master - what's she done now?'

'She?'

'Never mind.'

'It's about a Time Ring, and the woman I loved. Her name was Dodo.'

‘Look, I’m in the middle of something right now. What year is it?’

‘What year?’

‘It’s a simple enough question.’

‘1996. Today is April 6th, 1996.’

‘Can you be in Brighton tomorrow?’

‘I suppose so--’

‘I’ll see you by Dodo’s grave at midday.’

* * *

The next day I caught a train to Brighton, and took a taxi to an old stone church on a hillside. I hadn’t been back since the funeral, and it took some time to find Dodo’s grave. The headstone was overgrown, so I pulled away the weeds and cleaned it as best I could.

As I finished, a stranger strode towards me through the graveyard. He was in his fifties, with a gaunt face and greying hair. He wore a dark frock coat over black trousers and boots, a white shirt buttoned to his throat.

‘Mr Stevens, I presume?’

I pulled the Time Ring from my coat pocket. ‘I need your help - with this.’

He took it, studying the device’s inner wiring. ‘Have you used this?’

‘Twice. It took me to Dallas the day JFK died, and brought me back.’

The stranger nodded as if there was nothing remarkable in my words. That was the moment I knew for certain he was the Doctor.

‘And what did you see there?’

I told him about the Master’s scheme, seeing my older self fire the fateful shot that would kill a president. As I spoke we walked along a hilltop path until exhaustion got the better of me. I sank on to a bench - the same bench where I had gone after Dodo’s funeral - to conclude my story.

‘So what do you want me to do, Mr Stevens?’

‘You once told me that history could be perverted - or changed. You also told me Dodo was a friend, and that she died before her time.’

The Doctor stared out to sea where distant storm clouds were gathering. 'I'm sorry, Mr Stevens, but I can't intervene. Everyone dies eventually.'

'But Dodo died because of the Master. He didn't pull the trigger, but he might as well have. She didn't deserve to be gunned down, to be murdered.'

The Doctor didn't reply at first. I could sense my chance slipping away. 'I'm sorry, truly I am, but--'

'She was carrying my child.' The words tumbled from my mouth before I could stop them. 'Dodo was planning to tell me the night she was killed. I have to make amends for that. She was alone and vulnerable because of me. I have to right that wrong. I have to try. Please.'

I don't know if it was my desperation or my words that got to him, but I saw the Doctor's body language change, his shoulders relaxing. He looked down at the Time Ring. 'If I do this, there's no guarantee you will make it back.'

'That doesn't matter. I would sacrifice anything to save her.'

After another long silence, the Doctor reached into his coat pocket and extracted an antique jeweller's eyeglass and a strange tool unlike any I'd seen before. He sat beside me and worked on the Time Ring for several minutes, the tool emitting high-pitched noises.

'Your destination - what date and time? Be precise.'

Every detail of that day was burned into my memory. 'August 11th, 1971.'

A whirr. 'What time, and where?'

'Wandsworth Common will do, about 6pm.'

Another whirr. 'You're sure about this?' I nodded. A final whirr, and the Doctor returned the Time Ring to me. 'I've given it a boost, so you should get there safely. But as for coming back--'

'One way will be enough.'

'I must warn you: if you use it twice, the Time Ring will likely disintegrate in the continuum. You would be lost forever.'

'I understand.'

He stood up, pocketing his screwdriver and eyeglass. 'I doubt we will meet again, Mr Stevens. I hope you find what you're seeking.'

I held out my hand. He frowned, as if the gesture was foreign to him, before shaking my hand. 'Thank you, Doctor.'

He nodded, and strode away. ‘Give my best to Dodo when you see her!’

POST SCRIPT

If you are still reading this, it means I made it back to 1971. As I type these words, I do not know if my intervention will be successful, whether I can save the one woman I truly loved. But I shall take this manuscript back with me in the hope it will make some sense to you.

If you have read this far, James, you will know what to do next.

25 August 1971

My name is James Stevens, and I have spent the past two weeks trying to understand events that would scramble the mind of any sane person. My adult life has been devoted to working with words, using my skills as a writer to make sense of the world around me. So that is what I will do now - or what I will try to do, at least.

Two weeks ago I opened an envelope with my name on it. Inside I found a manuscript that defied explanation. Much of it described events I had experienced or witnessed: my early life in New Zealand; my investigation of UNIT; my doomed marriage to Natasha; even how I fell in love with a young woman called Dorothea Chaplet - or Dodo, as she likes to be called.

