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Written by Mark Peterson

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FLESH AND BLOOD

MARK PETERSON



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The final racehorse entered the parade ring. In the fierce sunshine, its black flanks shone like water. All around it, people were moving, making their way over to watch the race from up in the stand, or hurrying to the Tote for a final punt. An announcer's voice carried over from the line of tannoys: 'The Mishon McKay Novice Stakes is up next, ladies and gentlemen, and what a great field it's attracted to Brighton this afternoon.' Trackside, first-time racegoers waved banknotes at the bookies' chalkboards, where the odds were changing in the blink of an eye. Amid the piped trumpets and excited chatter, a racehorse pranced nervously towards the starting line.

Behind the Tattersall, in the corner of the car park nearest the racecourse, a blue Mondeo was waiting. Detective Chief Inspector Tom Beckett sat sweltering in the driver's seat. Beside him was Detective Constable Vicky Reynolds. At twenty-four, Vicky was the youngest DC on Beckett's squad, and the only woman. Neither of them was thinking about the next race.

Beckett looked across at Vicky. 'You OK?' he asked.

Vicky nodded. The senior investigating officer for Operation Windmill, Tom Beckett was a hard taskmaster. Vicky stared at the red Alfa Romeo parked a hundred yards away, halfway down the middle row of cars. She glanced at the clock on the Mondeo's dashboard. 'He's half an hour late,' she said.

'Alan Day is always late,' said Beckett. 'It's in his nature. Like being an evil bastard is in his nature.'

There was a sudden crackle of static in Beckett's earpiece and a message from the surveillance unit came over the secure waveband. Alan Day was coming up the hill.

'What's he driving?' Vicky asked.

Another crackle, then the answer came: 'The Cayenne.'

A moment later, Day's enormous car entered the car park. The red Cayenne was Porsche's punchy version of the classic 4x4. As it prowled along the first rank of cars, its chunky wheels crunched over the exposed chalk. At the end of the line, it turned round. It drove back along the middle row, pausing only briefly in front of the puny-looking Alfa. Then it drove on, slotting into one of the few remaining spaces.

Ray Tyler got out of the Alfa Romeo. As the undercover police officer walked towards the Cayenne, he was trying to concentrate only on the throaty growl still emanating from its engine.

The driver's window of the Cayenne slid down and instantly Tyler recognised Alan Day's ugly, hyper-mobile features. Tyler's mouth was dry now and he could feel his body pumping adrenaline. 'All right, Al?' he asked.

'Good, mate,' Day answered from his lofty seat. He wasn't looking at Tyler. His shaven head was turned towards the

windscreen of the Cayenne and the city of Brighton, laid out before him at the bottom of the steep hill.

Tyler hesitated. 'You sure, Al?' he asked.

Day shrugged. 'Just need to get well.'

Tyler ventured a smile. 'Don't we all, mate?'

Alan Day turned his face towards the undercover cop. 'Do we?' he snapped. 'Didn't fancy it the other night, then?'

Tyler looked down, shifting the position of his feet. 'On and off, y'know.' Day resumed his silent study of Brighton's teeming seafront. He seemed to be thinking something over. 'We all set for Wednesday, then?' Tyler asked.

Day sucked at his teeth. 'Not sure.'

'What's up?'

The fake Yardie accent rippled through Day's voice. 'It's a lot of chiva, man,' he said. Day was nineteen and white, but he spoke like a black man and he drove a fifty-grand car.

Tyler knew that something was wrong. He shifted his feet again. 'It's your call, Al. But the money's still sweet, yeah?'

'A lot of people asking questions.'

Tyler laughed unconvincingly. 'They would ask questions, wouldn't they? Like, I'm the new boy in town.' He hesitated, then gambled. 'But don't forget that I'm the one holding the cash, Al, and the money's not going to stay on the table for ever.'

Day stared Tyler in the face. 'But who are you, Ray?' Out of nowhere, a Tokarev pistol had appeared in the window of the Cayenne. 'Where you from, Ray? That's what I want to know.'

