JAMES DEEGAN MC spent five years in the Parachute Regiment, and seventeen years in the SAS.

He served for most of that time in a Sabre Squadron, from Trooper to Squadron Sergeant Major, and saw almost continuous service on operations in Northern Ireland, the Balkans, Africa, Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. He fought in both Gulf Wars, and was on both occasions amongst the first Coalition soldiers to cross the border into Iraq. He was twice decorated for gallantry and, on his retirement from the Special Air Service, as a Regimental Sergeant Major, he was described by his commanding officer as 'one of the most operationally-experienced SAS men of his era'.

He now works in the security industry, in some of the world's most hostile and challenging environments.

James Deegan

Once a Pilgrim

ONE PLACE. MANY STORIES

This novel is entirely a work of fiction. The names, characters and incidents portrayed in it are the work of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or localities is entirely coincidental.

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TO ALL THE BRAVE MEN I HAVE KNOWN WHO WILL NOT SEE OLD AGE. THEY ACCEPTED THE RISKS, STEPPED INTO THE BREACH, AND PAID THE ULTIMATE PRICE.

UTRINQUE PARATUS

WHO DARES WINS

THE UNITED KINGDOM

John Carr - CV

Personal

Born: Edinburgh, Midlothian
Parents: Father - James John Carr (deceased)
Mother – Mary Margaret Carr
Siblings: Brother – Alex Mark Carr (younger) KIA Afghanistan 2006
Sister – Louise Mary Carr (older)
Addresses: [redacted], [redacted], Hereford, Herefordshire
[redacted], [redacted] [redacted], London

Physical Description
Height: 6ft 2in (187cm)
Weight: 15st 6lb (95.5 kg)
Hair: Dark
Eyes: Blue
Distinguishing marks:
Extensive tattoos to upper body (chest and back) and arms
2.5in (6.35cm) inverted semicircular scar to chin (grenade shrapnel from action in [redacted])

Military Career

Units : Third Battalion The Parachute Regiment
22nd Special Air Service Regiment

Secondments:
Special Reconnaissance Regiment
Operational Detachment [redacted]
[redacted]

Operational Theatres deployed:
Northern Ireland multiple deployments
Iraq – two Gulf Wars and Counter-Insurgency campaign
Afghanistan – Operation [redacted]
Balkans – Bosnia, Kosovo, [redacted], [redacted].
Africa – Kenya, [redacted], [redacted], [redacted], [redacted].
Middle East – Yemen, [redacted], [redacted].
Latin America – [redacted], [redacted].
Far East – Brunei, [redacted].

Specialist Infiltration skills: Mobility/Air
Specialist Military skills:
Sniper
Demolitions
Medic
Communications
Jungle Warfare Instructor
Counter Insurgency Expert
Close-Quarter Battle
Hostage Negotiator
JTAC
Mortars
Surveillance – Technical and Physical

Languages: Spanish – advanced
Serbo Croat – advanced
Arabic – fluent

Specialist skills: Helicopter Pilot (civilian)

Honours and Awards:
MBE – Northern Ireland
Military Cross – awarded for gallantry in [redacted]
Bar to Military Cross – awarded for gallantry in [redacted]
Mention in Despatches – Classified Area

Foreign award: Silver Star (US) – awarded for gallantry in [redacted].

Security Clearances Held: Top Secret

Total length of Military Service: 22 years

Retiring Rank: Warrant Officer Class 2 (Squadron Sergeant Major)

Current Occupation: Head of UK Security to Konstantin Avilov

Personal data:
Status: Divorced
Children: Son – George (serving soldier Parachute Regiment)
Daughter - Alice (first year of A levels)
Hobbies: Mixed Martial Arts

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

**THIS IS A WORK OF FICTION.
NONE OF THE EVENTS DESCRIBED
HAPPENED, AND NONE OF THE CHARACTERS
CONTAINED IN THE NARRATIVE ARE BASED
ON ANY PERSONS, LIVING OR DEAD, UNLESS
EXPRESSLY STATED.**

We are the Pilgrims, master; we shall go
Always a little further; it may be
Beyond that last blue mountain barred with snow
Across that angry or that glimmering sea

From *The Story of Hassan of Baghdad and How He Came to Make the Golden Journey to Samarkand* (1913)
JAMES ELROY FLECKER (1884–1915)

These words are inscribed on the clock tower at Stirling Lines, Hereford, along with the names of those members of the Special Air Service who have fallen whilst serving.