But the manuscript also detailed things that hadn't happened yet, terrible events in my future that defied belief and shook me to the core. The author of those pages seemed to know me better than I knew myself, yet there was something different about them - a bleak sadness born of a devastating loss.

Most shocking of all was the chapter about what happened to Dodo on August 11th, 1971 - a night that changed my life forever.

I have decided I must record my own version of those events while they are still fresh in my mind, though I have little intention of ever publishing this...

* * *

Earlier that day I had escaped from the Glasshouse with Private Cleary, just as is described in the manuscript. I rang Dodo from Paddington Station, and my friend Vincent at BBC3. I convinced him to devote that night's edition of *The Passing Parade* to exposing the Glasshouse, my scoop of the century.

I went home to Wandsworth, taking Cleary with me. My reunion with Dodo was among the happiest of my life, but all too soon I was rushing back out the door. I had a job to do, not knowing the Master had laid a trap that would destroy my credibility as a journalist. As I left, Dodo told me she had a surprise for me, but it would have to wait for my return.

Within hours the Master's trap had been sprung. *The Passing Parade* proved a farce, with the Glasshouse empty and the government producing the notorious Victor Magister to utterly disprove all my claims and accusations.

After apologising to Vincent, I returned home to Wandsworth.

But unlike the version of events in the manuscript, I found no police cordon outside my home, no hacks or cameramen waiting for me out front.

Inside the house I found carnage. There had been a violent altercation, furniture smashed and blood spilled. In the front room two men were lying on the floor, one that looked dead and the other as if he was dying. Dodo was in my white towelling robe, doing her best to care for the latter man.

Seeing me, she flung herself across the room, hugging me so hard it knocked the breath from my lungs. I hugged her back, baffled by what I was seeing.

‘James, thank god you’re back,’ Dodo sobbed. ‘I was so worried about you!’

‘Looks like I should’ve been worried about you. What on earth?’

I went over to examine the two men. As I got closer, I recognised the corpse face down on the floor - it was Private Francis Cleary. He had been shot in the stomach, judging by the pool of blood under his torso. I put two fingers to his neck, checking for a pulse: nothing.

The other man was ashen, able to take only the tiniest of breaths, sweat plastering grey hair to his forehead. I could see no visible wounds or injuries on him, but it was obvious he would not live for long.

I crouched down for a better look at his face - and my mind rebelled at what I was seeing. It was like gazing into a mirror at an older, more tired version of myself. He had my face, but it had borne the weight of decades still to come. Impossible, yet there he was.

‘Don’t touch me,’ he whispered. ‘We mustn’t make contact.’

‘Why not?’

‘Something called the Blinovitch Limitation Effect. The Doctor warned me about it. Can’t say I understood a word, but he was most insistent.’

‘The Doctor?’

The older me nodded. ‘I came back to save Dodo.’ He gestured at a thick manila envelope on the floor. ‘Read what’s in there, you’ll understand.’ A weak smile. ‘Probably.’

‘But what happened to Cleary?’

‘Brainwashed by the Master. Sent here to murder Dodo before going back to Dallas, 1963. I only meant to stop him. We fought, his gun went off...’

I glanced over at Dodo. She nodded. He - I - was telling the truth.

The older me coughed, a dry rattle of pain. ‘Now he can’t interfere with whatever happened to JFK. Now history will run its true course.’

I stood up. ‘We have to call an ambulance, and the police.’

Dodo shook her head. ‘He wouldn’t let me.’

‘We can’t just watch him die.’

‘You won’t have to,’ the older me said. He pushed back a sleeve, revealing an odd metal bracelet round one wrist. ‘I’ll take Francis with me. It’ll be easier that way, no loose ends. Besides, you’re going to have enough on your plate, with the baby coming.’

‘Baby?’

He grimaced. ‘Oh, she hasn’t told you yet. Sorry.’

Dodo took hold of my hands. ‘He’s right. I’m pregnant. We’re having a baby, James.’

One of the worst days of my life had brought me the best of news. I hugged Dodo to me, pulling her as close as I could, never wanting to let go.

As I did, the room filled with a brilliant light, and the crackle of electricity. I felt the hairs on my neck and arms standing upright. I twisted round to see the older me surrounded by a glowing ball of energy. Reaching over to touch Private Cleary, the old me mouthed one final word: goodbye.

Then they were gone, leaving just a burn on the floor, smoke rising from it.

* * *

That was two weeks ago. The police came soon after, in search of the missing UNIT soldier. Dodo and I denied having seen him; it was easier than trying to explain what had really happened.