The last thing Tyler saw was the sneer on Alan Day's

face. There was a single sharp crack and a boom that filled the entire hillside. The high-velocity round lifted Tyler off his feet, smacking his shoulders back against the roofline of the car parked next to the Porsche. Tyler slid down the door, bloodying the paintwork, then slumped onto the stony ground.

Day threw the pistol onto the passenger seat and rammed the engine into reverse. The back wheels crunched over Tyler's outstretched legs at the same time as an unmarked police van screeched forwards to block the exit of the car park. Day saw his escape route closed off. The Cayenne roared backwards again along the line of cars, barely missing Vicky Reynolds, who had got out of the Mondeo to go to Tyler's aid.

Vicky stood over Tyler's body. The undercover officer was lying on his back, unmoving, a circle of blood spreading out from the massive gunshot wound in the side of his head. Vicky put her hand up to her mouth. 'Oh God,' she breathed. She stood there for a moment, rooted to the spot. Then she remembered she was mic'ed up. 'Day shot him in the face!' she cried.

Tom Beckett was still in the Mondeo. 'Take Day down!' he yelled as the Cayenne raced towards him along the line of parked cars. It swung round, raising up clouds of white dust that prevented the firearms officers from getting a clear sight. A single shot split the air nonetheless, but by now Day was heading for the top corner of the car park, where he'd spotted a gap next to the St John's Ambulance.

Alan Day's Cayenne bumped up onto the grass verge. In a moment, he'd be gone. One of his officers was down, and DCI Beckett was closest to the perp. Without waiting for

Reynolds, he floored the accelerator and gave chase.

In the parade ring, spooked by the gunfire, the black horse kicked and reared, tugging its reins free from the stable lad's outstretched hands. It skittered out of the enclosure, straight into the path of the speeding Cayenne. The gelding's forelegs buckled. The impact sent him up onto the bonnet of Alan Day's car before sliding him off again in a flail of broken limbs.

A moment later, two thousand amazed racegoers watched from the stand as the mighty Cayenne crashed through the white railings and out onto the hillside. Some of the spectators had heard the gunshots, but they'd mistaken them for nothing more alarming than a misfiring starting pistol. Now – as the bookies threw themselves off their boxes and a man yanked his daughter out of the way of the Porsche – everyone knew that something very bad had just happened.

Day's car crashed through both sets of railings and out onto the Downs. A few seconds later, the Mondeo joined it. The two cars sped along the hilltop. Day turned right, away from the houses, down towards the sea, the Cayenne ripping up the thin topsoil but keeping tight to the ground. Behind it, Beckett almost lost control of his plunging saloon, the Mondeo's backside slewing suddenly out to the left. The gap between the two cars began to widen again.

At the bottom of the hill, Day smashed through a metal barrier and screeched out onto Wilson Avenue. A horn blared as a van whacked up onto the kerb to avoid it, the wing clipping the back of the Cayenne, the nudge helping Day wheel-spin out onto the seafront road. There were more horns from the braking cars. Day ignored them. He regained control of the Cayenne and roared through the red traffic

lights. In his rear-view mirror, Day could see the Mondeo threading its way through the vehicles lodged at odd angles around the junction.

Looking ahead again, Day saw, in the middle distance, traffic queuing all the way to the city centre. The black-yellow police helicopter had already appeared in the sky above the Palace Pier.

Day pulled out onto the wrong side of the carriageway and accelerated hard. The single column of cars coming out of the city began splintering before him. Closer to the Steine, the road began to narrow. Day could hear the wailing two-tones of the squad cars coming up the hill. 'Fuck it,' he spat out, taking his foot off the pedal and yanking the long, leather-bound handbrake. Its tyres screaming, the Cayenne spun round once, twice. The massive vehicle slid sideways across the road, toppling the bollards at a traffic island. Then it slammed into the door of a parked green-and-white taxi.

In the Mondeo, Beckett saw the cloud of glass fly up, heard the terrible, grinding thud of metal tearing into metal. He stood on his own brakes, stopping the Ford just a few feet from the collision.

Behind the smoked windows of the Cayenne, Day was still invisible. Beckett opened the door of his saloon. Noises returned to the scene around him: police sirens, the chuntering of the helicopter, the taxi's pointless alarm.

