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Opening Extract from...

Rather Be the Devil

Written by Ian Rankin

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Day One

1

Rebus placed his knife and fork on the empty plate, then leaned back in his chair, studying the other diners in the restaurant.

'Someone was murdered here, you know,' he announced.

'And they say romance is dead.' Deborah Quant paused over her steak. Rebus had been about to comment that she carved it with the same care she took when using her scalpel on a cadaver. But then the murder had popped into his head and he'd considered it the better conversational gambit.

'Sorry,' he apologised, taking a sip of red wine. They sold beer here – he had seen waiters delivering it to a few of the tables – but he was trying to cut down.

A new start – it was why they were dining out in the first place, celebrating a week without cigarettes.

Seven whole days.

A hundred and sixty-eight hours.

(She didn't need to know about the one he'd begged from a smoker outside an office block three days back. It had made him feel queasy anyway.)

'You can taste the food better, can't you?' she asked now, not for the first time.

'Oh aye,' he acknowledged, stifling a cough.

She seemed to have given up on the steak and was dabbing her mouth with her napkin. They were in the Galvin Brasserie Deluxe, which was attached to the Caledonian Hotel – though these days it was really the Waldorf Astoria Caledonian. But those who'd grown up in Edinburgh knew it as the Caledonian, or 'the Caley'. In the bar before dinner, Rebus had reeled off a few stories – the railway

station next door, dismantled in the sixties; the time Roy Rogers had steered his horse Trigger up the main staircase for a photographer. Quant had listened dutifully, before telling him he could undo the top button of his shirt. He had been running a finger around the inside of the collar, trying to stretch the material a little.

'You notice things,' he had commented.

'Cutting out cigarettes can add a few pounds.'

'Really?' he'd answered, scooping up more peanuts from the bowl.

Now she had caught a waiter's eye and their plates were being removed. The offer of dessert menus was dismissed. 'We'll just have coffee – decaf if you've got it.'

'Two decafs?' The waiter was looking at Rebus for guidance.

'Absolutely,' Rebus confirmed.

Quant pushed a lock of red hair away from one eye and smiled across the table. 'You're doing fine,' she said.

'Thanks, Mum.'

Another smile. 'Go on then, tell me about this murder.'

He reached for his glass but started coughing again. 'Just need to . . .' signalling towards the toilets. He pushed the chair back and got up, rubbing at his chest with his hand. Once inside the gents, he made for a sink, leaning over it, hacking some of the gunk up from his lungs. There were the usual flecks of blood. Nothing to panic about, he'd been assured. More coughing, more mucus. COPD, they called it. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. When told, Deborah Quant had formed her lips into a thin line.

'Not so surprising, is it?'

And the very next day she had brought him a glass specimen jar of indeterminate age. Its contents: a section of lung, showing the bronchial tubes.

'Just so you know,' she'd said, pointing out what he'd already been shown on a computer screen. She had left the jar with him.

'On loan or to keep?'

'For as long as you need it, John.'

He was rinsing the sink when he heard the door behind him open.

'Did you leave your inhaler at home?' He turned towards her. She was leaning against the door, one foot crossed over the other, arms folded, head cocked.

'Is nowhere safe?' he muttered.

Her pale blue eyes scanned the room. 'Nothing here I haven't seen before. You feeling okay?'

‘Never better.’ He splashed water on his face and dabbed it with a towel.

‘Next step is an exercise programme.’

‘Starting tonight?’

Her smile widened. ‘If you promise not to die on me.’

‘We’re going to drink our delicious caffeine-free refreshments first, though, right?’

‘Plus you’re going to woo me with a story.’

‘The murder, you mean? It happened right upstairs in one of the bedrooms. A banker’s wife who enjoyed the odd dalliance.’

‘Killed by her lover?’

‘That was one theory.’

She brushed invisible crumbs from the lapels of his jacket. ‘Will it take long to tell?’