PART ONE

BAGHDAD, IRAQ

1.

SERGEANT MAJOR John Carr stood in the low light, fighting unfamiliar emotions and watching his blokes go through their final equipment checks.

Even at this hour, the air was brutally hot and humid, and it stank of open sewers, old garbage fires, and diesel fumes from the idling vehicles.

Foul in his nostrils as it was, he inhaled deeply: to Carr, it smelled like nothing on earth. He was going to miss it.

Tonight would see yet another operation against yet another high value target – this one a man codenamed 'Joker'.

Joker: Sufyan bin Ahmed, a former colonel in Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard and now the leader of The Obedient Servants, a vicious Al Qaeda-in-Iraq cell responsible for multiple atrocities and deaths.

Another night, another nasty bastard.

The men of 22 SAS and Task Force Dagger had been at this for a long time now, year after year spent hunting and killing the murderous jihadists who had turned Iraq into a charnel house, slick with blood. Most of the action took place close enough to smell the other man's breath, and sweat, and fear, in dark, dank rooms in backstreet houses and compounds, where the enemy holed up to make his stand.

With this tour drawing to its end, Carr's Squadron had been lucky, with only a couple of soldiers wounded and none killed. They were facing a foe who prayed for his own, glorious death, and that presented a very particular challenge. But it was one which the men from Hereford were more than equipped to meet: their phenomenal skill at close-quarter battle, and their proficiency in the art of room combat, had changed the course of the campaign, and the flow of volunteers was drying up. The streets of the Iraqi capital might be teeming with those who loudly proclaimed their desire for martyrdom; few actually stepped up.

Squadron Quarter Master Sergeant Geordie Skelton wandered over, one giant fist wrapped around a hot brew, despite the thirty-five degree heat.

He and John Carr had passed Selection together, and had gone on to serve in every theatre to which the SAS had been committed during the nineteen years they had spent at the tip of the spear. Carr would have stepped through the gates of hell with Geordie by his side, and the feeling was mutual.

'What's on your mind, buddy?' said Skelton, slurping tea.

'Getting out,' said Carr, quietly. Absent-mindedly, he rubbed his chin, rough with stubble, and felt the livid, crescent moon scar under his lower lip. A few yards away, a couple of young troopers cracked up at something a third had said. He envied them: they had years of service ahead of them. 'Knowing I'll never do this again,' he said. 'Knowing it's all over.'

'Fuck me,' said Skelton, with a laugh. 'That's another day. Let's get this one done first, eh?'

'Yeah, you're right,' said Carr. 'Feeling sorry for myself. Give us a swig of that brew.'

Skelton handed over the mug, and Carr took a big mouthful of the strong, sweet tea before handing it back.

'Knowing my luck I'll get clipped tonight,' he said, with a rueful half-grin.

'Howay, man,' said Skelton. 'What the fuck's up with you? Twenty years of dickheads shooting at you, and you've never had a scratch, bar that fucking Action Man scar on your chin. And even that's just made yous a fanny magnet. Your luck, you'd jump into a barrel of shite and come out clean.'

'Aye,' said Carr. 'I'm only kidding. If either of *us* get clipped it's all went south, that's for sure.'

That was true: at their level of seniority, John Carr and Geordie Skelton would not even be entering the target building. Grizzled old men like them would hang around at the back with the Squadron HQ element, directing the whole thing, while the young guys did the business.

The building in question was a pale grey, two-storey villa to the south of Masafi Street, in the hard-core Sunni suburb of Dora, on the southern bank of the meandering Tigris. Two hours ago, Carr had delivered the briefing – the last he would ever give – and had watched the blokes poring over the aerial photographs of the area, until every man-jack of them knew the place intimately. Each of the multiple assault teams had gone over its individual tasks, step-by-step, ensuring that they knew exactly which rooms each of them would clear, who would go through which door, what their limit of exploitation would be…

Nothing was left to chance: that was the only way to make sure – or as sure as possible – that you walked back out of the room you'd breached.

As ever, the intelligence picture was imperfect. The informant – who had been promised a lot of US dollars, a new ID and six seats on a US Air Force Globemaster out of Baghdad for himself and his family – was confident that Joker would be at the premises this evening, preparing a giant improvised explosive device for an attack on civilians in the central Shia district of Sadr City. What he could not say for sure was how many of Joker's lieutenants and underlings would be there.

