



Blue Wicked

Alan Jones

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Alan Jones

First sampler edition

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This book is a work of fiction and, except in the case of historical fact, any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

At the end of the book, there is a glossary of policing and medical terms. There is also a dictionary of Glasgow slang.

For Margaret Elizabeth

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PROLOGUE

Eddie looked around at the crime scene. As usual, it looked nothing like those on the cop shows he'd seen on TV. No photographer, no blue and white police tape or flashing blue lights; just him and his little black case. A small crowd of onlookers surrounded him and to be fair, they gave him a little room to work, but that may have been because of the smell.

This was the third of three similar cases that Eddie had worked in the space of two years, and he briefly wondered if they could be connected. Flies buzzed around his face and he flapped his hand at them ineffectively. The victim had been dead for a couple of days, and there was a sticky pool of blood and faeces on the ground below the body. A length of wood extended from the anus, and another from the mouth; from the position of the body, Eddie surmised that it was the same piece of wood, because it was supporting the corpse in mid-air across two rusty steel barrels, as if it were a spit roast about to be barbecued. Eddie hoped that death had come before the skewering.

He was concentrating hard, so it gave him a bit of a start when a voice interrupted his thoughts.

“Hey mister, who the fuck wid dae that tae a fucken cat?”

CHAPTER 1 Eddie

Ever since he could remember, Eddie had wanted to be a vet. As one of the few vets in Scotland who specialised in animal abuse and poisoning, he was often called out by the SSPCA when an animal was suspected of having been poisoned or tortured, which is why he found himself in the middle of a patch of waste ground on the outskirts of Glasgow.

He had started out as a fairly ordinary vet, qualifying with a veterinary degree from Glasgow University including distinctions in medicine, pathology, physiology and biochemistry. This was all the more remarkable when you knew his background; one of four children from a one-parent family brought up on one of Glasgow's toughest housing estates, Castlemilk. University had been a struggle at times, both financially and emotionally, although he had coped better with the academic side of the veterinary degree, being, according to his friend Brian, "a clever cunt".

Despite his upbringing he had almost fitted in, but he couldn't quite manage the don't-give-a-fuck attitude that some of the better-off students had and, although he joined in with many of the social activities normally associated with students, most of his fellow classmates considered him to be somewhat stand-offish, perhaps with a bit of a chip on his shoulder. Eddie himself would have told anybody who asked that he enjoyed his time at university, but that he'd had to grow up a lot quicker than his fellow students, helping to bring up his three younger siblings and working from an early age to earn enough to help with the housekeeping and have a little money for himself.

He took some photographs of the unlucky animal in situ, measured the length of the wood impaling it, and then, using the small hacksaw from his case, he cut the wood close to where it emerged from both ends of the cat, which allowed him to place the animal into the thick polythene bag that he'd brought for that purpose. As he did this, he thought of his first few years in practice, when he had soon become bored with much of the daily routine work that he needed to get through. He wasn't really a people person, so it was often an effort to be "nice" to the clients, although he generally got on a little better with his patients. None of the pet-owners in any of the practices where he'd worked particularly disliked him, but he'd never developed a loyal following of clients like some of the other vets he'd worked with.

He'd also struggled at times to fit in with the other practice staff until, about five years earlier, he'd moved to a small-animal practice in Paisley, just to the South West of Glasgow. The senior partner and the other vets in the practice realised before long that in Eddie, they had a very useful addition to the team. His strong interest in medicine and pathology made him indispensable in handling the kind of lengthy and complex cases that they struggled with, and his solid knowledge of lab work combined with his scientific and ordered approach meant that his work in the background let the other vets get on with keeping the customers happy and doing most of the day-to-day stuff that he found tedious. As a result he was offered a partnership in the practice, which he had accepted two years after joining them.

Encouraged by his position as the practice "expert" in biochemistry and post-mortem work, and his interest in the occasional poisoning case that the practice dealt with, he decided to take the unusual step of studying for a certificate in veterinary forensic pathology. It meant that he had to attend seminars and lectures periodically at Cambridge University, which was a bit of a bitch, but the practice paid for it, and he soon found himself involved in intriguing, though sometimes horrific, animal welfare cases.

Strangely, Eddie had fitted in at Cambridge. The other post-grads he studied with at the veterinary faculty were similar to him in many respects. Their backgrounds varied enormously, but they all had the same drive to learn, and a benign disdain for anyone who didn't strive to further their knowledge. He

even had a brief fling with one of his fellow students, Anna, but bizarrely, their post-coital chat was usually about forensic pathology rather than any plans they might have to carry on the romance away from the university's rarefied environment.

The crowd had dispersed with the disappearance of the sorry corpse, and Eddie laid it gently in the large plastic box that he kept in his car for the purpose. Putting his case in the car as well, he took one last look around then pulled off the blue overalls that he usually wore for such jobs, more to keep himself clean than for any forensic reasons. He checked the cat for a microchip which, if present, would enable Eddie to identify its owner.

Eddie groaned when the reader pinged and the number appeared on the screen. It meant a particularly unpleasant phone call he'd have to make later, breaking the news to a distraught owner, getting their permission to do a post-mortem examination and send appropriate samples off to the lab. He headed back to the surgery, anxious to get on with it; it would mean a very late finish, as he also wanted to write up his interim findings and send his preliminary report to Mike George at the SSPCA before going home.

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Eddie arrived at work sharp the next morning, hoping to get all the loose ends from the skewered cat investigation tidied up, but one of the younger vets was also an early starter, and wanted his input on a case that was troubling her.

"I've done full bloods, X-rays and ultrasound on this dog, but I can't find anything abnormal," Lesley complained, frustrated at her inability to find the cause of the young Labrador's vomiting and diarrhoea.

Eddie tried not to show his annoyance at the interruption to his plans; despite his awkwardness with the public, he was generally very good with the younger members of the staff. They in turn found that he was often the best person to approach for clinical advice, not only because of his patience with them, but also due to his excellent technical knowledge.

"Give me the full story," he said, taking out a pad to make a few notes.

"Well, Opus is a male, nine-month-old Lab. He's entire and weighs 24.8Kg. He presented three weeks ago with what appeared to be a mild acute gastroenteritis, and he seemed to respond initially to anti-emetics and antibiotics. He was non-pyrexia; his temp was 37.8 degrees, and his pulse, colour and respiratory parameters were normal. As usual, I advised the owners to withdraw food for twenty-four hours."

She paused and looked at Eddie for a response. He just nodded for her to continue.

"He's been back in three times since for the same problem; mostly vomiting, so we did some bloods. Everything looks normal. Urea, creatinine, ALT, AST and bile acids all were within normal ranges, so the liver and kidneys look good. All the haematology was normal, too.

"What about electrolytes?" Eddie asked.

"I didn't run them, the dog wasn't dehydrated."

"What was he like when you palpated his abdomen?"

"No real discomfort and I couldn't feel anything unusual, either."

“OK, what did you do next?”

“We did an abdominal ultrasound; well, Jenny did it with me. It was normal.” Jenny was better than everybody else in the practice at getting the most out of the ultrasound scanner.

“Good. Now, you said you took some X-rays?”

“Yes, we anaesthetised Opus yesterday and did a couple of plates of his abdomen, then we passed a stomach tube and did a barium study as well. The plain films were normal and the barium passed through with no problem. He is a bit of a chewer and I had wondered if he might have had a gastric foreign body; a piece of plastic toy, or a sock or something, but there was nothing there and the stomach emptied without leaving a barium outline of anything abnormal.”

“Was a note of his heart rate made at any point?”

“Hold on a sec, I’ll go and check. As far as I remember it was OK.”

She disappeared, and Eddie got on with filling out the submission forms for the samples he’d taken from the cat the previous evening. The post-mortem had been as bad as he had expected – there was widespread haemorrhage in the abdominal and thoracic cavities, and in the pharynx, which meant that the poor cat had been alive when the piece of wood had been inserted into its anus, pushed all the way through, and out of its mouth at the other end.

It had caused extensive lacerations to the anus and had penetrated the rectum before rupturing some of the mesenteric blood vessels supplying the intestines. Continuing its journey through the abdomen, it had passed through the stomach and liver, prior to rupturing the diaphragm, a sheet of muscle that separates the abdomen from the thorax. It had then travelled along through the mediastinum between the lungs, miraculously sliding over the heart base and through the thoracic opening into the neck, just nicking the pulmonary vein on the way through. After it had passed along the neck, beside the trachea and oesophagus, it penetrated the pharynx and exited the mouth, taking half the tongue with it. Eddie felt sick, and as angry as he had ever been, thinking of the pain the cat must have gone through at every single thrust that the sick bastard must have used to push the oversized skewer through the whole length of the body. He estimated that the cat could have taken up to an hour to die, as none of the ruptured blood vessels were large enough to cause the animal to bleed to death quickly. Either the culprit knew what he was doing and avoided the major arteries and veins, which he found hard to believe, or he had just achieved it by luck alone.

At each stage of the post-mortem Eddie photographed the body from all angles, and he collected the usual samples – such as blood and urine – as he went along. He had also measured the cat and weighed it before starting, and would subtract the weight of the piece of wood at the end to calculate the cat's true weight.

Even taking into account the major trauma that was evident in the abdomen, Eddie noticed that the kidneys looked a bit strange. They hadn't been affected by the passage of the wood, but he was sufficiently intrigued by their appearance to remove one of them, divide it in two and fix one half in formol saline for histological examination to determine if the kidneys were damaged. The other half, the unfixed piece of kidney, he placed in a container with a sample of liver, to allow the lab to run toxicology assays, vital in cases where poisoning was suspected.

All these samples needed accompanying paperwork. He had just finished it, and had bagged everything up to send to the lab, when Lesley returned.

“Opus's heart rate was in the low sixties on both occasions that it was noted,” she told Eddie.

Eddie wrote this down on his notepad.

“Is there any history of Opus collapsing, or having any ataxia?” he asked, referring to any blackouts or balance problems the dog might have.