‘Depends how abridged you want it.’

She considered for a moment. ‘The length of a taxi ride back to my flat or yours.’

‘Just the best bits then.’

There was a throat-clearing from the other side of the door, another diner unsure of the protocol. He muttered an apology as he squeezed past, deciding on the safety of one of the stalls. Rebus and Quant were smiling as they returned to their table, where two decaffeinated coffees sat waiting.

Detective Inspector Siobhan Clarke had been at home with a good book and the remains of a ready meal when the call came, the caller a friend called Tess who worked in the control room at Bilston Glen.

‘Wouldn’t normally bother you, Siobhan, but when I got the victim’s name . . .’

So Clarke was in her Vauxhall Astra, on her way to the Royal Infirmary. The hospital sat on the southern edge of the city, plenty of space in the car park at this hour. She showed her ID at the Accident and Emergency desk and was shown where to go. She passed cubicle after cubicle, and if the curtains were closed, she popped her head around each. An old woman, her skin almost translucent, gave a beaming smile from her trolley. There were hopeful looks from others, too – patients and family members. A drunk youth, blood still dripping from his head, was being calmed by a couple of male nurses. A middle-aged woman was retching into a cardboard bowl. A teenage girl moaned softly and regularly, knees drawn up to her chest.

She recognised his mother first. Gail McKie was leaning over her son's trolley, stroking his hair and his forehead. Darryl Christie's closed eyes were puffy and bruised, his nose swollen and with dried blood caking the nostrils. A foam head brace had been rigged up, with further support around the neck. He was dressed in a suit, the shirt unbuttoned all the way to the waistband. There were contusions on his chest and stomach, but he was breathing. He was connected by a clip on one finger to a machine recording his vital signs.

Gail McKie turned towards the new arrival. She was wearing too much make-up and tears had left streaks down her face. Her hair was dyed straw-blonde, piled atop her head. Jewellery jangled on both wrists.

'I know you,' she stated. 'You're police.'

'Sorry to hear about your son,' Clarke said, drawing a little closer. 'He's all right, though?'

'Look at him!' The voice rising. 'Look what the bastards done to him! First Annette and now this . . .'

Annette: just a kid when she'd been murdered, her killer caught and jailed, though not lasting long before he too was killed, stabbed through the heart by an inmate who – best guess – had been put up to it by Annette's brother Darryl.

'Do you know what happened?' Clarke asked.

'He was lying in the driveway. I heard the car, wondered what was taking so long. The security lights had gone on and then off again, and no sign of him, his supper waiting on the stove.'

'You were the one who found him?'

'On the ground next to his car. Minute he got out, they must have jumped him.'

'You didn't see anything?'

Christie's mother was shaking her head slowly, her attention fixed on her son.

'What do the doctors say?' Clarke asked.

'We're waiting to hear.'

'Darryl's not been conscious at all? Able to speak?'

'What do you need to hear from him? You know as well as I do this is Cafferty's doing.'

'Best not jump to conclusions.'

Gail McKie gave a snort of derision, pulling herself upright as two white coats, one male and one female, brushed past Clarke.

'I'm going to suggest a scan as well as a chest X-ray. Far as we

can tell, the upper half of the body took the brunt of the blows.' The female doctor broke off, eyes on Clarke.

'CID,' Clarke explained.

'Not our immediate priority,' the doctor said, signalling for her male colleague to draw the curtain, leaving Clarke on the outside. She stood her ground for a few moments, trying to listen, but there were too many moans and cries all around her. With a sigh, she retreated to the waiting area. A couple of uniforms were taking details from the paramedics. Clarke showed her ID and checked that they were discussing Christie.

'He was on the ground at the driver's side, between the Range Rover and the wall,' one uniform began to explain. 'Car locked and the key fob still in his hand. Gates are electric and he'd obviously closed them after driving through.'

'Where are we talking about exactly?' Clarke interrupted.