Carr thought back to the conversation he'd had with the spook who had provided the intelligence for tonight's target.

'We want them alive,' the spook had said, looking down his nose at the thickset Scot – a difficult thing to do, given that Carr was a good six inches taller than he. 'Especially Joker.'

Carr had shrugged. 'Is that so?' he'd said, with a smile. 'You cannae even tell me what we're up against.'

'It's very important,' the intelligence officer had said.

'Really?' Carr had said. 'Well, you'll get him in whatever state he comes out of that building.'

And he'd stared directly into the eyes of the spook, until the man had been forced to look away. 'But we need…' he'd said, almost plaintively.

'What you *need* is to know what it's like to step into a room where there's an armed man trying to kill you. When you know that, then you'll understand why that's not an order I'll be giving my men.'

Truth was, Carr didn't have a whole lot of respect for the intelligence community: a first in Politics from Cambridge and a nice, soft pair of hands were not much use out here in the nightmarish killing zones of Baghdad, and this particular miscreant was even worse than most of them. Carr had taken an instant dislike to the superior little fucker – not that the answer would have been any different with a spook he did like.

'One chance,' he'd said, finally. 'He'll get one fucking chance, and that's if he's lying face down on the floor when my guys go in. If not, you get him in whatever state he comes out.'

Geordie Skelton threw away the dregs of his tea.

'Look on the bright side,' he said, to Carr. 'The Squadron'll run a damned sight better once I'm in charge.'

Carr chuckled: Skelton was due to replace him as Sergeant Major at the end of the tour.

'I might come back and see how you're getting on,' he said. 'If I fancy a laugh.'

He looked at his watch.

01:15 hrs.

Fifteen minutes until they rolled out of the gate of the FOB on the southern outskirts of Baghdad, which was home to TF Dagger.

'Time to go, Geordie,' he said. 'Mount up.'

Geordie Skelton grinned and stepped up into his vehicle, which would bring up the rear of the mobile column. Carr walked down the line, telling each vehicle commander in turn to mount up, until he reached the front. The plan called for Carr to lead the blokes to the lay-up position, from where the Squadron would move the final couple of hundred metres onto the target on foot. He would remain at the rear with Geordie and his driver, the OC, a signaller and his own driver, a young Brummie trooper called 'Wayne' Rooney.

Rooney had joined the Squadron from The Rifles six months earlier, and he was already a promising blade. He'd looked momentarily downcast when Carr had told him he was missing out on the assault.

'Everyone has to step out to work with the HQ now and then, Wayne,' Carr had said. 'Your turn tonight.'

Rooney was already in his seat, and Carr winked at him as he climbed aboard.

'Alright, son,' he said. 'Ready to roll?'

'Yes, sir,' said Rooney, not yet comfortable with calling his Sergeant Major by his first name. The informality of the SAS, when compared with the line infantry, could be disconcerting at first.

Carr thought about correcting him but decided against, on the basis that it might worsen the young trooper's discomfort. Instead, he smiled, strapped on his Kevlar helmet, and grabbed his Diemaco C7 – a Special Forces M4 variant fitted with a heavy duty barrel, night-sight, and a flash suppressor.

The vehicle moved forward, and each vehicle behind followed on.

The time to target was twenty minutes.

They picked their way north, past shuttered shops, burned-out cars, and fire-gutted houses. Before the war, Dora had been a predominantly Assyrian Christian neighbourhood, but in the chaos of the early occupation the lunatic fringe had moved in and begun a programme of religious cleansing. It seemed like every third house was daubed with symbols which had been used to identify their occupants as Shia, or Christian, or Mandaeists – whatever *they* were.

The streets were deserted – you had to be crazy to be out and about at this time of night. But that meant that anyone on the streets *was* crazy, so the men manned their vehicle-mounted weapons and scanned the route for enemy activity as they progressed to the target area.

As they passed the bloated corpse of a donkey, Carr looked at his map with the route marked on it.

'Next left, Wayne,' he said, glancing at the young Brummie.

'Yes, sir,' said Rooney.

'For fuck's sake,' said Carr, under his breath. He shook his head and grinned: it was too far back to remember, but he'd probably been just as bad himself as a new trooper.

Twenty minutes after leaving the FOB, the vehicles pulled over and went static at the LUP.