“The owner didn't report any, and I think they're the kind of owners who would have told us if they'd seen something.”

“OK, Lesley, I think that you should run electrolytes and do an ECG on Opus.” He paused again. “Why do you think they would be useful in this case?”

Lesley realised now what Eddie was hinting at.

“Shit, do you think it might have Addison's disease? I didn't think of that because there was no sign of an Addisonian crisis.”

She was alluding to the dangerous collapsed state that dogs with Addison's disease sometimes died from, where the blood levels of the crucial hormones, cortisol and aldosterone, fell dangerously low. In Opus's case, Eddie suspected that he hadn't quite reached that level, but that the dog might be suffering from Addison's all the same, his adrenal glands unable to produce enough of those critical chemicals that control the levels of sodium and potassium in the body, as well as the blood glucose level. These fluctuations could affect the heart and other organs, and would explain the moderately low heart rate, and the intermittent vomiting.

“It certainly needs checking, and I wouldn't be surprised if that's what it turns out to be.”

“Thanks Eddie, I'll get that all checked, and get him dripped and started on medication right away if it is. I should have bloody thought of that myself.”

Eddie smiled. “Don't beat yourself up, it's hard to diagnose when it's that mild.” He knew that she wouldn't miss it again; she was thorough and would learn from every case she dealt with.

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The results from the lab came back quicker than Eddie expected, and he wasn't surprised when he read that there was extensive damage to the tissue of the kidneys; they'd looked abnormal on gross examination. What slightly surprised him was that the report stated that there were extensive deposits of oxalate crystals in the tubules of the kidney, but he realised that this unexpected finding could explain how it had been possible for the person responsible for this sick act of cruelty to achieve it. Making the assumption that it would have been very difficult, if not impossible, to restrain a cat thoroughly enough to impale it so effectively, he had presumed that the cat must have been at least semi-conscious. In the absence of any trauma to the head, he had come to the conclusion that some form of sedative or anaesthetic had been used, but he had wondered where the person who had done this had managed to get hold of an appropriate drug, and use it correctly.

He contacted the lab and asked them to check for ethylene glycol toxicity on the samples that he had already sent to them. An hour later, he had the results he expected.

He phoned Mike George, knowing that the SSPCA would be keen to know the results as soon as possible, especially as this was a new departure, in Eddie's experience, from the familiar string of cruelty cases that happened on a weekly, or sometimes daily, basis.

"Mike," he said, when the SSPCA regional superintendent answered the phone, "I've got an interesting one for you today."

"Eddie, how's tricks? Is this about the cat we sent you to investigate?"

"Aye, it certainly is. We have a nutcase with a new twist on killing cats. This poor little moggy was poisoned with antifreeze first, probably to immobilise it, then impaled on a stick while it was still alive."

"What a sick bastard. It makes you wonder how far people will go when it comes to torturing animals." Mike knew that death by antifreeze poisoning was horrible, but to suffer the impaling in addition was almost unimaginable. "Do you think those other two cases last year were the same?" he asked.

"I was just coming on to that. Because they were so autolysed, I couldn't tell if there were any kidney changes, and there was no point in doing histopathology on either of them." Both cats had been dead for at least a week before they were found, and were partly decomposed when Eddie post-mortemed them, but there was no mistaking the fact that both had died from having different, but equally lethal, penetrating objects inserted through their anuses. "I retained tissue from both cases, so I'm sending off liver and kidney samples for ethylene glycol toxicology. I suspect that antifreeze was used to immobilise these cats to allow the subsequent mutilation to take place."

"That's a new one for us. I can't recall a case like this before, and I've been involved with this side of things at the SSPCA for the last twenty years."

"I've got something else. I know it's a long shot, but when I examined this cat's claws, there was some tissue under four of them. I looked at a smear under the microscope of this tissue, and although I'm no expert, I think it might be human."

Mike laughed, then apologised. "I know I shouldn't have laughed, but I was just thinking what the police would say if we asked them to use their DNA database to find our cat killer. They'd tell us to take a hike."

"I know," Eddie replied, slightly annoyed, "but if we do find someone for this, there's no reason why we couldn't use DNA matching to confirm that he had been in close contact with the cat."

Mike sounded doubtful. "I'm not sure of the legal implications or the financial costs, but we've certainly never used it before."

"OK, so at least we have it as an option. I've frozen the whole cadaver, so that we have the DNA evidence in the bag, so to speak, if we should ever need it." He paused. "Can you send an Inspector over to Nitshill to ask around and see if anyone knows anything? I asked the bystanders a few questions at the time, but drew a blank. The cat was found near a boarded up block of flats due for demolition, so it would have been fairly secluded. We might not get much."

Mike agreed to send one of his officers over the next day and asked Eddie if there was anything else he could do.

“No, I’m going to ask around the local practices, to see if any of the vets in the area have come across similar cases. Let’s see what we get from that, and from the toxicology in the other two cases we have tissue for.”

“Good. I’ll trawl through our records and get a list of cases we’ve dealt with that could fit in with these ones. Our IT guys should be able to come up with something for us.” He continued. “I’ll speak to you as soon as I’ve done that. In the meantime, can you keep me up to date with any progress?” There was a pause while he wrote down a few notes. “We should really arrange a meeting once we have a bit more to go on, and get Sally from the press side in on it. She might come up with ways to push the investigation through the media.”

They agreed to keep in touch, and Eddie hung up. He finished writing up his final report and popped it in with the practice mail for posting the next day.

He phoned the cat’s owner to tell her the results, not as difficult a task as his first phone call to her, informing her of her pet’s demise, had been. This time she was marginally less distressed, but he still felt genuinely sorry for her, an old age pensioner, living alone, losing her only companion in such a horrible way.

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Eddie worked his butt off for the rest of the week. The practice was extremely busy with a parvovirus outbreak in the local dog population, not helped by the fact that a large percentage of dogs in the area were unvaccinated. There was also a rash of heatstroke cases caused by the exceptionally warm weather that had hit central Scotland during early June. If dogs weren’t on an IV drip for the severe dehydration caused by the profuse diarrhoea and vomiting associated with parvo, they were on a regime of cold water showering *and* an IV drip passed through ice-water to counteract the overheating resulting from them being left in parked cars, even those with their windows left open a crack. The more severe cases needed a tepid rectal lavage in addition to the drip, which didn’t please the nurses.

It was only during his rushed lunch hours that he managed to find time to contact the other practices in and around Glasgow. It took over a week, and he suffered a bit with indigestion due to wolfing down lunches, or missing them altogether, but he had such a good response initially that he widened his research to the whole of Scotland.

When the results arrived from the samples Eddie had sent in from the two cases he’d investigated previously, they confirmed that the two animals had been poisoned with ethylene glycol. Armed with this, he composed letters, and posted them to *The Veterinary Record* and a couple of other veterinary publications, asking for information about any poisoning or cruelty cases in Scotland within the previous five years.

Finally, he wrote to the local and national veterinary associations, and all the Scottish veterinary diagnostic laboratories, requesting any information of relevance to his investigation.

It came flooding in. Even Eddie was surprised just how many animals were involved. From Scotland as a whole, a spreadsheet supplied by the SSPCA listed about 3,650 cases of animals, mostly cats, that had been poisoned with antifreeze in the last five years. When he added case reports that he’d gathered from his other research that didn’t already appear on the list, this grew to 4,821. Many of these could have been accidental, as cats were prone to sit under parked cars and leaked antifreeze had a sweet taste that seemed to appeal to them. Only twenty-three were reported as having survived, and of these, just eight

had confirmation by blood analysis of ethylene glycol toxicity. Of the four thousand and odd total cases, only a handful involved some form of mutilation in addition to the fact that they'd been poisoned, and they were all cats.

In addition, there were another 2,359 cases of deliberate mutilation, from the SSPCA and external sources, without any evidence of poisoning.

Eddie was no IT geek, but he had enough computer skills to do some basic analysis of the data. He sorted the list by date and location, and flagged whether or not there was any mutilation or poisoning involved. Sharon, the practice manager, helped him to set up a map of Scotland on Photoshop, with fifteen overlying layers. For each of the five years, there were three categories: The poisoning cases, which were marked with a small round dot; mutilation cases, which were given a triangular mark; and cases which had been poisoned and mutilated, which were denoted by a square. Each year was represented by a different colour.

Eddie laboriously plotted all the cases in their appropriate layers, according to the year they were reported and their category, but with them all visible there were too many marks on the screen, and the pattern was seemingly random, as if someone had fired a shotgun at the map from a distance.

However, when he started playing about with the layers there was a bit more of a pattern to it. The most telling were the layers showing the cats that had been poisoned *and* mutilated. There were two clusters. He had expected the one in and around the Paisley area, where there were five cases, but he was surprised to see that the only other three reported cases were all within ten miles of each other, in or near to the city of Dundee.

His first thought was that there were two individuals that had the same perverted way of jacking off. All the Dundee cases were all on the SSPCA list, so he phoned the SSPCA centre in Dundee, and asked to speak to one of the Inspectors. A woman came to the phone and introduced herself as Inspector Julie Elliot.

He explained that he was making enquiries about a series of cases in Glasgow, and asked her if she could fill in the details of the three instances of poisoning and mutilation in the Dundee area that were on the list, in case they were related in any way to the one in Glasgow.

“We only dealt with two of these cases, but we got nowhere with them. If the other one was south of the river, it may have been the Dunfermline branch that dealt with it. You could try them.”

“What about the two cases that you did deal with?”