'Inverleith Place. It looks on to Inverleith Park, just by the Botanic Gardens. Detached house.'

'Neighbours?'

'Not spoken to them yet. His mum called it in. He couldn't have been lying there more than a few minutes . . .'

'She called the police?'

The constable shook his head.

'It was us she asked for,' the male paramedic answered. He was dressed in green and looked exhausted, as did his female colleague. 'Soon as we saw him, we got on to your lot.'

'Hard day?' Clarke enquired, watching as he rubbed at his eyes.

'No more than usual.'

'So his mum lives with him,' Clarke went on. 'Anyone else?'

'Two younger brothers. The mum was going daft trying to stop them getting a close look.'

Clarke turned to the constables. 'Asked the brothers any questions yet?'

Shakes of both heads.

'Professional hit, do you reckon?' the female paramedic asked. Then, without waiting for an answer: 'I mean, lying in wait like that . . . Baseball bat, maybe a crowbar or hammer, and then out of there before anybody's the wiser.'

Clarke ignored her. 'Cameras?' she asked.

'At the corners of the house,' the second of the constables confirmed.

'Well, that's something,' Clarke said.

'We all know, though, don't we?'

Clarke stared at the female paramedic. 'What do we know exactly?'

'It was meant to be fatal, or else it was a warning, and in either case . . .'

'Yes?'

'Big Ger Cafferty,' the woman said with a shrug.

'I keep hearing that name.'

'Victim's mother seemed fairly sure of it,' the male paramedic commented. 'Shouting it from the bloody rooftops, she was. And a few choice blasphemies besides.'

'Nothing but speculation at this stage,' Clarke warned them.

'You have to speculate to accumulate, though,' the female paramedic said, her smile fading as she caught the look Clarke was giving her.

Rebus sat on the bed in his flat's spare bedroom. It had been his daughter Sammy's room back in the day, before his wife took her away. Sammy was a mother herself now and Rebus a grandfather. Not that he saw much of them. The bedroom had been cleared of its various posters but was otherwise little changed. Same wallpaper, the mattress stripped, duvet folded in the wardrobe along with a single pillow, ready for use should a visitor need to stay the night. He couldn't remember the last time that had happened, though, which was just as well, as the place was no more welcoming than a storeroom. There were boxes on top of the bed and under it, atop the wardrobe and flanking it. They rose halfway up the window, too, making it impossible for him to close the wooden shutters. He knew he should do something about them, but knew, too, that he never would. They would be someone else's problem – Sammy's probably – after he was gone.

He had finally found the relevant box and was seated with it on a corner of the bed, his dog Brillo at his feet. October 1978. Maria Turquand. Strangled in Room 316 of the Caledonian Hotel. Rebus had worked the case for a short time, until he'd had a run-in with a superior. Sidelined, he'd still taken an interest, collecting newspaper cuttings and jotting down pieces of information, mostly rumours and gossip shared by fellow officers. One reason he remembered it: almost exactly a year before that, two teenage girls had been murdered after a night out at the World's End pub. Their case had seen little or no progress and the investigation was being wound down,

but in 1978 there was a last-gasp effort to see if the anniversary jogged memories or stirred somebody's conscience. Rebus's punishment for insubordination: a lengthy and solitary stint on one of the telephones, waiting for it to ring. And it had, but only with cranks. Meantime, colleagues were traipsing through the Caley, pausing for tea and biscuits between interviews.

Maria Turquand had been born Maria Frazer. Wealthy parents, private education. She had married a young man with prospects. His name was John Turquand and he worked for a private bank called Brough's. Brough's was home to a lot of Scotland's old money, its chequebook held only by those with deep and trusted pockets. It was secretive but becoming less so as its coffers filled and it looked for new investment opportunities. Turned out it had even been eyeing up a takeover of the Royal Bank of Scotland, the equivalent of David landing a knockout blow on Goliath's bigger, brawnier brother. Maria Turquand's murder had seen Brough's land on the front pages of the nation's newspapers, and stay there as stories of her tempestuous private life emerged. There had been a string of lovers, usually entertained in a room she kept at the Caley. Some of Rebus's jottings referred to names he'd heard – unsubstantiated, but including a Conservative MP.