I read and re-read the manuscript, struggling to understand. Try as I might, I couldn’t make sense of it all. I needed help - expert help. An announcement tucked away in *New Scientist* offered hope: a professor from Cambridge was giving a public lecture at Imperial College about new theories on time travel. Her name was Elizabeth Shaw.

I sat in the back of the lecture theatre, listening to her talk. Much of it went over my head, but her conclusion did capture my attention. Professor Shaw talked about the terrible consequences that could arise if humanity ever travelled through time.

‘If we went back into our past and altered an event, current thinking suggests that action could have devastating consequences. It would divert the course of history, sending the future in a new direction. Those of us living our lives here and now would not notice the change because history unfolds around us in real time, day by day. But the time traveller could never return to their point of departure, because the future they know would no longer exist. By altering the past, you run the risk of destroying the present - and your future. That is the danger of time travel, and its ultimate paradox.’

There was a drinks reception after the lecture, with warm white wine and insipid fruit juice. I waited until Professor Shaw slipped outside to light her pipe to approach her. She recognised me at once.

‘I heard what happened after we met,’ she said. ‘I did warn you.’

‘Don’t worry, I’ve given up chasing UNIT.’

‘Very wise.’

‘I wanted to ask about what you said - the consequences of time travel.’

Professor Shaw’s gaze narrowed, no doubt wary of my motives. But she listened as I described a hypothetical version of my older self’s intervention. When I finished, she smoked her pipe in silence a while before replying.

‘Blinovitch Limitation Effect,’ she said. ‘I haven’t heard that in a while.’

‘Is what I described possible?’

Professor Shaw knocked her pipe out on the side of the lecture hall. ‘Yes, it is. But there’s something else you want to ask me, isn’t there?’

I hesitated, unsure how to phrase my question. ‘It’s about the past. The soldier was supposed to go back, alter events in 1963 - and the journalist was meant to follow him. But instead the journalist stopped the soldier in 1971, so the events in 1963 were never altered. Does that mean--?’

‘The world we are living in now, the past we know, all of it is following the original pathway that human history would have taken,’ she replied.

‘And everything that happens after today?’

‘Our future isn’t predetermined, Mr Stevens. You choose what you will do with the rest of your life, as does everyone else.’ Professor Shaw paused, something wistful in her expression. ‘This hypothetical Time Ring - I suppose it vanished with your hypothetical visitor?’

I nodded.

‘Probably just as well,’ she smiled. ‘As I concluded in my lecture, time travel is a dangerous business. Best left to the professionals, you might say.’

I walked home from South Kensington in the warm air of late summer. It took ninety minutes, but gave me a chance to reconcile all I had seen and heard and read. Dodo was dozing on the sofa when I got in. I kissed her awake, and she smiled. I knew just how lucky I was to have her in my life.

I had lost her once, and - thanks to the impossible - had gotten her back. Having been given this second chance, I would not make the same mistakes. No doubt I would make new mistakes instead, different ones, but they would be my mistakes, my choices from now on.

* * *

I wrote this new chapter to make sense of these events. When the original version of this manuscript was written, it opened with a hypothetical sequence imagining what might have happened if JFK had not been assassinated in Dallas on November 22, 1963.

Happily, I no longer know who killed Kennedy. The past is another country and I don't have to live there any more. I shall seal this revised manuscript in an envelope and give it to someone I trust, with instructions that it be published only when Dodo and I have both died. Hopefully that will be many decades from now!

In the meantime, I have one last JFK quote to offer. His words will serve as a fitting conclusion to this tale of fear and tragedy and - finally - of hope:

Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.

AFTERWORD

James Stevens entrusted this narrative to me in December 2015, shortly before his death. He was seventy by then, and in the intervening years had created a new life for himself and his late partner, Dorothea ‘Dodo’ Chaplet. After a time spent training investigative journalists, James embraced the world of fiction, which he said was both ‘more satisfying and less unrealistic than reality.’

He and Dodo were co-authors of numerous short stories and a considerable number of novels, though James always credited Dodo with providing all the ideas. Among their more celebrated works was a series of tales for children about a crotchety old man who travels across worlds and time.

During our last conversation, James made me promise to see this manuscript published as written - warts and all. He doubted anyone would believe it, but felt the story had to be told.

I’ve done as you asked. Farewell, old friend.

DAVID BISHOP
April 2016

Acknowledgements, etc: The Real Author Speaks...