“I remember thinking at the time that we had a fair chance of getting a prosecution, because they were so blatant; somebody must have known about it or have seen something, but there was nothing. One cat was nailed to a wooden door, but would have been almost dead from antifreeze poisoning by the time that happened, according to the pathologist at the University of Edinburgh Vet School. We found it in a derelict factory after a phone call from a member of the public. The second cat had been hung by a noose around its neck, but the pathologist’s report stated that the noose had been knotted, and it wouldn’t have tightened enough to strangle the cat immediately. The cord had abraded the skin right through to the flesh in places, as the cat struggled for what must have been a considerable amount of time. This cat was also shown to have severe renal failure due to ethylene glycol poisoning, and may have been pretty far gone by the time it was strung up. It was reported by a family out walking, who found it hanging from a tree in Magdalen Park, down by the Tay Railway Bridge.”

“Can you send me the reports, if that's possible? They seem to be similar to the case I'm dealing with already. There probably isn't a link, but I'm not ruling it out.”

After making a few notes about their conversation, he phoned the Fife office, based in Dunfermline, and discovered that Julie Elliot had been right. The third case had been found on the beach at Tayport, on the south bank of the Tay Estuary, just as it flows into the North Sea.

The inspector wasn't in, but the woman in the office promised to get him to ring back. When he did, it turned out that he knew Eddie from his time as an inspector in Glasgow, a few years previously.

“Eddie, it's nice to talk to you again. It must have been four years now, eh?”

“Graham,” replied Eddie, recognising his voice after a few seconds, “I'd forgotten you'd moved up to Fife. How are you enjoying it up there?”

They spent a few minutes catching up, but Eddie was keen to get down to business, and steered the conversation round to the case of “the cat on the raft”. It hadn't been in such an advanced stage of antifreeze toxicity, so it would have been conscious when it was nailed to a kitchen cupboard door with an industrial nail gun, and floated down the Tay. By the time it beached at Tayport it was dead, but it would have taken a long time to die. Although it had taken some water into its lungs, it had probably died of hypothermia and shock. A couple walking along the beach had found it washed up on the shore, and had taken it to the SSPCA facility in their home town of Dunfermline, demanding that whoever had done this should be locked up. The staff had explained that while they would do what they could, it might be difficult to find out who had been responsible.

After talking to Graham, Eddie was curious about the two clusters and started playing around with the layers that divided these cases into groups according to the year that they had occurred in. The Dundee cases had all taken place in one year, and only one Glasgow case had taken place that same year. He went back to the original spreadsheet and sorted the eight cases into date order. They had all taken place over the last three years, two before the Dundee cluster and three after, including the three cases he'd investigated himself.

It made it more likely that one person had been responsible for all the cases, and that he or she had lived in Dundee for a period of just under a year.

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“Eddie, it's unlikely that the police are going to look at an investigation with so little information, and the PF will only consider a prosecution if we have a definite suspect and a very strong case,” said Mike George.

He'd called in to the practice after Eddie contacted him about his concerns and suggested that the police should be brought in, or that the case should be reported to the PF, or Procurator Fiscal. The SSPCA is almost unique among animal welfare charities. In most parts of the world, animal charities have the same rights as ordinary citizens to bring private prosecutions of individuals who have broken animal welfare laws. Because there are ineffective provisions for private prosecutions in Scottish law, the SSPCA has been granted the status of a specialist reporting agency to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, allowing it to lay reports for prosecutions directly to the Fiscal. Their inspectors have

powers of entry, seizure, and issue of binding notices like “care notices”, that force people to care for their animals or have them removed by the SSPCA.

Mike George was being realistic and pragmatic, but it seemed to Eddie that he was also being too cautious.

“Mike, this is not just your wee mindless thug that thinks it's funny to see an animal suffering or someone playing the big man to his mates; this is a guy who is serious about torturing animals and he *is* going to continue.”

“I know that, Eddie. Don't forget that I've been doing this for a long time. In my experience, it's better to wait until we are further down the line before we go to the police or the PF, but I fully understand your frustration.”

“So we just wait for the next one, and hope that Joe Public sees him and reports it to us?”

“No, of course not. We'll put a couple of inspectors on it for a while to see if we can come up with something more substantial. After all, somebody somewhere must have seen something. And don't get me wrong, what you've done already is fantastic, especially with that map on the computer; it gives our guys much more of a chance to make progress.”

Eddie was still annoyed, but part of him could see Mike's point. Even so, he didn't feel like backing down completely.

“OK, I'll give it two weeks. But if you've got nothing by then, or there's another case in the meantime, I think we should go to the police.”

Mike could see that Eddie was adamant. As a veterinary consultant Eddie was a useful asset to the SSPCA and Mike didn't want to curb the younger man's enthusiasm and determination, so he came up with a compromise.

“Tell you what,” he said, “let's make it a month and if there's still nothing, I'll ring Paisley CID myself.”

It wasn't ideal, but it was something. “Okay,” said Eddie, reluctantly, “we'll give it a month.”

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As Eddie had suspected, despite the efforts of the SSPCA Inspectors assigned to the case, no more information came to light during the month. In fairness to Mike, Eddie didn't have to push him; he kept to his word, and phoned Eddie to tell him that he had contacted Paisley CID. Eddie knew he was referring to the Criminal Investigation Department of the Strathclyde Police force; he'd worked with them on a couple of occasions before.

“The police are going to be phoning you at some point in the next few days,” said Mike. “I thought it better that they talked to you first, as you have more in-depth knowledge about the case and I'm up to my ears with this pet shop chain that has been importing dodgy exotics and keeping them in totally unsuitable conditions.”

“Mike, that's fine, I don't mind dealing with it. Good luck with the pet shops. What species are you talking about?”

“Mainly lizards and snakes, but there are some terrapins and turtles too. We’ve had to euthanase half of them, due to the state they were in.”

“They should stop exotics being kept as pets altogether, in my opinion, or at least allow it only under licence by trained owners, but I don't suppose that will ever happen!”

“Sadly, I think you’re right. Are you OK time wise for dealing with CID? We can't pay you for all of this, but I'll see if we can do something with expenses to help out.”

“Don't worry about it, I don't mind doing it. Call it pro bono, if you want.”

“Thanks, Eddie, much appreciated. The name of the officer you’ll be working with is DC Catherine Douglas. I gave her your mobile number; she’ll contact you.”

Eddie was about to put the phone down, when he heard Mike say something else.

“What was that, Mike?”

“Sorry, Eddie, I meant to say, I’ll also have to organise some identification as a temporary SSPCA Inspector for you. That will put you on a better footing legally, and make it easier for the police to work with you. Can you send me a current passport style photo of yourself?”

“Aye, no bother. I’ll take one just now and email it to you.”

CHAPTER 2 Stevie

Stevie Reilly never really had much of a chance in life, but what little hope he had of ever succeeding at any level was snuffed out by his drug habit. His switch from a combination of alcohol and marijuana to heroin was the point at which everyone who knew him, and was willing to help him, gave up.

His friends, with whom he would share a bottle of Buckie and a few spliffs, became acquaintances who would sell his kidneys for a score of smack, if they had the opportunity.

His favoured haunt was an abandoned and boarded up service station at the entrance to the derelict industrial estate on the edge of town. Once a busy fuelling spot for workers driving to and from work, it now lay deserted amidst the abandoned factories of post-Thatcherite Scotland. It seemed that nobody else ever went there, so he always had the place to himself and, more importantly, he didn't have to share his stash.

It was at least a twenty minute walk from the centre of town and he hated the dismal dampness as he forced a fast pace on himself in his desperation to load up. The Tesco bag holding his gear, and a couple of cans of Special Brew as an extra treat, occasionally banged against his leg as he walked, causing him to curse quietly. As he approached the edge of town, passing the thought-provoking "Haste ye back" and "Thank you for driving carefully" signs, the houses dwindled, and the long section of manicured grass which fronted the industrial estate, still cut by the council to keep up appearances, faced a muddy field with some sorry looking animals in it; some type of cattle, which he barely even noticed.

When he came close to his bolthole he looked round quickly, as he usually did, just to check that there were no scrounging bastards following him, looking for some of his score. He cursed again, suddenly noticing a figure maybe a couple of hundred yards back on the other side of the road, walking out from the centre of town like he had. He slowed down, then sat on the low metal barrier separating the pavement from the grass, pulled out one of his cans and cracked the ring-pull open. He took a large slug of the "super-lager", feeling it burn his throat, waiting for the kick that he always got from Special Brew while he watched for the stupid cunt opposite to pass by.

Stupid bastard, walkin' for the sake ae it, just get the fuck oot the way, man, he thought to himself.

The stranger looked over at him and nodded as he walked by. It wasn't some healthy bastard looking for fresh air and exercise, although he wore a hoodie and an Adidas top, with matching trainers and jogging bottoms. This was one of his own kind, which made Stevie much more nervous, wondering if the cunt was on the make. He relaxed a bit as his fellow jakey kept on walking past him, striding out to fuck-knows-where.

He gave it a few minutes until the man was out of sight then, where a corner of the corrugated tin sheet and the underlying plywood had been prised off enough to allow it to flex out a foot or two, he squeezed through into what had previously been the forecourt shop. It had been stripped of everything but the hardened glass booth where the attendant could sit safely at night, securely locked in, taking payments for fuel and handing out occasional goods from the steel shuttered and closed shop, in the sure knowledge that he wouldn't be robbed at knifepoint.

Stevie, or Stevo, as he was known to his fellow junkies, sat in the corner on a stained and ripped mattress rescued from a skip, his kit beside him. There was just enough light from the solitary skylight in the ceiling, against which large drops of rain were beginning to batter loudly. He prepared to shoot up, the smack bought with the cash he'd got from the sale of a laptop he'd removed from a car parked outside the mini-mart in the row of shops that served as a shopping centre for the whole estate. *Served the stupid bastard right, leavin' the fucken thing in the boot in the first place.* It had been a ten second job to prise open the lock and grab the computer, having seen the silly cunt put it in there for safety. Now his world was right again and for a while, as the needle punctured his skin and delivered its beautiful load into his worn out vein, the pain and torment that was his normal state faded into fucken greatness.