Did her husband know? It didn't seem so. He had an alibi anyway, having been in an all-day meeting with the head of the bank, Sir Magnus Brough. Maria's most recent lover, a playboy wheeler-and-dealer called Peter Attwood – who happened to be a friend of her husband's – was on shaky ground for a while, unable to account for his movements on the afternoon in question, until a new lover had surfaced, a married woman he'd been trying to protect.

Decent of him, Rebus mused.

All of which would have been enough to give the story traction, without the incidental appearance of a music star in a supporting role. But Bruce Collier had also been staying at the Caley with his band and management, the hotel being handy for the Usher Hall where he was due to perform. Collier had been in a rock group in the early 1970s. They were called Blacksmith, and Rebus had seen them play. Somewhere he almost certainly still had their three albums. There had been shock when Collier had quit the group to go solo, opting for a mellower sound and covering a slew of 1950s and 60s pop hits with growing success. His comeback gig in his home town, kicking off a sell-out UK tour, had brought with it journalists and TV crews from across the country and further afield.

Sifting through the cuttings, Rebus found plenty of photographs. Collier sporting big hair and skinny jeans, his neck festooned with silk scarves, captured in flashlight glare as he climbed the steps of the hotel. Then out walking in his old neighbourhood, stopping at the terraced house where he'd grown up. Questioned by the press, he'd admitted that the police were readying to interview him. The piece was accompanied by a photograph of Maria Turquand (taken at a party) that had been used a lot in the weeks after her death. She wore a short dress, cut very low, and was pouting for the camera, cigarette in one hand, drink in the other. Plenty of column inches discussed her 'racy lifestyle', the string of lovers and admirers, the holidays to ski resorts and Caribbean islands. Few lingered over her end, the fear she must have felt, the searing pain as her airway was crushed by her killer's hands.

Strong, male hands, according to the autopsy.

'What are you up to?'

Rebus looked up. Deborah Quant was standing in the doorway, dressed in the long white T-shirt she kept in a drawer in his bedroom for the odd nights she stayed over. Almost a year now they'd been seeing one another, but moving in together was something they'd both dismissed – too set in their ways, too used to their own company and routine.

'Couldn't sleep,' he said.

'The coughing?' She pulled her long hair back from her head.

He shrugged in place of an answer. How could he tell her he had dreamed of cigarettes and woken up craving nicotine, a craving no amount of patches or chewing gum or e-cigs was ever going to satisfy?

'What's all this stuff?' She tapped a bare foot against one of the boxes.

'You've not been in here before? This is just . . . old cases. Things that interested me at the time.'

'I thought you were retired.'

'I am retired.'

'But you can't let go?'

He gave another shrug. 'I was just thinking of Maria Turquand. When I started telling you her story, I realised there were bits I couldn't remember.'

'You should try and sleep.'

'Unlike some, I don't have work in the morning. *You're* the one who should be sleeping.'

'My clients tend not to complain if I'm a few minutes late – one bonus of working with the deceased.' She paused. 'I need some water. Can I get you anything?' He shook his head. 'Don't be too long then.'

He watched as she turned back into the hallway, heading for the kitchen. A cutting had slipped from his lap and fallen to the floor. It was from a few years later. A drowning in a swimming pool on Grand Cayman. The victim had been holidaying there with friends, among them Anthony and Francesca Brough, grandchildren of Sir Magnus. There was a photo of the house's elegant exterior, along with a caption explaining that it belonged to Sir Magnus, who was recently deceased. Rebus wasn't sure now why he had added this postscript to the history of Maria Turquand's murder, except that the story had given the newspaper a further excuse to print a photo of Maria, reminding Rebus of her beauty and of how irritated he'd been to be pulled from the case.