Beckett walked forwards. The cab driver had still been in the vehicle when Day hit it. The Cayenne's high bonnet had smashed straight into his head.

Suddenly, the driver's door of the Cayenne flew open and Day jumped down onto the road. Looking straight at Beckett,

he raised the Tokarev to fire. Beckett flinched, expecting the shot to come, but something made Day change his mind. Instead of firing, he turned and ran. Within seconds one of the narrow lanes leading off the seafront had swallowed him up.

Half an hour later, Tom Beckett was walking up the steps in front of the entrance to Kemptown Police Station. There was a television news camera pointing at his face and Beckett realised that Alan Day was no longer just a drug dealer. He was a celebrity.

Beckett strode inside the narrow, scruffy 1960s tower block. Someone had tried to tart up the reception area, sticking the Sussex Police insignia on the wall and installing a civilian behind a desk to answer phones. Very corporate, Beckett thought, walking straight past the lifts and smacking open the door of the stairwell. Like the building, DCI Tom Beckett was showing his age. He'd found his first grey hair and he'd noticed the beginnings of a paunch. It was the TV dinners he was eating. As Beckett climbed the stairs, though, it wasn't the salt in his veins that set his heart racing but the thought of Alan Day slipping through his fingers. Right now, most of the Windmill team were out on the streets, or upstairs in the Major Incident Room. They were working the phones, calling in favours, dishing out threats, pumping everyone they knew for the word about Alan Day's whereabouts. Beckett wanted to be with them, doing something, not walking into a meeting with Chief Superintendent Roberts.

On the third floor, Beckett's mobile rang. He grabbed it out of his pocket – perhaps this was the call about Alan

Day. Pressing the button, he barked his own name into the phone. It was the consultant doctor at the Royal County Hospital: on his arrival, Ray Tyler had gone straight into emergency surgery. Beckett stood still and listened to what the doctor had to say.

After a moment, he closed his eyes. This afternoon, Operation Windmill had turned to shit, but the news Beckett had just been given was the worst news of all. Tom Beckett was the SIO and it had been his decision to send Ray Tyler up against Alan Day armed with nothing more lethal than a radio microphone and a suitcase full of marked banknotes. On the landing of the stairwell, Beckett searched his mind for any prior indication, any reason to believe that Tyler's cover had been anything less than secure. There was nothing, nothing at all, but that didn't make it any easier.

On the phone, the consultant said something else.

'Sorry?' Beckett asked. 'Yeah, that's right – there's a wife.'

Another question.

'No, I'll call her.' Beckett gazed out of the window of the stairwell. 'It's down to me.'

On the fifth floor at Kemptown Station, Detective Sergeant Minter was working in his office. Minter was the new boy. He'd only moved his things in a couple of days ago.

There was an electronic beep and the computer screen on Minter's desk flipped back to ExCal, the intelligence database deployed by SOCU, Brighton's Serious and Organised Crime Unit. Today was a good day because ExCal had only crashed the once.

The 5x5x5 intelligence forms from the racetrack shooting were coming in thick and fast, and Minter had recognised

lots of things from Alan Day's Target Profile. There was the same cocksure personalised number plate on the Porsche Cayenne – RE5IN – and the pistol he'd used on Tyler had long been Alan Day's firearm of choice. The Tokarev might be surprisingly old-fashioned, but it packed a punch. Minter downloaded the latest 5x5x5 and read the brief paragraph on the screen. The uniformed officer he had sent to one of Alan Day's known addresses in Whitehawk was reporting that Trish Yates wasn't at her mum's house. Trish Yates was Alan Day's girlfriend, and she hadn't been seen all day. It was probably nothing, Minter thought. Just coincidence. But he knew that Russell Compton had taken hostages before. Minter picked up his mobile from the desk, composed a text to DCI Beckett and pressed send.

Minter was ambitious. He was twenty-seven years old – pretty young for a DS – and at Kemptown he had a lot to prove, having spent the last two years behind a desk up at Division, where he worked for Chief Superintendent Roberts. It had raised quite a few eyebrows when Minter took his detective exams and applied to join the Crime Squad.