He must have fallen asleep at some point, because he woke with a start to a scraping sound behind him. Turning slowly, still floating, he saw the board at the entrance to his sanctuary being pulled open and a foot, then a leg, followed by the rest of the cunt he had seen earlier, appearing through the gap, looking around in the gloom as he did so. He watched warily as the guy shook himself, shedding rainwater in a cloud of droplets like a dog.

"Hey," the stranger said, "ye aw right, man?"

"Aye. Whit dae ye want, man?"

"Nuthin', man, just gettin in oot o' that fucken rain. Saw you comin' in here earlier and thought I'd gie it a go."

Stevo wasn't happy, but what could he say? He resigned himself to sharing his "squat" with a fellow ned.

"Ma name's Jacko, by the way, man." The newcomer offered his hand in the strangely formal way that jakeys sometimes do.

Stevo shook his hand and pointed to the mattress. "Ah'm Stevo, park yer arse therr, if ye want."

Jacko pulled a bottle out of his bag, opened it, put it to his lips and threw his head back, slugging as he did so. He handed the bottle to Stevo.

"Here, huv some ae this, man."

Stevo took the bottle and looked at it strangely. It was a plastic lemonade bottle, filled with a blue coloured liquid. "Whit the fuck is it?" he asked, grimacing.

"Hame made Blue Wicked, man, cheap as fuck, an' just as guid. Cheap voddy, some lemonade, an' ye knaw that crap the weans drink? Thon blue dilutin' juice stuff, cannae mind its name just aff the tap o' ma heid, but ye just get a boattle o' that an' add as much voddy as ye feel like."

Stevo took a drink. It was a bit rough, but sweet, and he'd tasted worse. Much worse. He took another long slug, and passed it back to his new pal, who put it on the floor between his legs. Jacko took out a ten packet of Pall Mall king size, offered one to Stevo and took one himself.

"Man, that stuff's aw right, ye know," Stevo said between puffs, eyeing up the almost empty bottle.

"Here, huv some mair, there's plenty o' it, man."

Stevo took the plastic bottle from him again, and downed most of the remainder. He could feel the familiar warm glow in his belly, spreading out through his body. It would help when he started to come down off the junk.

"You're no' drinkin' much yersel, Jacko."

"Ye kiddin', man. That'll be ma sixth boattle; ah tanned quite a few awready oan ma way up here."

"Where wur ye goin' earlier when ah saw ye?"

"Ah knaw a place oot the road a bit. It's an auld farm or sumfin', and it's got a bit in it ye can doss down in. Therr's a few boys go up therr; ye get peace, an' sometimes a bit o' fanny goes up an' aw, an' ye get the chance o' a ride, man." He grinned, pumping his arms in the universal shag-mime. "There wis naebody therr the day, so I came back doon tae wherr ah'd seen you."

"Ah thought ye hadnae seen me comin' in here. I like tae keep this for masel', but yer welcome tae use it if ye want. Just don't tell any other cunt."

"Hey, ye don't huv tae worry about that man, ye'll no' be bothered wi' onywan 'cos ae me." He looked at Stevie and grinned, but there was something in his face that made Stevie look away, suddenly uncomfortable.

Stevie shivered. Trust him to get hooked up with some psycho. The guy had seemed all right at first.

But it passed, and Stevie took another drink, then another bottle when Jacko offered again. Within an hour, he'd downed two or three bottles of the stuff. He could feel the alcohol hitting home, on top of the heroin he'd taken earlier. He took out his packet of Golden Virginia and his Rizlas and rolled a fag, offering Jacko the chance to roll one as well, but he shook his head and took one of his own. "Ah'll stick tae these. Ah'm no a big fan o' roll-ups apart fae an odd spliff."

Stevie lay back on the mattress smoking with one hand behind his head, almost drifting off. When he finally did go to sleep, Jacko took the still lit fag from him and stubbed it out on the floor, so the mattress didn't catch fire.

He sat on the edge of the mattress watching Stevie as he fell into a deeper sleep, the drink kicking in. Fifteen minutes later Jacko lit another cigarette, took a long puff and pressed the glowing end against Stevie's arm. Stevie groaned slightly, but didn't wake up. Jacko looked round at the glass cubicle in the corner and checked that the door was open, then grabbed Stevie's legs. There was a thump as his head hit the floor when he pulled him off the mattress and a smear of blood marked the track of Stevie's head across the vinyl tiles as he dragged him into the booth.

Jacko propped him up against the back corner, so that he could shut the door. He couldn't resist cupping Stevie's chin in his hand, squeezing it roughly and saying, "Ye silly, trustin' bastard, ye've made a big mistake, ya cunt, bumpin' intae me. Just your luck, Stevo boy."

With that he left the booth, closing the door behind him. He looked around and saw what he was looking for in a small pile of discarded shop fittings in the corner. He chose a suitable metal fitting, previously used to hang packets or jump leads or furry seat covers, and jammed it through the large, curved, brushed steel handle on the outside of the class cubicle. Just to make sure, he ripped a piece of wire from one of the vandalised light fittings and wrapped it round both the handle and the metal bar, to hold it all in place.

After he'd done all this, he double-checked that everything was to his satisfaction, and lay down on the mattress for a kip.

He awoke to the sound of Stevie groaning and thumping at the glass. *Here we go*, he thought to himself, feeling the familiar rush of adrenalin and accompanying sexual arousal that he knew would heighten during the next few hours, or even days.

Jacko knew almost exactly what to expect, but there were a few differences from his previous subjects that he hoped might show up, and the fact that this one was human ramped up the excitement and fear ten-fold. Although he didn't know the precise mechanisms for each phase of Stevie's chemical torture, he had a very good idea of how Stevie would die, because of the cats.

He wondered if he had time to go for a quick wank, but he forced himself to put it off, knowing that it would be so much fucken better if he waited.

As Jacko approached the booth, Stevie raised his head slowly and stared at him, doubled over in agony, a look of fear, confusion, pain and incomprehension in his eyes. Saliva dripped down his chin, and his fingers were already bleeding from his attempts to escape from the booth. The glass was smeared with blood around the door edges, and there were also palm prints and spots of blood on the glass at the front of the booth.

"Help me, man," Stevie rasped, his speech almost unintelligible as spittle dribbled from his chin on to the counter.

"Didn't quite catch that, Stevo," replied Jacko, smiling and leaning towards him, cupping his ear as if to help Stevie make himself understood.

Stevie screamed and smashed his forehead off the counter. He clutched at his midriff with his hands as shards of pain shot up his back. Looking up through the glass, he could see a blurred shape, vaguely human. There were gaps in his vision; he couldn't see anything on his left hand side and there was a red blotch in the middle, which half blotted out the face of the person in front of him. Pulsing waves of pain shot from the front to the back of his head, and he could hear a roaring sound in his ears.

"Ah must have had some bad junk, man. Gie's a fucken hand here, fur christ's sake."

There was no response. He tried again, grimacing with pain.

"Help me, fur fuck's sake, man, ah'm fucken dyin' here."

This time Jacko replied, grinning.

"Ah knaw, ya junkie cunt, that's the general fucken idea. Ah'd be disappointed if ye goat better."

Stevie screamed again, collapsing on the floor, writhing around in the small space, his head banging off the walls as he did. His bladder suddenly let go, soaking the front of his trackie bottoms and saturating the floor with urine.

Jacko moved round to the door to watch his victim's attempts to get up, but Stevie's balance was badly affected and he couldn't straighten up easily. The intense pain started in his pelvis and crept up to his neck, almost meeting the agonising stabs of pain travelling through his head like glass shards. The wet floor didn't help, and Stevie failed two or three times, falling heavily on to his knees and hips as he did so, lucky not to break a leg. He got himself into a kneeling position and, just when he thought it couldn't get any worse, he felt a wave of nausea, the like of which he'd never felt before, sweep over him, and he retched violently, adding to the level of slime on the now swimming floor, and a stench of urine and vomit that only made his nausea worse.

He made another heroic attempt to get up, and managed to drag his chest up as far as the counter. His eyes were bloodshot and staring wildly, and he could see less than before. The headaches were so bad that when the pain was at its worst, all he could see was an incredibly bright light. When they subsided a little, he became aware of blurred shapes in front of him. It looked like two Jackos standing outside the booth, but he knew there was only one.

Again he screamed as the pain became unbearable, and it seemed to take an eternity to pass.

"Whit the fuck's happened tae me?" he whimpered to both the Jackos.

"Well, ye see, ye drank some antifreeze, ya stupit bas, ye; that's why yer kidneys are fucked up an' yer goin' tae die."

Stevo struggled to think, but he vaguely remembered drinking with Jacko yesterday. Was it yesterday? He didn't know.

"Was that the stuff we wis drinkin' yester...?" he asked, the question unfinished as another stab of pain tore at his body.

"Naw, that wis the stuff you were drinking. Ah didnae drink any o' it."

"But ah seen ye."

"Ah didnae swallow it, ya dopey bam, ye, ah just put it up tae ma mooth, so that ye'd think ah wis drinkin' it." Jacko grinned again but it was wasted, because at that moment Stevie let out another scream and fell over, sliding sideways on the counter before hitting the side of the kiosk with his head on the way down; blood spilled out from where a piece of his scalp had been torn off.

As he lay on the floor, half-conscious, he realised that there was a new pain appearing, this time in his guts, and that he had a sudden urge to empty his bowels. Even in the state he was in, he tried to haul himself up the wall, pulling down his jogging trousers at the same time, but he ended up falling over again. He attempted to hold it in, but the pain and pressure overcame him and as he lay on his side, he could feel a mixture of gas and fluid explode from his rectum, the warmth spreading all down his body and on to the hand and arm that were stuck underneath him.

As the smell reached his nostrils, he started to gag again. He believed Jacko when he had told him he was going to die, and wished that it would happen soon, as he couldn't bear any more of the suffering

that he was being subjected to. He started crying, when he wasn't screaming, all the time aware of being watched from outside the glass.