He looked at the copies of the *Scotsman* he'd kept from the week of the murder: Vietnamese refugees arriving to start a new life; B. B. King on *The Old Grey Whistle Test* and *Revenge of the Pink Panther* at the cinema; an ad for the Royal Bank of Scotland featuring a photo of the Twin Towers; Margaret Thatcher visiting East Lothian prior to a by-election; rubbish piling up in Edinburgh as the bin strike dragged on . . .

And on the sports pages: *No goals for Scots clubs in Europe.*

'Some things don't change,' Rebus muttered to himself.

Having put everything back in the box marked *77–80*, he brushed dust from his hands and sat for a further moment studying the room and its contents. Most of the paperwork related to cases he had worked on, cases eventually solved – all of it adding up to what, exactly? A policeman's lot. Yet the real story, he felt, remained unwritten, only hinted at in the various reports and scribbled notes. The bald facts of arrests and convictions – these told only partial truths. He wondered who might make sense of it all, and doubted anyone would bother. Not his daughter – she would take the briefest look then put the whole lot in a skip.

You can't let go . . .

True enough. He'd walked away from the job only when told there was no alternative on offer, pensioned off, skills no longer germane or required. *Adios.* Brillo seemed to sense the atmosphere in the room and raised his head, nudging it against Rebus's leg until Rebus reached down to offer a reassuring rub.

'Okay, boy. Everything's fine.'

Rising to his feet, he switched off the light, waiting until the dog had followed him from the room before closing the door. The kettle had boiled and Quant was pouring water into a mug.

'Want one?'

'Better not,' Rebus said. 'I'll only have to get up for a pee in an hour.'

'I'll be gone by then, busy morning.' She nodded towards where his phone was charging on the worktop. 'It's been vibrating.'

'Oh aye?' He picked up the phone and checked the screen.

'I couldn't help noticing the first text is a reminder from the Infirmary.'

'So it is.'

'You're having more tests?'

'So it would seem.' He kept his eyes on the screen, avoiding her stare.

'John . . .'

'It's nothing, Deb. Just as you say – more tests.'

'Tests for what, though?'

'I won't know till I get there.'

'You weren't going to tell me, were you?'

'What is there to tell? I've got bronchitis, remember?' He pretended to cough, while giving his chest a thump. 'They just want to run more tests.'

Having entered his passcode, he saw that there was another text, just below the automated NHS one. It was from Siobhan Clarke. His eyes narrowed a little as he read it.

Any dealings with Cafferty of late?

Quant had decided on the silent treatment, blowing on her tea and then sipping it.

'Need to take this,' Rebus muttered. 'It's from Siobhan.'

He headed into the darkened living room. A half-empty bottle of wine on the coffee table. A glow from the hi-fi system that told him he hadn't switched it off. Last album played: John Martyn, *Solid Air*. Felt like that was what he was walking through as he padded across the carpet to the window. What was he supposed to say to Deb? There's some sort of shadow on my lung, so now it's all about things with scary names like 'tomography' and 'biopsy'? He didn't want to think about it, never mind say it out loud. A lifetime of smoking was doing all its catching-up at once. A cough that wouldn't shift; spitting out blood into the sink; prescription inhaler, prescription nebuliser; COPD . . .

Lung cancer.

No way he was allowing *that* bad boy into his mental vocabulary. No, no, no. Keep the brain active, shift focus, don't think about all the lovely cigarettes smoked at this very spot, many of them in the middle of the night with a John Martyn LP spinning at low volume. Instead, he waited for Clarke to answer, and looked past his own vague reflection at the windows across the street, each one curtained or in darkness. Nobody on the pavements below, no cars or taxis passing, the sky above giving not a hint of the day yet to come.

'It would have waited,' Clarke said eventually.

'Then why text me at four in the morning?'

'It was actually closer to midnight when I sent it. You been busy?'