The teams all dismounted and shook out into the order of march, ready to move towards the target, each man going down on one knee and scanning the immediate area for any threat, the pitch black turning green in their night vision.

Carr walked over to Geordie and the Squadron Commander for a final brief.

Everything was good, no issues.

Carr keyed his radio mike, and sent one transmission. 'All teams, move to final assault positions.'

The men started to go forwards slowly towards the target. It was only two hundred metres, but it took a full ten minutes, moving

quietly, carefully: they'd been in Dora enough times to know that the locals would react aggressively as soon as they worked out what was going on. Every man in the area owned a gun, and most would relish the chance to have a pop. They'd all wake up as soon as the explosive charges effected the breaches, but there was no sense in giving them a head start.

Eventually, the assault teams were at their final positions, and awaiting the radio transmission for the show to commence.

Carr carried out a check on the comms to confirm that everyone was ready to go.

All team commanders confirmed.

Carr gave the OC – Evan Forrest – a thumbs-up.

Forrest keyed the pressel on his radio and uttered the words which had launched a thousand assaults.

'Standby, standby… Go!'

There were two deafening explosions, instantly followed by the wailing of car alarms activated by the pressure wave from the breach charges, and the assault teams were in.

From where Carr stood, he could hear the immediate crackle of small arms fire coming from inside the villa.

He fought the temptation to ask questions on the radio, to find out what was going on; the teams had to be allowed to get on with their task with no interruption.

Instead, he turned to speak to Evan Forrest, and it was at that moment that gunfire erupted from a building directly opposite the target.

It was wild and high, and the assault team at whom it was directed were able to take cover inside the walled compound of the grey villa.

Carr watched as they began returning fire.

'Fucking amateur,' said Geordie, and he was right – the gunman had fired two long bursts, the first of which had illuminated his position in one of the upstairs rooms, the second of which confirmed he had not changed his position.

But this was still very much not ideal: a number of Carr's men were now engaged in a firefight inside *and* outside the target.

He made a quick decision. The team outside was Delta 18 Charlie, led by Steve Smith. Steve was a good man, and full of balls, and that meant that in a matter of moments he'd be over the wall and rushing across the street to take out the shooter.

That was not the best way to deal with this threat.

Carr keyed his mike. 'Steve, it's John,' he said, calmly. 'Stay put, mate, and keep suppressing that house. We're in a blind spot to them so I'm going in round the back. Okay?'

Smith's reply came back a moment later. 'Okay, John, got it. I think there's at least three shooters in there.'

'Noted, mate,' said Carr. 'Moving shortly.'

He turned to the small group he was with. 'Right,' he said. 'Evan, you stay here with the scaley and Jedd, okay? Me, Wayne and Geordie are going to take them fuckers out.'

The OC nodded.

'You watch your back round here, Evan,' said Carr. 'Geordie, ready? Wayne, ready?'

Rooney nodded. 'Ready, John,' he said, the effort to use Carr's first name written all over his face.

Carr grinned. 'Good man. Right, let's go.' He pressed his transmit button. 'Moving, Steve.'

Smith acknowledged.

Carr led Geordie Skelton and Wayne Rooney into the alley behind the shooters' house, until they were level with it. As they reached a rear gate, in the shadow of an eight-foot back wall, he stopped.

A sound, from the other side of the wall – low voices, and the click-clack of weapons being cocked.

Carr raised his hand to stop Geordie, and put his finger to his lips. Wayne immediately took a knee and turned to cover their rear.

Carr moved forward and looked through the gate.

He saw four men, one of them placing an RPG7 warhead into its launcher, the others peering cautiously around the side of the building towards the target house where the assault teams were still engaged.

Carr looked back towards Geordie.

Gave a thumbs down – enemy – and held up four fingers.

Geordie nodded.

Carr removed a fragmentation grenade from his assault vest and showed it to Geordie, who nodded back and immediately brought up his weapon to cover him. Noiselessly, Carr removed the pin and casually lobbed the grenade over the wall, and moved back into cover.

In the darkness, and amidst the cacophony from the firefight, the men neither saw nor heard the grenade land.

Three seconds later it detonated, partially eviscerating the three to the side and leaving them moaning and writhing on the ground. Carr stepped through the gate, followed closely by Geordie. The RPG man turned, seeing only black shapes – though Carr saw him well enough, and saw his look of utter surprise – and opened his mouth to say something.

