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The Grey Man

Andy McNab

CHAPTER ONE

The Bank, Ipswich

Friday, 3 February 2006, 4.51 p.m.

FROM HIS DESK KEVIN looked through the glass security screen at the three men in long raincoats about to rob the bank. He could see the shapes of their sawn-off shotguns bulging out from under their coats. His heart started to beat faster, almost jumping out of his chest. Why hadn't anyone else noticed?

One robber stood at the credit point. He was going to make sure no one got in or out of the bank's main door once the robbery went down. Another was in the queue for Gary, the only clerk on duty at that time in the afternoon. He would hand a note to Gary that read, 'Put both hands where I can see them and call the manager. If not, you all die.' The third man, the leader, was reading a poster about bank loans. He was close to the security door that led to the staff side of the screen.

Kevin knew what would happen. Gary would call the manager and he would be told to open the security door. The gang leader would burst in and grab the cash while the other two controlled the customers and staff.

The plan was simple, quick and violent. Anyone in their way would get the good news from the business end of the shotguns. They must be on drugs because Kevin couldn't understand why they weren't worried about the cameras, which would already have taped enough film for the police to ID them. But Kevin didn't have time to think about that now. He had to take action. He reached under his desk and felt for the alarm that would alert the local police station.

His hand shook a little as it hovered near the button. From his office he watched Gary say goodbye to Mr Field and start talking to another customer. The robber was next in line.

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The second robber, standing at the credit point, headed for the main door. The leader undid his raincoat, ready to draw down his gun before he burst through the security door. Kevin's throat was dry as he moved his hand away from the alarm button. It was too late. The police wouldn't get there in time. Customers' lives were in danger and someone had to save them.

That someone had to be Kevin. Only he could see what was about to happen. He couldn't shout and raise the alarm. The gang might panic and try to shoot their way out. The only way to stop the robbery was to jump the leader before he passed the note to Gary. If Kevin had the leader's gun, he could arrest the robbers himself. If the other two drew down their weapons to take him on, he would just have to shoot it out with them. He felt a little excited at the prospect.

Gary had nearly finished with his customer. The robber was next. Now wasn't the time for thinking. It was the time for doing. Kevin took a deep breath and prepared to take down the three-man crew.

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