'Busy sleeping.'

'You're awake now, though.'

'Just like you. So what's Cafferty gone and done?'

'Have you talked to him recently?'

'Two or three weeks back.'

'Keeping his nose clean? Still the respectable ex-gangster about town?'

'Spit it out.'

'Darryl Christie was roughed up last night outside his house. Damage report: a cracked rib or three and some loosened teeth. Nose isn't quite broken but it looks the part. His mother was quick to blurt out Cafferty's name.'

'Cafferty's got forty-odd years on young Darryl.'

'More heft on him too, though. And we both know he'd have hired someone if he felt it necessary.'

'To what end?'

'It's not so long ago he thought Darryl might have put a price on his head.'

Rebus considered this. A bullet aimed at Cafferty's head as he stood in his living room one night, his rival Christie the obvious candidate. 'He was proved wrong,' he said after a moment.

'Got him excited, though, didn't it? Maybe he remembered just how much he missed being the city's Mr Big.'

'And giving Darryl Christie a doing is supposed to achieve what exactly?'

'Scare him off, maybe goad him into some rash action . . .'

'You think so?'

'I'm just . . . speculating,' Clarke said.

'Have you bothered asking Darryl?'

'He's doped to the eyeballs and being kept in overnight.'

'No witnesses?'

'We'll know more in a few hours.'

Rebus pressed a finger to the window pane. 'Want me to broach the subject with Big Ger?'

'Best keep this a police matter, don't you think?'

'Ouch. Speaking of which – you still not talking to Malcolm?'

'What's he been saying?'

'Not much, but I get the feeling his promotion to Gartcosh got you bristling.'

'Then your amazing intuition has let you down for once.'

'Fair enough. But if you *do* want me to talk to Cafferty, you just have to say.'

'Thanks.' He heard her give a sigh. 'How's everything else, by the way?'

'Nose to the grindstone, as usual.'

'Doing what exactly?'

'All those hobbies people take up when they retire. Actually, you might be able to help me with that.'

'Oh yes?'

He turned away from the window. Brillo was seated behind him, awaiting another rub. Rebus offered a smile and a wink instead. 'You got any access to the cold-case files?' he said into the phone.

Day Two

2

Malcolm Fox hated the commute – forty miles each way, most of it spent on the M8. Some days it resembled *Wacky Races*, with cars weaving in and out of traffic, lorries wheezing into the outside lane to crawl past other lorries, roadworks and breakdowns and buffeting winds accompanied by lashing rain. Not that there was anyone he could complain to – his colleagues at Gartcosh, the Scottish Crime Campus, considered themselves the crème de la crème, and they had the state-of-the-art building to prove it. Once you'd found a parking space and proved your credentials at the gatehouse, you entered a closed compound that was trying its damnedest to resemble a new-build university, one aimed at the elite. Plenty of internal space, filled with light and heat. Breakout areas where specialists from different disciplines could meet and share intelligence. Not just the various branches of the Specialist Crime Division, but Forensic Science, the Procurator Fiscal's office, and HMRC's Criminal Investigation wing. All housed under the one happy roof. He hadn't heard anyone moan about how long it took them to get to Gartcosh and then home again, and he knew he wasn't the only one who lived in Edinburgh.

Edinburgh. He'd only been transferred a month, but he still missed his old CID office. Then again, nobody here minded that he was ex-Professional Standards, the kind of cop hated by other cops. But did any of them know the story behind his move? He'd been left for dead by a detective gone rogue, and that same detective had been dragged away by two career criminals – Darryl Christie and Joe Stark – never to be seen again. The upper echelons didn't want the story made public. Added to which, the Procurator Fiscal hadn't fancied taking either gangster to court when no actual body had ever turned up.

'A good defence lawyer would rip us to pieces,' Fox had been told at one of several hush-hush meetings.