Carr placed the barrel of his weapon into the centre of the man's face and squeezed the trigger. The muzzle flash illuminated his head as it exploded from the impact of the high velocity round, and Carr was turning and moving before the body hit the floor.

Geordie took care of the three on the ground and then they moved quickly to the back door of the house, ready to make entry.

As they reached it, a burst of gunfire erupted from the window above, followed by shouting.

Carr turned: Wayne Rooney had been following them through the gate, and had taken rounds directly into the chest and face; his body armour had absorbed the impact to his chest, but a round had just clipped his right temple. It might have been survivable,

ironically, if it hadn't been for his helmet. As it was, the bullet had bounced around inside the Kevlar, ricocheting through his brain and making mincemeat of it. An inch to the left and things would have been different.

★

But shit happens.

The temptation was to run to help him, but that would have been suicidal, and pointless: Carr knew the young trooper was dead before he hit the ground.

The only thing to do now was get into the house and kill everyone inside.

Cursing, he opened the door.

He and Geordie stepped into a darkened kitchen, and paused to listen. They could hear some movement upstairs, but nothing in the immediate vicinity. While Geordie covered an open doorway which led into a hall, Carr keyed his mike and transmitted. 'Steve, it's John. We're in the downstairs of the house. Make sure no-one fires into the downstairs, okay?'

He listened for a response.

Nothing.

He repeated the transmission.

This time it was acknowledged.

With rounds smacking into the upper floor, and rapid AK fire being returned, the two men quickly cleared the lower floor of the building.

Carr got on the net again. 'Steve,' he said, 'Downstairs clear. We're moving upstairs. Stop firing.'

'Okay, John.'

Carefully, John Carr and Geordie Skelton headed up the marble staircase. They cleared the rear rooms of the house – whoever had

shot Wayne Rooney had obviously returned to the front – and came to the final two doors, which faced the target building.

Both doors were closed.

Carr pointed at the first and held up one finger.

Geordie understood that he was going to be the first through the door.

He nodded and took up position.

Carr pressed the door handle and pushed it open.

Geordie stepped through.

Directly in front of him, an insurgent began to turn, lifting an AK47 and swinging it around.

Geordie fired two quick shots into his face, and the man was punched backwards and straight out of the open window.

To the right, a second insurgent turned to engage the SAS man, who beat him to the shot and pulled his trigger…

Nothing.

It couldn't have happened at a worse time.

'Shit,' screamed Geordie. '*Stoppage*!'

He began to drop into the kneeling position, reaching for his pistol, knowing that he would not have time to draw it and take out the threat, knowing also that Carr would hear and respond.

The big Tynesider felt the impact of the round in his mid-thigh at the same moment that he heard the report of Carr's weapon sounding over his head.

The shooter was flung backwards against the wall; just to make sure, Carr stepped forward, put the barrel of his weapon to the man's forehead, and shot him again.

Then he turned to Geordie. 'You okay?' he said.

'What do you fucking *think*?' said Skelton, through gritted teeth. 'I've been fucking *shot*, you daft twat. Fuck *me*, it hurts.'

'It's only a flesh wound, you big girl,' said Carr, with a sniff. 'Sort your weapon out.'

Geordie nodded, cleared the stoppage, and stuck in a new magazine.

It was as the mag was slapped home that Carr looked down, and immediately saw that it was far from a flesh wound.

Geordie's leg was sticking out at an unnatural angle, indicating that the round had hit bone; Carr knew that he could bleed out quickly from a shot to the femur, especially if the femoral artery was damaged.

'Oh, bollocks,' he said. 'Right, Geordie. I'm going to pull you over to the wall over there and prop you up. Keep an eye on the doorway, okay?'

Another nod.

Sweating, Carr dragged Skelton the ten or twelve feet over to the side of the room. It was a bastard – he weighed more than 270lbs with all his kit, and he couldn't help much, and Carr felt horribly vulnerable, especially when he had to turn his back to the door to sit him up.

Once that was done, Carr pulled the tourniquet from his chest rig.

'Keep watching that fucking door,' he said, feeling for the entry point on Geordie's leg.

He found it, and then located the exit wound on the back of the thigh. It was large, and wet with blood, and full of bone splinters.

Shit, he thought. But at least the artery appeared to be intact.