Minter put down his mobile and glanced around the office. The bookcase on the side wall was neatly lined with rows of training manuals. Piled on the bottom shelf were copies of the three reports Minter had compiled last year for Chief Superintendent Roberts. He'd stowed them there just yesterday, uncertain of where else they should go but deciding not to shred them, which was what he really wanted to do.

On the whiteboard on the other wall, Minter had drawn a diagram of Russell Compton's heroin distribution network.

Pinned up in the middle of the spider's web was a recent colour surveillance photo of Russell Compton himself. It showed a tall, sandy-haired man getting out of a top-of-the-range Lexus. A handy amateur boxer in his youth, Compton was a big guy who dwarfed the side of the luxury car. Operation Windmill had been pressing Brighton's biggest, best-organised heroin franchise for over a year now and Russell Compton was the main target. He was the kingpin, the thirty-kilo man, and it was in order to make inroads into Compton's organisation that the undercover operation with Tyler had been set up. Compton shifted kilo after kilo of gear every single week, in Sussex and beyond, so it needed a lot of protection. Russell wasn't involved in the violence himself anymore – he had Alan Day to do that for him, among others – but everyone on SOCU knew exactly what he was capable of. One word from Russell Compton and someone got beaten or stabbed or shot, just like Ray Tyler had been.

On the diagram, lines radiated out from Compton's name and photograph like spokes running down from the hub of a wheel. At the end of each line, written up in red, the name of one of Compton's associates appeared, together with their designated function. Alan Day was the enforcer. In return for the discounted deals that Russell Compton gave him, Day provided the muscle needed to keep the seafront and the estate dealers in line. Apart from Day, Russell Compton ran a family business. His brother-in-law, Dave Gillespie, ran the stash houses, and his wife, Jacqui Compton, laundered the money.

Looking away from the whiteboard, Minter caught sight of a black lever-arch file hidden underneath the pile of

intelligence reports on the side of his desk. He hesitated. He didn't really have time for that at the moment, but there was something about the Murder Book he just couldn't leave alone. As an intelligence analyst, Minter had top-level security clearance for his rank. He could go anywhere, look at anything, and it had been a relatively simple thing a couple of days ago to retrieve the cold case file from a long-forgotten corner of the archive in the basement of the Kemptown station. The victim's name was written on the spine of the Murder Book in felt-tip pen, along with the date of her death: *Anna May, 12 July 1995*. Minter opened the front cover. On top of the thick wedge of papers was a contemporaneous clipping from the *Evening Argus*, Brighton's local newspaper. In her black blazer with the crest on the pocket, Anna smiled out innocently from the front page. Minter recognised the shoulder-length hair, the open, good-natured expression and he touched the faded newsprint with the tips of his fingers. Anna would have been thirty one now, although for some reason Minter found that difficult to imagine. Last night, with his analyst's eye for detail, he'd read Anna's Murder Book. Like Operation Windmill, the investigation seventeen years ago lacked method, lacked rigour. Far too many clues had been overlooked and, as a result, too many lines of enquiry had run into the sand, but that wasn't really surprising since the SIO on both cases had been the same DCI. Minter's mobile drummed on his desk. Beckett had texted straight back: he was coming to see Minter now.

Concealing the Murder Book under all the 5x5x5s again, Minter looked back at the whiteboard. This was his priority now, he told himself, this and the murder of Ray Tyler. In

the top left-hand corner of the whiteboard, in his neat, almost fastidious script, Minter had written the single word *Importer*, followed by a red question mark. Compton might be a thirty-kilo man, but as yet there was no indication he was bringing in the heroin himself. That meant Compton was buying from someone else in the UK. As far as Minter could see, however, no one on Windmill had ever bothered to ask who that might be. 'Who do *you* buy from, Russell?' Minter wondered aloud just before the door burst open and Beckett came into the room.

'I'm on my way to see Roberts,' Beckett said, glaring at the young DS. 'You've got one minute.'

Minter stood up. 'Trish Yates, sir.'