It took Stevie another twenty-seven hours to die. He was conscious for about half that time, alternately pleading for water to quench his raging thirst and begging for alcohol or drugs to numb the pain. He would scream and repeatedly hit his head off the glass, trying to render himself unconscious, or lie in the pool of his own urine, vomit and faeces, whimpering and occasionally taking convulsions, especially towards the end. Jacko hardly said a word, but spent most of the time watching.

In the last brief lucid spell before he slipped into a terminal comatose stupor, Stevie asked only one question.

“Why, ya cunt? Why? Why? Why?”

Jacko’s voice sounded different and distant, as if he was getting further away, or he was someone else entirely.

“Well, Stevo, in more ways than one, ye were just a bit fucken unlucky. It wisnae necessarily needin’ tae be you, but somewan like ye; some wee junkie that nae one would gie a fuck about. Ye see, some o’ us get a right buzz frae bein’ right proper cruel bastards, an’ you were a wee experiment tae see if it was mair fun tae kill a human wi’ antifreeze as it wis fir tae kill a cat. If it's any consolation tae ye, it's been much better in a lot ae ways; ye don't get the chat frae a cat that there's been frae you, so all in all it's been worth it.” He paused, and then carried on, taunting his victim. “An’ when yer deid, ah’ll take the bar oot o’ the door; an’ when they find you, they’ll just think it's another stupid jakey whit drank the wrang stuff comin’ doon frae a score. An’ they’ll all say, (yer maw as well), what a daft wee cunt ye wur, what a waste. But you an’ me, we’ll knaw better, Stevo, eh.”

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Two weeks passed before Stevie Reilly’s body was found. A springer spaniel, ironically with the name of Jack, managed to slip through the small gap that had been Stevie's secret entrance into the filling station, and when he refused to come out, his owner had squeezed his way in to retrieve him, to be confronted by the smell and the sight of Stevie's decomposing remains, a cloud of flies and a mass of maggots writhing in the dark pool of fluid that had emanated from his body before and after his death.

The police investigated his death but, as far as could be determined and taking into consideration the level of decomposition, acute kidney failure was given as the cause of death. There was moderate trauma to various parts of the body, but all of it could be reasonably attributed to falls and self-inflicted damage. A comment was made about a cigarette burn on the right arm, but again, the police assumed that this had happened when he had become unconscious while smoking. Dried blood and tissue were found on the floor and edges within the booth that supported this, and some empty bottles that had contained alcohol were present in the building. Lab work done on the liquid after the results of the post-mortem confirmed that it contained high levels of ethylene glycol.

There was a bit of puzzlement as to why Stevie had got stuck in the booth, but it was suggested that the combination of drugs and ethylene glycol may have caused blindness, and the subsequent panic rendered him unable to find his way out.

The Procurator Fiscal gave *accidental ingestion of ethylene glycol leading to acute kidney failure* as the cause of death.

At Stevie's funeral, his mum wept for her lost son. The remainder of the small group of mourners in the main looked embarrassed for her, and didn't want to be there. There had been no intimation notice in the paper; she didn't want Stevie's druggie friends turning up for the free food and drink, and a chance to wallow in their drug-fuelled pseudo-grief, giving insincere monologues about what a good friend Stevie had been to them.

CHAPTER 3 DC Douglas

Detective Constable Catherine Douglas turned out to be a pretty but rather serious-looking policewoman. She contacted Eddie the day after he'd spoken to Mike and arranged to come to the practice to have a chat with him.

When Mike had said that she was a DC, Eddie didn't want to appear ill-informed, so he went online to find out what sort of policewoman she was.

It turned out that the "D" stood for detective, and the following letter, or letters denoted the rank. She was a DC, a Constable, which was the lowest ranked officer. The next up was a DS, a Sergeant, followed by an DI, an Inspector, then a DCI, a Detective Chief Inspector and finally the Detective Superintendent. He was the highest ranked CID officer, and would answer to a Deputy Chief Constable, and the Chief Constable in overall charge of Strathclyde police force.

The women at the reception desk were all curious when DC Douglas came in and asked for Dr Henderson. She was told that vets weren't called doctor this or that, but if she took a seat Mr Henderson would see her shortly.

She was dressed in a two-piece business suit, dark grey, with an almost black three-quarter length coat. Her hair was tied in a tight bun at the back, and she wore very little make-up, and sensible shoes, but when Eddie came out to guide her through reception he got all flustered, and he could hear the stifled giggles from his admin staff as he retreated with the policewoman to the partners' office, up the stairs behind the dispensary. He ushered her into the sizable room, took her coat and showed her to a seat. One of the other partners, Gavin Usher, was at a desk on the far side of the room. He looked up, said a quick hello, and then got back to what he had been doing when they entered; something to do with practice duty rotas.

Eddie asked her if she wanted a cup of something and when she said yes he buzzed one of the receptionists to bring up a couple of coffees for them, adding one for Gavin when he indicated he'd like one, too. He didn't normally get his staff to run after him, but he thought he would teach them a lesson for taking the piss earlier. While waiting for the coffee to arrive they made awkward small talk, but once the still-grinning secretary delivered their drinks, they got down to discussing the horrific torture cases that were the object of their meeting.

Gavin initially tried to look as if he wasn't listening, but he gave up pretending as the story unfolded. It became obvious that DC Douglas had a fondness for animals, which pleased Eddie greatly because he felt that she would have empathy with the victims and be more inclined to treat the investigation with the seriousness it deserved. Eddie explained that cruelty against animals generally fitted into one of three categories. The first was *neglect*, often starvation or inadequate provision of veterinary care. The second was *casual cruelty* or *malicious killing*, like drowning unwanted kittens. The last category was *deliberate cruelty*. The crimes they were investigating fell into this last category.

He detailed the individual cases that he'd found and she took brief notes the whole way through. She also taped the interview, with Eddie's consent, and when they finished, Eddie promised to copy all the documentation associated with the case and have it sent over to her within the next few days. He showed her the work he'd done on his laptop, mapping all the locations and dates, which he assured her he would email to her. Finally, they discussed the way forward, and considered what resources they would need to make progress.

“What we need is a list of what we know, what we suspect, and what we don't know,” she told him, taking an A4 pad out of her shoulder bag, “and also a course of possible actions that we should think about taking.”

At this point Gavin interrupted.

“Listen, I have to go. I've got a clinic starting soon. Let me know if there's anything I can help you with. It was nice meeting you, Miss Douglas.” He got up, shook her hand and left the room.

“Gavin's all right, but I doubt he'll be of too much help unless the hours are billable.” Eddie didn't say this nastily, just in the matter of fact way he did with most things.

“Listen, Mr Henderson, I think we'll find that this investigation will be down to you and I. There's no chance of us getting any more help from my end, and I'll only be able to do this part of the time, and for a very limited period.”

“Please call me Eddie, everyone else does, Detective Constable. I'm OK to put a little bit of official work in on this, but it will mostly have to be in my spare time; my partners will get annoyed if I do too much during working hours without getting paid for it, and to be fair, they're right to feel that way.”

“It's Catherine. We may as well be on first name terms, but if you contact the station, or there are other officers about, I'd appreciate it if you'd address me as DC Douglas. I get a bit of flak at work because I'm a woman and because I won't play their games, so I try to keep everything as workmanlike as I can.”

Eddie was a little taken aback, but didn't pursue it any further, sensing that this was a raw spot with her. Instead he made a few suggestions for her list, a sort of “case summary”, which soon started to take shape. After an hour it was more or less complete, which wasn't saying that much.

The things that they already knew were that a series of animal mutilation cases had taken place over the last three years, all of the victims were cats, and they'd all been poisoned first. The first two had taken place on the south side of Glasgow between May and July, 2010, then there were three further cases in the Dundee area from October to December of the same year. Finally, there were the last three cases in Paisley and the south of Glasgow.

They suspected that all the crimes had been committed by the same person, who lived in the Paisley area or a neighbouring part of Glasgow, and that statistically, the culprit would most likely be male. He may have lived in Dundee for a period in 2010.

They didn't have a description for the suspect, or any idea of his age or background, or a motive for the killings.

Both Eddie and Catherine decided that they needed to collect more historical data for the relevant areas, to try to narrow the search down by further analysis of the updated data, and that a search of police files for any reports of similar cases not on Eddie's list could be helpful.

Eddie suggested that a look at crime reports from Glasgow and Dundee for any instances of stolen nail guns would be worthwhile, and Catherine agreed that this would be relatively straightforward, but she was less optimistic that his idea to collect employment records from companies with branches in both cities would be as manageable.

“There's just too many, and we don't have the resources for such a long shot.”

They decided to divide the proposed actions between them. Eddie would look at the information again to see if there was anything more he could get from it, and he would get the SSPCA to give him records going back another fifteen to twenty years. He would also look into the drifting pattern for the Tayport cat. If wind and tide data was available, he might be able to work out where the cat was dumped into the water.

Catherine would search back through the Strathclyde and Dundee police files for additional cases, and for any records of a stolen nail gun. She would also go up to Dundee and meet with a colleague in CID that she knew from her college days, to see if she could get a little help at that end, especially with things like trying to trace antifreeze sales. She would leave Eddie to contact or visit garages and auto spares outlets in the Paisley area.

“There's a problem here, Eddie,” she said, tidying her pad and pens into her bag ready to head back to the station, “you don't have any official standing in this investigation, so there's a lot of things you can't do. Just be careful that you don't overstep the mark at any point, or you could jeopardise any future prosecutions.”

“Oh, right, the SSPCA is already dealing with that. They are making me a temporary inspector so that I have an official role. Up until now I've just freelanced for them on the pathology side.”

“That might help, but with or without that just be careful, and keep me updated at all times so that I can keep everything on the right track. Here's my work mobile and my personal mobile number.” She gave him a business card with her name, her rank, the station phone number and her personal and police mobile numbers printed on it. As an afterthought, she took the card back, and wrote another number on it. “That's my home number as well. Neither of my mobiles work anywhere about the house. For God's sake, don't lose it or hand my number out to anyone else.”