'Okay, mate,' he said. 'It's fine. I'm going to put this on, yeah? It's going to hurt a bit.'

Carr applied the tourniquet and pulled it tight.

Geordie let out a low moan of animal pain; he was a hard man, and Carr knew he must be in something near agony.

'That's done, mate,' he said, wiping his bloodied hands on his combats. 'Now listen, I need to go and clear that last room. Anyone but me comes through that door, you kill them. Got it?'

'I'm coming,' said Geordie. 'You can't do it by yourself.'

He tried to stand, but fell back down.

'Ah, shit,' he said. 'That *does* fucking hurt. Give me a hand up.'

'Don't be stupid,' said Carr. 'Stay here.'

Geordie gave him a thumbs-up with his left hand, his right wrapped round the pistol grip of his Diemaco, which was aimed at the doorway.

Carr smiled, returned the thumbs-up, and stepped out and back into the hallway.

Looking at the door to the last room, readying himself to step through that breach.

And then the handle started to move, and the door began to open.

Carr moved to the wall, flush to the door, and took aim.

A bloodied hand gripped the side of the door recess, and then a man of sixty or so stepped out, unarmed, hands cradling his belly. His white shirt was stained red with blood from a gunshot wound to the stomach, and when he looked at Carr the Scot saw shock but no fear in his eyes.

He smiled at Carr and nodded – as if he was acknowledging a stranger in the street, on a nice summer's day. But then another man, much younger, stepped out behind him.

The second man looked at Carr for a split second, yelled 'Allahu akhbar!' and raised his hand.

Carr was diving back into Geordie's room when the suicide vest detonated, and the force seemed to propel him even quicker.

Momentarily stunned, he came to a few moments later, lying in a heap in the floor, his ears ringing, covered in plaster and dust, and coughing and choking.

From outside, somewhere across the street, he could hear a voice shouting, 'John! John!'

He sat up and looked around himself.

His hearing became clearer, and he realised that the shouting was coming from Geordie.

'Jesus man,' said Skelton, his own pain momentarily forgotten. 'Fuck me. You okay?'

Carr patted himself down, and stood up. 'Mother*fucker*,' he said. 'That was close.'

He could feel the heat before he saw the flames.

'Geordie,' he shouted. 'We've got to get out. The place is on fire. I'm gonnae have to help you up. It's going to hurt, bud.'

Skelton shot him a withering look. 'Just get on with it,' he said. 'It's not like I can fucking hang around, is it?'

Carr keyed his radio. 'Steve, house clear. We're coming out the front. Get some guys over here to pick up Wayne, he's down at the back.'

He helped Geordie to his feet, and they made their way quickly down the stairs, the injured man hopping on his good leg and cursing as he went; the flames were confined to the top floor, close to where the guy had detonated, but still the heat drove them on.

Outside, the assault teams had cleared the grey villa, and they were now starting to regroup, ready to move out.

In the distance, one or two shadowy figures were flitting across the road – locals, roused by the firefight.

As yet they'd not been contacted.

But it was only a matter of time.

They needed to get moving.

Geordie was starting to falter, the adrenalin waning.

Carr laid him on the ground, as gently as he could.

'Medic!' he shouted. 'Medic! Quick!'

One of the team medics rushed over and took in the situation.

'Has he had morphine, John?'

'No mate, nothing. The tourniquet's only been on couple of minutes. Soon as you get a drip in him, get him back to the vehicles and call into the Ops room. Casualty requiring immediate surgery, get the medevac stood by at the FOB.'

For a moment, he'd considered bringing the medevac into

Dora, but he didn't think the injury was life-threatening, and he wasn't going to risk a heli and its crew, even for his best mate.

With Geordie handed over, he looked at his watch: from the first explosion until now, only six minutes had elapsed.

He jogged over to the OC. Forrest was standing talking to the primary assault team leader, and Carr picked up the tail end of the conversation.

'Definitely dead?' Forrest was saying.

'That's right, boss.'

'Fuck me. We're going to be popular now.' He looked at Carr. 'Did you hear that? Joker's dead.'

'Yeah,' said Carr. 'Good news.'

'It's not fucking good news, John.'

'Hey, boss,' said Carr. 'We've got Wayne down round the back there, and Geordie's took a bad one to the leg. So you're right, it's not good that he's dead. It's fucking great. Now, we need to get the fuck back to the FOB.'