Before we get into the usual list of credits at the end of this volume, a few notes about what you have just read.

First of all, *Who Killed Kennedy* is a work of fiction. It is written in the style of a non-fiction conspiracy investigation book, but it is fiction, based upon the real facts of JFK's assassination and the fictional world of the long-running television series *Doctor Who*.

Secondly, I have tried to respect continuity while reconciling it with the events of real history that occurred during the time stream I have plotted. If you disagree with what I've done, then we disagree. I hope to have given readers a different perspective on the televised *Doctor Who* stories with which we are all, perhaps, too familiar. If you watch *The Mind of Evil* carefully, you might even spot James Stevens!

Thirdly, the matter of UNIT dating. It is impossible to join all the dots and come up with an equivalent to the Warren Commission's 'magic bullet' theory which satisfies all the inconsistencies of dates mentioned in broadcast episodes of *Doctor Who*. Forget it, it can't be done - God knows enough people have tried. So I've taken the best counsel I can and set the stories around the time they were broadcast.

* * *

To claim this book as all my own work would be not so much a lie, as a falsehood of Elvis-like proportions, complete with sequin jumpsuit, big sideburns and a hankering for thrills, pills and hamburgers. So, eyes down for the obligatory long list of name dropping and debt settling...

Everyone at Virgin Publishing, for a start. It seems ironic that they tolerated my endless awful ideas cheerfully and finally commissioned me to write a novel filled from cover to cover with old monsters, old villains, and enough continuity to bloat a hot air balloon. Special mentions go to Rebecca for belief beyond patience and vice versa; Rebecca and Peter for the title and about half the plot; the erotic stylings of Kerri, the memory of Andy and the reality of Simon; and the woman on reception with the freckles [Tracey (Ed)] who sees me visit so often she probably thinks I'm on the staff at Virgin Publishing.

Everyone at the NZDWFC, for enthusiasm and encouragement - especially Paul for support, Jon for continuity, and Felicity for critiques.

Everyone at the Tavern, especially Alan and Percy for video tapes.

Editors and contributors to *Doctor Who Magazine* past and present, especially John Freeman: splendid fellows, all of them.

Endless other *Doctor Who* authors deserve a mention for their contributions, especially Andrew for the pre-credit sequence; Lance for the chronology, even if we do disagree wildly on UNIT dating; Kate for toleration at 04:00 Sydney time; Paul, Gareth and Andy for helpful hints; David for life after the invasion; Craig for Ashley Chapel; and the elusive Gary for the young man with the lisp and his blond friend with the tan.

Research is addictive and John F. Kennedy is the inspiration for thousands of volumes, so I now have a very full bookshelf. Special debt must be acknowledged to *The Killing of a President* by Robert J. Groden; *JFK for Beginners* by Errol Selkirk; *The Day Kennedy was Shot* by Jim Bishop (no relation); *President Kennedy: Profile of Power* by Richard Reeves; and *Kennedy* by Theodore C. Sorensen. (Special thanks to Aldo Fioravanti for hunting around the bookstores of Washington DC to find the Sorenson book.) Also *The Last Brother: The Rise and Fall of Teddy Kennedy* by Joe McGinniss for information about Chappaquiddick.

Inspirations for and influences upon this book are almost innumerable, but a few crucial catalysts must be named: Kurt Busiek and Alex Ross for their seminal comics mini-series *Marvels*; authors of conspiracy theory books and investigative journalism tomes everywhere, but particularly David Yallop for *To the Ends of the Earth: The Hunt for the Jackal*; and all the writers, directors, cast and crew of the dozens of *Doctor Who* television serials referenced, rewritten and remixed within. Without their work, this would not, could not exist.

Respect is due especially to Barry Letts for scaring the hell out of a small boy in New Zealand in the 1970s and Terrance Dicks, who almost single-handedly got a generation of television children to read books. The authors of the New and Missing Adventures of today are, almost without exception, the readers of Target Books in years gone by.

DEDICATION

To Robert McKee, whose story structure course lifted the scales from my eyes.

And to Alison, just because.

EBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A massive thank you to Paul Scoones and Alden Bates for making this online ebook of *Who Killed Kennedy* happen. The copy editing proved a much bigger job than anyone expected and this whole endeavour has been a labour of love for all involved. Particular thanks are due to Paul for his patience in gently nudging me every Tuesday to hurry up and deliver the next chunk of comments.

Who Killed Kennedy ebook and Author's Commentary appears online at
<http://nzdwfc.tetrap.com/archive/wkk/>