“Of course not.” Eddie stood up and they shook hands before leaving the way they'd come in. The reception staff tried and failed to get a look at her without being obvious, and she gave them a frosty look for their efforts. She knew from experience that would unnerve them a little; with the exception of criminals, even people who've done nothing remotely unlawful feel slightly nervous when there's a police officer about.

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When Eddie passed back through reception, one of the receptionists waved the phone and, making a grimace, told him that Brian Gardner was on the line for him.

Eddie told her that he'd take the call up in the office. She rolled her eyes at him, and pressed the button to put Brian on hold.

None of the staff liked Brian Gardner, but he was the nearest thing Eddie had to a friend, although they sometimes didn't have any contact for months at a time. Brian was a bit of a waster, but Eddie had a soft spot for him, having known each other since they'd been infants playing in the muddy back yard shared by four blocks of flats in the council estate where they were brought up.

Even before he picked up the phone, Eddie knew that Brian was in trouble again.

“What's happened now?” he asked.

The voice on the line sounded hollow and echoing.

“Ah’m in the polis station. Ah’ve been detained. The duty sarge let me phone ye.”

“Shit. What have you done this time?” asked Eddie, sighing.

“Nuffin, man, honest. Ah did nuffin.”

“You must have done something for them to arrest you.”

“Honest, man, ah’ve been set up. Ah’ve kept maseel’ oot o’ trouble fir months.’

Strangely, Eddie believed him. Brian would usually admit to his crimes, at least to Eddie. Over the years there had been numerous phone calls in a similar vein, and Brian had spent various lengths of time incarcerated in penal establishments from young offenders’ institutions through to Low Moss low security prison and HMP Greenock, all for repetitive petty crimes of a non-violent nature.

“OK, Brian; I believe you. You have been doing pretty well, recently. What do you want me to do?”

“Well, ah wid normally jist use the duty solicitor, ’cos usually ah’ve done it, but ah wis thinkin’ that ah might need somewan wi’ a bit mair swagger, wi’ me bein’ set up by the cunts an’ that. Ye aye spoke about yon friend ye hud that wis a lawyer. Ah jist wunnered if he wid be interested. Ah get legal aid.”

“Terry Gallagher. He was at university the same time as me. He hung about with a couple of the guys in my year.”

“Can ye ask him fir me?”

“He *is* a defence lawyer, but I’ve not spoken to him for years. I don’t mind phoning him, though.”

“Ah’ll leave it with ye, then.”

He hung up. The last time Brian had been locked up, it was for resetting stolen goods, when he wisely kept his mouth shut about the source of the thirty £200 phones he was caught punting for forty quid each at the Barras, Glasgow's East End market. That was over a year ago, and Eddie had done his best to push Brian into legitimate but menial employment.

He looked up the phone number for the law firm where Terry was a partner, McCluskey & Gallagher solicitors, and rang them immediately. He was lucky enough to catch him in the office.

Terry was delighted to hear from him, although they’d never been close friends.

“How’s it going, Eddie? Still shoving your hand up cows’ arses?”

Eddie laughed dutifully. “I do that very rarely now; mostly fingers up dogs’ rectums these days, I’m afraid,” he replied, as always amazed by people’s fascination with the orifices it was part of his job to occasionally explore.

“Is this a social call, or have you been arrested for murdering someone?”

“No, I’m calling on behalf of a friend of mine who asked me to contact you because he’d heard that I knew you. He’s been arrested, and maintains that he’s been set up.”

“He must have heard my reputation. Best young defence lawyer in town.”

Eddie laughed. “I’m not sure on either count. It depends on what you call young and what town it is.”

They both laughed this time, but Eddie was anxious to help his friend and, hoping that he'd been sociable enough, he went on to give Terry Brian's resume.

"Brian, a friend of mine, is a bit of a habitual petty thief and has done some time here and there. I've been trying to get him straightened out and I thought that I was succeeding, until today. He's been arrested for something he says he didn't do, and I don't want to see him lose his job and get locked up for it."

"This might sound cynical, but do you believe him?"

"I do, although that might seem naive to you. He's always been up front with me in the past when he's been guilty."

"What's the story with you and Brian?"

"Well, as you probably remember, I was brought up in Castlemilk, which was rough at times, and Brian lived next door, so I've known him all my life. We went through school together, and through his association with the more delinquent elements in both primary and secondary schools, I was protected from the worst of the bullying that most kids like me suffered."

He hesitated.

"I don't mind paying. We've always just got on, despite our differences. It's as simple as that."

"OK. I'll take it on. He'll get legal aid, so that shouldn't be a problem, but I'll keep your offer in mind. Give me his details and I'll get down there. It is the main Paisley police station he's being held in?"

"Shit, I didn't ask. Sorry."

"It's OK. I'll phone first, in case it's Ferguslie Park."

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A few hours later, Eddie left to pick Brian up from the front door of the police station, hoping that he didn't bump into DC Douglas. He spoke briefly to Terry Gallagher, and thanked him.

"It was no bother. They were just trying it on, rounding up a few previous offenders who were possible suspects."

Eddie felt that he couldn't refuse Terry's offer of a quick pint, so the three of them headed across the street to the Kelbourne. When Eddie was up at the bar getting the drinks in, Brian explained his and Eddie's relationship.

"He's a kinda cross between a big brother an' a social worker. He's always on ma back aboot sumfin, but a will say, he's no' that bad for a posh cunt."

"He said you'd watched his back all through school, though."

"Ah suppose. He was aye a clevir bastard, an' he stuck oot like a plook oan a tart's coupon. He wid have goat mair do-ins if he hadnae knawn me, that's fir sure." He laughed. "He wis aye tryin tae get me tae learn stuff, an ah sometimes wished ah'd listened tae him, but ..."

Eddie returned with the drinks, and asked them what was so funny.

“Nuthin, man. Ah was jist tellin’ Terry here that yer aye oan ma case.”

Eddie grinned. “Not that it does any good, most of the time,” he said.

Brian tried to look hurt, but quickly cheered up when Eddie slid his pint over to him.

“This feels magic, after spendin’ aw that time in thon cell.”

Eddie couldn’t help laughing again.

As they finished their drinks, Brian continued. “Terry showed thae bastards where they could put their fucken detention, onyhow.”

Terry handed Brian his card, saying “You did the right thing; ‘No comment’ always works, then phone me, if there’s a next time.”

Eddie and Brian had another pint after Terry left. Even though Brian had been in the police station where Catherine Douglas worked, Eddie didn’t mention her or his involvement with CID, although he did tell Brian about his work with the SSPCA, investigating the mutilated cats, on the off-chance that Brian might have heard something at street level about who might be involved. Perhaps he thought that telling Brian about his involvement with the police might have made him nervous, scathing or both.

CHAPTER 4 Craig

Craig Ferguson stood for a few moments in the open doorway, savouring the damp air and his first taste of freedom in a year.

“Fuck this, man, I need a score.”

Craig had just completed twelve months of a two year sentence for a burglary that had gone wrong, during which he'd allegedly assaulted the homeowner, who'd appeared unexpectedly and at the wrong moment to discover Craig and another jakey trashing his house in the search for saleable items. The cunt was supposed to have been at work, but had come back early and let himself in the front door to be confronted by Craig, holding a top of the range home cinema sound unit in his arms and making for the back door, where the lock had been forced earlier. They had both panicked in their own way, the homeowner shouting and screaming at Craig, who responded by launching the substantial black, sharp-edged box in the general direction of the unfortunate man. Despite an arm thrown out to save himself, the corner of the box had connected with the side of the homeowner's head, causing a large gash, which bled profusely, and a loud thud as he collapsed on to the floor, breaking a glass display cabinet on the way down. Craig watched in horror as the man lay at a strange angle, unmoving, blood pouring from his head. His accomplice, entering the hall at that point, made things worse by telling Craig that he'd “fucken topped the bastard”.

In Craig's defence, he then did two things which ultimately saved him from a long prison stretch, but almost guaranteed that he would get caught. He checked the man's neck for a pulse but, because he couldn't feel it, he took off his right glove. Finally feeling a pulse but realising that the man needed help, he picked up the phone, dialled 999, and told the operator that there was a badly injured man at the address he was phoning from. It then dawned on him that he was holding the phone without a glove on, so he transferred it over to his gloved hand, wiped the handset with his sleeve, dropped it, and ran out the back door in the footsteps of his pal, who'd split as soon as he'd pointed out that the man had been “topped”.

Unfortunately for Craig, despite his efforts at cleaning them off, he'd left one print and a couple of partials on the phone. As he'd done time previously and his prints were on file, he was picked up the next day, high on heroin, and charged with theft by housebreaking, with assault. At the trial, the defence had argued that he hadn't meant to seriously hurt the homeowner, merely to facilitate his escape. The prosecutor conceded that checking the man's pulse and phoning for an ambulance weren't the acts of a ruthless killer, besides which the injured man had recovered consciousness before the emergency services had arrived and had asked, in a letter sent to the court, that Craig be shown some leniency because of his actions in summoning help. The judge was not completely unsympathetic, and gave him a shorter sentence than he could have, but made drug rehabilitation compulsory as a condition of his tolerance.

While in prison Craig did well initially, but access to drugs inside was too easy and he eventually slipped back into the familiar routine of either being under the influence of drugs or desperately trying to get some.

Now he was out on licence. As he stood on the pavement outside Barlinnie prison, with next to no money in his pocket, he wondered what his best plan of action was. At his mum's he would be looked after, but she was careful about leaving money about when he was there and she would try and keep him in the house and straighten him out, which he couldn't cope with.

As part of his supervised release order, he had to attend a drug rehabilitation centre and his criminal justice social worker had given him an address for one in Paisley, but that would be just as bad. *"Turnarounds" for fuck's sake. Fucken do-gooders.* Still, he needed an address for the Social, to get money.