'Never heard of her.'

'She's Alan Day's girlfriend,' said Minter. 'Lives in Whitehawk.'

'So?'

Minter picked up the 5x5x5 from his desk. 'She's gone missing. An officer from East Brighton just sent this.'

Beckett ignored the intel report. 'Missing since when?'

'Since this morning.'

Beckett shrugged. 'It's the weekend. The girl could be anywhere.'

'I've checked, sir,' said Minter. 'Trish Yates waitresses in the Laines. She was supposed to turn up for work at two o'clock this afternoon, but she never showed. I tried the mobile number they gave me. No answer.'

Beckett stared at SOCU's newest recruit. Minter was keen, he'd give him that, but he wouldn't give him anything else. Not in a million years. 'I don't have time for this,' he said, turning round. 'Put it in an email, Minter.'

'Trish Yates has a daughter, sir,' Minter said quickly. It was just enough to stop Beckett in his tracks. The DCI turned back. 'A baby girl,' Minter added.

'Ten seconds left,' said Beckett.

'Trish was supposed to drop the little girl off this afternoon at the baby's grandmother. It was the gran who rang us. She's worried.'

Beckett thought about it for a moment. 'So you're thinking that Trish Yates and this baby of hers have been taken hostage by Russell Compton, to keep Alan's mouth shut once he's in custody.'

'Yes, sir. Russell's working the angles, like he always does.'

'I see,' said Beckett. He walked round the desk and took the intelligence report out of Minter's hand. Beckett screwed the piece of paper into a tight little ball. Staring at the younger man, he let it fall to the floor. It rolled a few inches along the new carpet.

Beckett followed it, taking another couple of steps towards Minter. The younger man was two or three inches taller than he was. With his neat, side-parted hair, he was good-looking, too. The new DS obviously worked out a lot, but Beckett knew he could take him. 'You're going to have to do a lot better than this, Minter. Alan Day's the original baby father. He's got three kids. Three kids we know about, at least. All of them have got different mums. You're the intelligence analyst. You figure it out for yourself. If Day doesn't give a shit about any of his offspring, why should Russell Compton? And why the fuck should we?'

There was a pent-up fury about Beckett that was making Minter nervous. 'I'm sorry, sir. It was just an idea.'

'I told you – I don't have time for ideas.' He left a beat of silence. 'Tyler's dead, Minter. It happened just now, in the hospital.' Beckett caught the fear in the other man's eyes. 'These guys don't fuck around, Minter. They've killed an officer. Scary, isn't it?' Beckett looked around the office, taking in the neat ranks of training manuals on the bookcase. 'You know, when I put in that request for another detective, I wanted someone who knew his way around the estates. Or at least someone with their own contacts on the seafront. Someone useful, Minter.'

'Sir,' said Minter, 'I was a PC in East Brighton. I know Whitehawk very well.'

'Yeah? And how long ago was that?'

Minter glanced down at the floor. 'Two years ago. But I asked for a transfer into SOCU twice. I want to work crime.'

Beckett snorted. 'So that's it, is it? I suppose it makes sense. I mean, whoever heard of a detective inspector without experience of major crime? Not even your mate Roberts would sign off on that one. Well, let me tell you something, Minter. We're not here for the sake of your career development.'

Minter tried again. 'I just want the chance to show what I can do.'

'Oh, yeah? Well, I know all about what you can do, Minter. I've heard about how good you are at mangling crime stats for Roberts.' Beckett looked up at the ceiling. 'What was it this year? Oh, yeah. Auto crime down by 2.3 per cent. Well, that was a hard fucking rain that fell, wasn't it?'

'Sir—'

'Listen, Minter,' said Beckett. 'My team has got the best clear-up rate in this entire fucking division. Now, I know that gets on Roberts's tits, but there it is. And not even *you* can slice and dice the numbers any other way. So the last thing I need is some jumped-up little tosser like you coming in here and telling me how to run things. Got it? And while we're at it, Minter, let me make something else very plain. You haven't got any friends in this station. No one at Kemptown is glad you're back. We all know the score. We all know what you did to Kevin.'