Instead they had waved Gartcosh in front of him, and wouldn't take no for an answer. So here he was, trying to find his niche in the Major Crime Division.

And failing.

He recalled an old office saying about promoting mediocrity. He did not regard himself as mediocre, but he knew he had never quite proved himself exceptional. Siobhan Clarke *was* exceptional, and would have fitted in at Gartcosh. He'd seen the look on her face when he'd broken the news – trying not to be dumbstruck or resentful. A brief hug while she fixed her face. But their friendship afterwards had faltered, excuses found not to watch a film or eat a meal. All so he could drive the forty miles here and the forty miles home, day after day.

Get a grip, Malcolm, he told himself as he entered the building. He rolled his shoulders, straightened his tie and did up both buttons on his suit jacket – the suit bought specially. New shoes, too, which had just about softened enough that he didn't need daily plasters on his heels.

'Detective Inspector Fox!'

Fox paused at the bottom of the stairs and turned towards the voice. Black polo shirt, short-sleeved with a zip at the neck; shoulder flashes; two sets of lanyards with photo ID. And above the whole ensemble the tanned face, bushy black eyebrows and salt-and-pepper hair. Assistant Chief Constable Ben McManus. Instinctively, Fox pulled himself to his full height. There were two ACCs at Gartcosh, and McManus was in charge of Organised Crime and Counter-Terrorism. Not the meat and potatoes stuff of Major Crime – murders and the like – but the cases spoken of in undertones and via gestures, the cases that were investigated behind a series of locked doors elsewhere in the building, doors opened with one of the magnetic cards swinging from around McManus's neck.

'Yes, sir?' Fox said. The ACC was holding out his hand, gripping Fox's when it was offered and slipping his free hand over the top of both.

'We've not been properly introduced. I know Jen's been keeping you busy . . .'

Jen being Fox's own boss, ACC Jennifer Lyon.

'Yes, sir,' Fox repeated.

‘Settled in okay, I hear. I know it can be a bit disconcerting at first – very different set-up from what you’ve been used to. We’ve all been there, trust me.’ McManus had released his hold on Fox and was climbing the staircase at a sprightly pace, Fox just about keeping up. ‘It’s good to have you, though. They speak very highly of you in Division Six.’

Division Six: the City of Edinburgh.

‘And of course your record speaks for itself – even the bits we don’t want anyone outside Police Scotland to see.’ McManus offered a smile that was probably meant to be reassuring but told Fox only that this man wanted him for something and had had him checked out. At the top of the stairs they headed for one of the soundproofed glass boxes that were used for private meetings. Blinds could be drawn as required. Eight bodies could be accommodated around the rectangular table. There was only one there waiting.

She stood up as they entered, tucking a few stray blonde hairs back behind one ear. Fox reckoned the woman was in her early to mid thirties. Five and a half feet tall and dressed in dark skirt and pale blue blouse.

‘Ah, they’ve even brought us some coffee,’ McManus announced, spotting the pot and mugs. ‘Not that we’re going to be here long, but help yourselves if you like.’

Taking the hint, Fox and the woman shook their heads.

‘I’m Sheila Graham, by the way.’

‘Sorry,’ McManus interrupted, ‘my fault entirely. This is DI Fox, Sheila.’

‘Malcolm,’ Fox said.

‘Sheila here,’ McManus ran on, ‘is Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs. You won’t have been shown their part of the building yet.’

‘I’ve walked past a few times,’ Fox said. ‘Lots of people tapping away at computers.’

‘That’s the sort of thing,’ McManus agreed. He had seated himself and gestured for Fox to do the same.

‘We work the usual areas,’ Graham said, her eyes fixed on Fox. ‘Drink and tobacco, money laundering, e-crime and fraud. A lot of it comprises basic forensic accounting, not that there’s anything *basic* about it in the digital age. Dirty money can be transferred around the world in the blink of an eye, accounts opened and closed almost as quickly. And that’s before we get to Bitcoin and the Dark Web.’