The fine drizzle that had been falling was beginning to soak through his thin Adidas top, so he decided to start walking in the general direction of the city centre. He would make up his mind later; *get a score first.* He had enough cash for that. Maybe even do a bit of begging if he could find a pitch that wasn't already nabbed by an Albanian or Kurd, but that would be risky; he'd chance getting picked up and put back inside for breaking his parole conditions.

He'd not gone far when a car pulled up at the kerb beside him. The window rolled down as it stopped.

"Want a lift, man?"

Craig looked suspiciously at the car, a dark grey BMW, and the driver.

"Well, dae ye want a lift or no?"

Craig vaguely recognised the guy, he'd seen him around the estate from time to time. A Ferguslie Park boy. He'd never seen him with a car, though.

"Is it yer ain car, or is it knocked off?"

"It's ma ain. Why? Are ye gettin' in or no?"

"Aye, ah will. Ah wis just askin', man. Ah cannae afford tae get caught in a hot motor. Ah'm just oot ae the jail, man."

"Get in, man, it's fucken wet oot there. Ah stopped 'cos ah thought ah recognised ye."

Craig knew he would be happier on the south side of the city, away from this dump.

"Thanks man, ah wis just headin' intae town tae see a mate, get some gear."

"Ye got any cash oan ye?"

"Enough. Ah'll go up tae ma ma's and lend a few quid aff her later oan."

The driver reached under his dashboard, up behind the steering column, and produced a couple of plastic bags. Craig's eyes widened, but he tried to keep his face from giving away his hunger to grab them out of the guy's hand.

"How much?" he asked, not sure if the crumpled notes and the few coins he had in his pocket would cover it.

"Ah'll tell ye whit, ye can have this for whatever ye have oan ye, seein' as yer just oot the jail, man. Just mind and get yer stuff frae me in the future."

Craig knew he was going to owe this guy; at some point a favour would need to be returned, probably with interest, but he couldn't say no with the gear so close. He turned out his pocket on to the plastic dashboard tray, taking a risk and leaving a screwed up note in his pocket.

If the driver knew that Craig was holding out on him, he never let on. He gave Craig the bags and fished out a new syringe and a kit in a brown bag to cook up with.

“Here, ye’ll need that. Where are ye stayin’?”

“Ah think ah’ll stay at ma ma’s. She’s a pain, always oan at me, but ah need an address for ma fucken social worker. But ah’ll need tae fin’ somewhere tae shoot up first.”

“Where does yer ma stay? Ah’ve seen ye up at the Tannahill Road end, huven’t ah?”

“Aye, we stay in Tannahill Terrace. Ah’ve seen you about an’ aw.”

“Yer right, doon at the bottom end, but ah keep where ah live tae masel’, just in case.”

“Right, man, ah can appreciate that, what wi’ you dealin’ an’ that.”

The driver turned to Craig, who wondered if he’d gone too far, but his benefactor didn’t seem to react.

“Ah knaw a guid squat that’s empty, if ye want. It’s no’ that far frae yer ma’s, an’ ye can get peace frae her, but be close enough for yer social shirker.”

Craig grinned at that, but looked at him suspiciously, wondering again what this guy would expect in return for all these favours.

“Whit dae ye want frae me? Ah mean, ye’ve got tae want me to dae somethin’, huven’t ye?”

“Listen mate, ah’ve been in your shoes before; done some time, an’ that. Some cunts huv helped me oot in the past, so ah’m just doin’ the same. An’ ah’m aye on the lookout fur punters as well. Think o’ it as an introductory package, like ye get wi’ Sky TV.”

That seemed to settle Craig's anxiety, which was replaced with an impatience to get the gear inside him. If he could have got away with it, he'd have cooked up in the car. The two men didn't speak as the car crossed Glasgow, heading over the Kingston Bridge along the busy M8 to Paisley, and turned into the car park of a block of flats, currently unoccupied, awaiting conversion into accommodation for asylum seekers. The original contractors for the job had gone into liquidation, and a new but shortened tender process had only just started. The driver had a set of keys for the block, and for the fifth floor flat that they climbed up to.

“Nae lifts man; nae electricity at aw. But there's a couple o’ wee solar gairden lights. Ye’ve goat tae remember tae leave them oot on the veranda durin’ the day tae charge up. They don't gie ye much light, but enough fir whit yehs wid need, man.”

Craig looked around. It wasn't a bad gaff. In one room there were even two beds that had been left by the last tenants before the building was emptied, and that hadn't quite reached one of the two skips sitting directly below. They were already filling up with all the shite from miles around, an open invitation for opportunists wanting to dump anything from discarded bikes to a dead cat. The previous occupants must have been healthy cunts, as there was an old exercise bike which was past its best, with a cracked saddle and one pedal, and a weightlifter's bench oozing stuffing from the torn, black, padded PVC cushion. There were a few weights lying about, and two of the lighter ones were on the ends of the long, rusting metal lifting bar that lay across the bench's side supports.

“Don't be doin' too much weights, man,” joked the driver, “it's no guid fur ye.” He laughed, and Craig joined in.

“This is the berries man, the dug's baws. Thanks, man.”

“Nae probs, mate, they'll probably no' start workin' on this place fur anither month, onyway.” He moved towards the door, turning and throwing a set of keys towards Craig before leaving. Craig immediately set about getting ready to cook up. The lighter, the spoon, the syringe and needle were sitting on top of the bed alongside one of the two packets the driver had given him. Before he started, he rushed over to the window, swung it half open and looked down, to see the driver crossing the tarmacked pavement to the parking space the BMW sat in.

He shouted down, “Hey man, whit's yer name, mister?”

The driver opened his door then turned and looked up at Craig, whose head was sticking out the window.

“Just call me Jacko.”

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Eddie and Catherine's third meeting took place in Eddie's flat. She arrived exactly on time, a point noted by Eddie in her favour, dressed in her normal efficient manner, porting her shoulder bag and a file storage box full of the case files.

“Here, let me take those. Come in and sit down.” He showed her into his living room, a large south-facing room with a panoramic bay window facing Brodie Park. The room retained most of the original features affirming its Victorian origins, and it had been restored in an understated fashion, combining modern furniture with painted floorboards and an ornate fireplace. Catherine glanced approvingly around, sat down and accepted the offer of a cup of coffee, which Eddie went to make in the large kitchen across the hall.

Their previous meeting had been in the CID office in the police station in the centre of Paisley, where she had a small cubicle and desk, but there were too many distractions and she was getting comments from some of the more obnoxious male officers about taking up with a vet because honest hardworking policemen apparently weren't good enough for her. Most of them at some point had tried it on with her, since the messy break-up with her long-time boyfriend, latterly fiancé, now a two-timing sergeant in C division.

Eddie, on the other hand, was all business, although pleasant enough with it. In their phone conversations and meetings, he would be impatient to get past the small talk, and down to discussing any new developments in the case.

On his side, he had come up with some interesting new leads that would be worth following up. The extra data he'd received from the SSPCA contained a few details that excited Eddie. There was a cluster of cases near Paisley, where several cats and one dog, had been poisoned with antifreeze over the previous seven years. There had been a series of animal mutilations in the same locality over an even longer period. The levels were above what might have been expected as the typical background rate of sporadic accidental poisonings, deliberate killing of cats by disgruntled cat haters, and random acts of violence and torture of all species of animals that seems to be endemic in human culture. Eddie thought that this could mean that it *was* the same person who was responsible for these cases and the ones he had

already investigated, and if it was, this would tie the culprit to the Paisley area for a much longer time. It could be that there was more chance that a witness would be found who could identify him. It meant going through all the data in detail to see if any of the cases fitted in with the way their suspect worked.

Catherine's search through police archives hadn't been as productive, but there was one possible case that could be added. The SSPCA hadn't been involved because it had come to light during a police investigation that didn't initially involve any animals.

About four years previously, a routine call out to the aftermath of a warehouse fire, which was flagged up as a possible arson, led to the discovery of two bricked up cats. In a corner of the warehouse, which had been used for the long-term storage of MOD surplus items and had, to all intents and purposes, been forgotten about, a dummy wall had been built. Part of the warehouse wall behind this had collapsed due to the heat from the burning cladding, and in the exposed recess the police found two dead cats. One was a dismembered skeleton, but the other was desiccated, remaining reasonably well preserved. There was a capping slab on the recess, which was about eight feet tall, and eighteen inches square, almost like a short chimney. The police concluded that, as there was no access in and out of the recess, the cats had been incarcerated deliberately, or had become trapped by accident while the structure was being built. The latter was unlikely, as the structure was fairly compact, and two cats would have been observed entering into it and, in addition, the structure seemed to have no other function other than to contain the unfortunate animals. The bricks and the mortar used in the construction appeared to be much more modern than those in the original warehouse, so it was thought that somebody had got access to the warehouse, had built the brick enclosure and then dropped two cats in it. Whether or not the person had kept checking the cats over the days from the open top, or whether they had simply put the capping slab on and left them to die unobserved, the police could only guess.

It must have been winter when the cats died; only in cold weather would a cat's body not have decomposed before it dried out.

The police never found the arsonist and they certainly weren't likely to find the person who had killed the cats, as there were no records of any further investigation of the case. Eddie surmised that one of the cats had either died or been killed by the other cat, and the surviving animal had eaten the dead one – the body had been totally dismembered and some of the bones had been gnawed. It would have only delayed the second cat's demise by one or two weeks, and it died in quite an emaciated state, according to the notes, even accounting for the water loss that occurred during the desiccation process. Whatever happened, both cats suffered horribly, and Eddie could easily believe that it could have been the same sad individual involved in all of the cases.

There were no post-mortem results and the cats had long been disposed of, so it was impossible to know if there was any use of antifreeze, but the longest surviving cat couldn't have been fatally poisoned as it wouldn't then have survived long enough for the effects of starvation to be so marked.