Minter was shocked. 'That panel was confidential.'

Beckett leaned in even closer. 'We're family, Minter, and family looks after its own. Remember that next time you're shuffling your fucking papers.'

Turning on his heels, Beckett marched out of the room.

At the top of St James's Street, Jimbob McFarland stopped outside an antiques shop. A large, gold-framed mirror was hanging in the window. Jimbob leaned closer in, pulling the skin of his cheek taut. He tutted. It was definitely a zit. It would need a dab of foundation before he went out tonight.

In the late-afternoon sun, Jimbob continued walking down the hill, passing the Sidewinder pub and a new place selling hideous retro furniture. Ahead of him, a police car was parked up on the pavement. He crossed the road to avoid the officers getting out of it.

On St James's Street, the crowds were gone. Kemptown was being reclaimed by its workaday denizens: bag ladies, addicts, queers, crims. Jimbob ignored the smashed-in faces of the junkies. As he walked, he scoped the pretty faces of Kemptown's boys. Oversized sunglasses, geometric hair,

tight urban clothing – they were all looking fine. A lot of them knew him, too. Jimbob was young, just turned nineteen. With his floppy, peroxided hair, he was something of a talisman round here. He got plenty of nods and smiles.

The Red Roaster café was at the bottom of St James's and it was Jimbob's favourite place for coffee. When cash was short, it could also be a fair place to pick up trade. Glancing around at the other customers, Jimbob went and ordered at the counter. Then he took his cup and plate over to a table near the door.

Before he sat down, Jimbob took an already-opened letter out of the back pocket of his artfully ripped jeans. He slapped it down on the small, circular table, placed his mocha next to it. Outside, yet another police car went crawling up the hill. Something was definitely up.

Jimbob sat in one of the chairs. He stirred lots of sugar into his coffee, took his first bite of the Danish. The letter stayed there in front of him on the table. Sipping his drink, Jimbob tried not to look at it.

Jimbob's father hadn't contacted him in years.

By the time he'd reached the top floor of the Kemptown station, Beckett was sweating and he had to stand on the landing to catch his breath. He didn't want Chief Superintendent Roberts to see him like this. Through the window in the door, Beckett glimpsed the corridor leading to Roberts's office and its wood-panelled wall lined with trendy black uplighters. More tarting up, Beckett thought. More money wasted on his vanity. Tom Beckett's own career had stalled in the middle ranks a long time ago, and by his age that was a very uncomfortable place to be,

dumped on from on high at the same time as taking all the flak from below. Well, if it's promotion Minter wanted, Beckett thought, he was welcome to it. Steeling himself, Beckett was just about to grip the door handle when he stopped dead.

It had been going on for weeks now. Every night he lay awake in bed and every morning he woke up with the same sick feeling of dread inside his stomach. It was the undercover operation; it was Roberts going on at him; it was Minter being foisted on the team. Then it hit him. It wasn't any of these things that had been gnawing away at Tom Beckett worse than any stomach ulcer. It was today's date, a date that had been burrowing unseen through the pages of his diary for months. Letting go of the door, Beckett leaned back against the wall to rest his head. How could he have been so stupid? How could he have been so selfish, so wrapped up in his work that he hadn't even realised that today was 4 August? Beckett swallowed hard, choking back his tears. 'I'm sorry,' he gasped. 'I'm sorry.'

A year ago today, Tom Beckett's wife had died of cancer.

In front of the main entrance to Kemptown Station, television crews and press photographers jostled each other for the best position. When a female PR officer in a dark suit emerged from the building and came down the steps, there was a surge towards her.

'We're right up against deadline,' yelled one of the journalists. 'When are we going to get the statement?'

The young woman felt a little overwhelmed by the sheer number of reporters. This kind of thing didn't happen every day, even in Brighton. Taking a deep breath, she held up a

hand for silence. 'Thanks for being patient, guys,' she said. 'We're going on the record about the shooting in a couple of minutes.'

'Who's coming out?' asked another reporter.

'Chief Superintendent Roberts is just finishing up a meeting now,' said the PR. She paused to let their pens scribble down the name.