‘She’s lost me already,’ McManus said with a grin, throwing open his arms in a show of defeat.

'Am I being transferred?' Fox asked. 'I mean, I can balance a chequebook with the best of them, but . . .'

'We've plenty of number-crunchers,' Graham said with the thinnest of smiles. 'And right now some of them are looking at a man you seem to know – Darryl Christie.'

'I know him all right.'

'Did you hear what happened last night?'

'No.'

Graham seemed disappointed in his answer, as though he had already failed her in some way. 'He was given a doing, ended up in hospital.'

'Business he's in, there's always a price to be paid,' McManus said. He had risen to his feet and was pouring himself coffee, without offering to Fox and Graham.

'What's HMRC's interest?' Fox asked.

'You know Christie owns some betting shops?' Fox decided not to let on that this, too, was news to him. 'We think he's been using them to clean up dirty money – his own and that of other criminals.'

'Such as Joe Stark in Glasgow?'

'Such as Joe Stark in Glasgow,' Graham echoed, sounding as though he had partway redeemed himself.

'Stark and his boys came barging into Edinburgh a few months back,' Fox explained. 'Joe and Darryl ended up friends.'

'There are others besides Stark,' McManus chipped in before slurping from his mug. 'And not just in Scotland either.'

'Quite an enterprise,' Fox commented.

'It'll almost certainly run into the millions,' Graham agreed.

'We need someone on the ground, Malcolm.' McManus leaned across the table towards Fox. 'Someone who knows the territory, but reporting back to us.'

'To what end?'

'Could be the assault inquiry will throw up names or information. There are going to be a lot of headless chickens running around while Christie recuperates. Meantime he's going to be wondering who he's up against – associate or enemy.'

'He might start to slip up.'

'He might,' Graham agreed with a slow nod.

'So I'm going back to Edinburgh?'

'As a tourist, Malcolm,' McManus cautioned with a wag of the finger. 'You need to make sure they know you're *our* man, not theirs.'

‘Do I tell them HMRC have got their bloodhounds sniffing Christie’s trail?’

‘Better if you don’t,’ Graham stated.

‘You’ll be working for me, Malcolm.’ McManus had finished his coffee already and was getting back to his feet, meeting over. ‘And it’s only natural we at Organised Crime should want to know what’s going on.’

‘Yes, sir. You say he was attacked last night? So the investigation will just be getting started . . .’

‘The officer in charge is . . .’ Graham sought the name, closing her eyes for a moment. ‘Detective Inspector Clarke.’

‘Of course,’ Fox said, forcing a smile.

‘Excellent!’ McManus clapped his hands together, made the briskest of turns, and yanked open the door. Fox stood up, making sure he had Sheila Graham’s attention.

‘Anything else I need to know?’

‘I don’t think so, Malcolm.’ She handed him her business card. ‘Mobile’s the best way to get me.’

He handed her a card of his own.

‘You didn’t know about the betting shops, did you?’ she asked, eyes twinkling. ‘Pretty good poker face, though . . .’

The first thing Siobhan Clarke noticed as she parked outside Christie’s house was that it was almost identical in size and design to Cafferty’s home across town – a detached three-storey Victorian stone edifice with large bay windows either side of the front door and a long driveway to the side that led to a free-standing garage. The front gate wasn’t locked, so she walked up the path and rang the bell. She had already noted the CCTV cameras described by the constable last night, and there was another built into the stonework next to the door buzzer.

Gail McKie pulled open the door. She was standing in a vestibule, the glass-panelled door behind her leading into the main hallway. She didn’t look as if she’d slept – same clothes as at the hospital, and her hair drooping to her shoulders.

‘Wouldn’t have bothered if I’d known it was you,’ she offered by way of greeting. Clarke gestured towards the camera.

‘You don’t use that, then?’

‘It’s fake, same as all the others. They were there when we bought the place – Darryl keeps meaning to put in real ones.’