'Who's he when he's at home?'

'Chief Superintendent Roberts is the commanding officer in Kemptown,' said the PR.

'Where's Tom?' said one of the local scribes.

'DCI Beckett is leading the manhunt,' said the PR. 'As I'm sure you can appreciate—'

But they weren't listening to her anymore. Roberts had just emerged from the station and was standing at the top of the steps by the entrance. He was a tall man with a hatchet face and dark hair. His immaculate dress uniform had announced his seniority. The journalists all hurried over.

Roberts surveyed their upturned faces with well-concealed distaste. He could control virtually everything about the situation this afternoon, but he knew he couldn't control them and that always made him uneasy. 'Good evening, ladies and gentlemen,' he said grimly. He looked down at the typewritten statement he was holding in his hand. 'At three thirty-four this afternoon,' he began, 'a man was shot dead at Kemptown Racecourse. We can now name that man as Detective Sergeant Ray Tyler.' A ripple of surprise ran through the crowd of reporters. They had thought that the murder was the latest violent turn in the war between rival drug gangs. 'DS Tyler was an undercover police officer

working for Sussex Police,' Roberts continued. 'Ray Tyler was an experienced officer whose job required immense determination. He was a brave man who put himself deliberately in the way of harm in order to protect the public.' Roberts located the nearest BBC television news camera and stared straight into it. 'We will all miss him,' he said. Roberts looked back at the statement. 'The perpetrator of this appalling crime is well known to Sussex Police. His name is Alan Day. He is a notorious drug dealer with a history of violence. We will not rest until we have hunted this man down and brought him to justice. A substantial reward has already been made available for information leading to his arrest.' Roberts ran his eyes over the pack. 'Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. That is all I have for you at this time.'

Roberts turned away smartly and went back into the building. The PR scurried after him. She caught up with Roberts in the reception, where a small group of police officers and civilians had gathered to watch the press briefing.

'I'm going back to Division now,' Roberts told her. 'I believe you have my direct line.'

'Yes, sir,' said the PR. She hesitated.

'What is it?' said Roberts.

'I just wanted to say,' said the PR, 'that I thought what you told them – I mean about undercover work – I thought it was highly appropriate. It even got to the hacks, you know. They were moved, I could tell.'

Roberts nodded. 'Good,' he said. He fixed the young woman with his beady eyes. 'It's just a pity you didn't do your job so thoroughly, isn't it?' Roberts said, thrusting the statement back into her hands. The PR looked puzzled.

'There's a spelling mistake in the second paragraph,' Roberts told her. 'Check your bloody press releases before you put them out next time. That *is* what you're paid for.'

Roberts turned away.

A few moments later, in the underground car park beneath the station, Roberts had ensconced himself in the back seat of his official Jaguar. 'Division HQ,' he told the police driver.

They hit traffic as soon as they left the car park. The rush back home had started. Exhausted, sunburned, shopped out, all the day trippers were driving back to London. A lot of them – the ones who'd gone to the races, or taken the air along the seafront – wouldn't be returning in a hurry.

The Jaguar crawled down St James's. This part of town was an open sewer, Roberts thought, as he watched the freaks and misfits coming out for the evening's festivities. By the time morning came, there would be needles in all the gutters and the pavements would be slippery with blood. God knows why Minter wanted to come back here, the super thought. The whole lot should be swept into the sea.

Roberts drummed his fingers on the armrest. With time to kill, he tried to find the upside to this afternoon. He'd been around a long time. He was a consummate politician. There was always an upside to be found.

Two of them, in fact. The first was Detective Sergeant Minter. When he'd been up at Division, Minter had been a protégé of the chief superintendent. It was against Roberts's advice that the ambitious young sergeant had transferred to SOCU. But at least it meant Roberts had a man on the

inside now. Minter could tell Roberts all about the failings of the Crime Squad.

And there was DCI Beckett, too, of course. For a year now, Chief Superintendent Roberts had been looking for an excuse to get rid of the troublesome middle-ranking officer. The disaster at the racetrack presented the perfect opportunity. Roberts was going to deal with Beckett once and for all.