Eddie renewed his appeal that employment records should be checked and emphasised that this time it could be much more focused, as there was a distinct possibility that the killer worked in the building trade and may have had some easy way of gaining access to the warehouse legitimately, but it fell on deaf ears.

Catherine's initial visit to Dundee had been unproductive in providing new evidence, but she had made good contacts in the Dundee force that she felt might prove useful at a later stage.

Eddie had trawled through an online business directory and had made a list on his computer of all the service stations, branches of Halfords and independent auto stores in Paisley and the surrounding area, and he repeated the process for Dundee. He sent a form letter to every one of them outlining his concern about a serial poisoner and requested any information about unusual buying patterns or out of season purchases. He got little response, despite following most of the letters up with a phone call.

Catherine offered to try, with the clout of a police investigation behind her, but said she would have to run it past her sergeant first as she was racking up more hours than had been originally allotted to her for this investigation.

In the event, when she was called in to see the sergeant and the inspector the next day and asked to report on the progress of the investigation, she was told that it was being pulled. When she asked for the reasons, they said that it was because of a combination of an extremely large caseload for the department, and a poor projected outcome for this particular enquiry.

When she phoned Eddie he was livid, but he kept his anger under control, not wanting to take it out on her. In a way, he'd known this was coming, and he couldn't quite decide what he was most disappointed about: the investigation being closed down or the fact that he wouldn't be working with Catherine Douglas any more.

"I'll keep going," he told her, determined to let her see that he wasn't quitting on it. "I can probably get a bit of help from one of the SSPCA inspectors. I've convinced them that this is all connected, and I think they'd be loath to let it slip away now, without covering every angle."

"Eddie, I can still help you with this, just not officially. I'm just as committed to this as you are; I've had cats of my own, as you know, and I think it's important to get the guy who's doing this to these poor animals."

Eddie was relieved and pleased. He enjoyed working with Catherine. He felt that they made a good team, and he enjoyed her company, thinking of her already as a friend as well as a colleague.

"I'll call you, and we can meet up. It will have to be at the practice or at your flat, as I can't be seen moonlighting on this one. Technically it wouldn't be wrong unless I got caught using police resources, but it would be heavily frowned upon by the brass."

They agreed to meet the following week, when both their off duties coincided, and left it at that.

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Craig awoke with the mother of all hangovers, and in a very strange position. His head was throbbing, his mouth tasted awful, he felt sick and he had a tight knot in his stomach that was just short of a cramp, but the strangest thing, apart from his slightly blurred vision, was that he was unable to move his arms or legs. He tried, but he seemed to be stuck – he could feel something tight around his ankles and around his arms, which were stretched out to the side and resting uncomfortably on something hard between his elbows and his shoulders. In addition, he was kneeling on the floor, but bent at the waist to lie face down on a soft and padded surface that supported his torso from his pelvis to his neck. He tried to struggle again, but realised that he was securely tied, and as he craned his neck to look under him, he could see that it was probably the weight bench he was strapped to.

"Hoy," he shouted, struggling, trying to look left and right to see where he was and who was there. Every time he moved it hurt more. "What the fuck's goin' on, man?"

There was only silence. He knew now that he was in the squat and tried to remember anything that could explain how he got into the position he was now in. Surely he hadn't got so wasted that he had entered into some sort of sexual game with some cunt? *Aw fuck, ah hope it wisnae a bloke*, he thought, but he still had his jeans on, and there was no anal discomfort to speak of.

Gradually, as his brain became less fuzzled, he started to remember vague moments from the night before. As soon as his benefactor had driven away, Craig had cooked up the gear and shot up, and it was the best of junk, not like some of the shite he'd had to make do with in prison.

At some point, the driver, Jacko, had returned, letting himself in. He must have had spare keys for the block and for the flat. He had a couple of Tesco bags with him, from which he produced a dozen bottles of booze; *one of thae fancy alcopops. Bright fucken blue. Whit wis wrang wi' good ol' Buckie?* Craig would have rather tapped the guy for some more gear but knew better than to push it, so when he was offered a bottle, he accepted it gratefully. The guy pulled out a couple of large bags of Doritos, and chucked one to Craig, along with a bottle opener.

"Listen man, ah'm no a homo, just in case ye think ... ye know whit a mean, man."

Jacko laughed. "Craig, yer quite safe, ah'm no interested in ye that way, ah'm strictly a fanny man masel', so yer aw right."

Craig had laughed, relieved that he wasn't expected to put out. He'd had to give a guy in prison a hand job on a number of occasions to get drugs, but had gagged at the critical point when he'd been told that he wouldn't be getting any more drugs for anything less than a blow job, and his supplier had relented and contented himself with Craig's hand again.

Craig sipped from his bottle, relishing the taste after being so long without a decent drink. Alcohol was available in prison, but it was too easy for the screws to smell it on your breath, so he'd done without, sticking instead to whatever drugs he could get hold of.

The first couple of bottles had tasted wonderful, but to be honest, he had gone off the taste after that and had been desperate to ask Jacko for some more gear. His new mentor, if that was the word, had knocked back quite a few bottles as well, and seemed keen to chew the fat with Craig, talking about prison, life outside, women, football and drugs.

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The last thing Craig remembered before waking up strapped to the workout bench was Jacko telling him that he'd take care of him, and laughing as he said it.

Craig was by now really worried. *It must have been that cunt Jacko, or maybe some fud frae one of thae ither flats, tyin' him up fir a laugh.* He shouted again.

"Haw, ya bastards, ye. Let me oot o' here; ye've had yer laughs; it's no funny any mair."

Nothing. Just silence, and a distant lorry grunting up the hill, grinding its way through the gears.

He nearly shit himself when a voice no more than a couple of feet behind him broke the silence.

"Well, Craig, sonny boy. Just what the fuck have ye got yersel' intae?"

Jacko. The cunt y bawed bastard! It was him all along.

“Just get me out o’ this, Jacko. Please, man, ah’m as sair as fuck here, an’ a need a piss, man, an’ maybe a shite.”

“Now, Craig, ah think that’s the least o’ yer worries. Why d’ye think yer here?”

“Ah don’t fucken know, man, whit huv ah done tae you, fur fucks sake?” A sudden thought struck Craig. “Aw, man, ye found the tenner in ma pocket. Ah didnae mean tae keep it; it must huv got stuck in the corner, man, Ah noticed it later on, an’ ah didnae want tae say nuthin’ in case ye thought ah’d been lyin’ tae ye. Ah’m sorry, man.”

“Craig, ah knew ye kept some cash back, aw you wee jakey bastards always do. Anyhow, that’s no why yer here.” Jacko got up off the chair he’d been sitting on for the last few hours, waiting for Craig to wake up, and walked round to stand in front of him.

Craig stretched his head back painfully to see Jacko, but he could only see as far up as his chest. Jacko reached down, grabbed a handful of hair, and pulled Craig’s head back another couple of inches to help them make eye contact. Spittle frothed at Craig’s mouth, and he screamed until Jacko let him go. His head fell, and his throat pressed against the front of the bench, momentarily choking him.

“So ye need a piss and a shite, do ye?” Craig sensed Jacko moving behind him again, and felt a sudden pull on his belt. There was a ripping sound, then a sharp pain on one of his arse-cheeks, and coldness as his now halved trousers and boxers were pulled down to his knees. *The cunt must have cut them with a Stanley knife or something.* He could feel the warm drip of blood from his buttock run down the side of his leg.

“Naw. Naw. Naw. Yer goin’ tae rape me, ya dirty cunt, ye. Ye said ye wernie a poof, ya fucken arse-bandit, ye.”

“Craig, Craig. A bit less o’ the abuse, please. Ah think ye’ve forgot whit position yer in. Ah’d be more polite if ah were you.” He moved round in front again, and squatted down, smiling at Craig. “Ah’ll tell ye a story, jakey boy. How are ye feelin’?”

“Like shite, ya cunt. Whit dae ye fucken think, man?”

“Do ye knaw why ye feel like shite?”

Craig didn’t answer.

“Ye think that ye’ve got a bit o’ a hangover fae the drink, an’ yer also feelin’ rough ‘cos ye need a score, naw?”

Still no answer.

“Sulkin’, eh? Well, anyway, see if ah wis tae tell ye that if a let ye go now, ye wid die anyway, whit wid ye say tae that?”

“Yer talkin’ shite, man; utter fucken shite.”

“Oh, yer speakin’ tae me again, ur ye? Well, ah’ve got bad news fur ye, ah’m no tellin’ porkies, yer goin’ tae die whitever happens.”

Craig had gradually come to the same conclusion, and was now terrified. A trickle of piss came away from him involuntarily, and he could feel the previously mild cramps in his bowels becoming stronger.

“Ah really am goin’ tae shite, man; let me up tae go tae the bog or ah cannae promise tae keep it in.”

“Go ahead, Craig, it’s no matterin’ a fuck tae me. Ah don’t live here or nuthin’, an’ anyhow, ah wis tellin’ ye why yer as good as deid.”

Jacko reached over for one of the bottles from the night before. Craig noticed with horror that he was wearing medical gloves. He put the bottle on the floor inches in front of Craig’s face. “See this? Did ye enjoy yer wee swallow last night? Don’t answer; I saw ye lappin’ it up. It wisnae sae good efter the first couple, wis it? D’ye know why?” he paused to look at Craig’s uncomprehending face, then continued. “The rest of the ones ye drank wernae strictly kosher. More of a kinda cocktail, ye might say. Maistly antifreeze, tae be totally frank wi’ ye, wi’ just enough o’ the real stuff tae keep the taste fae bein’ too different.”

Tears were starting to roll down Craig’s face from his bloodshot eyes. He didn’t quite understand the full implications of what Jacko was telling him, but it was beginning to sink in.

“Well, that antifreeze stuff, it’s great fur motors, keeps ma BMW goin’ in winter, man. Doesnae do people much guid, though. Fucks ye up, right royal, an’ there’s nae cure, even if ye get tae a hospital, they just have tae haud yer haun til ye die.”

“Why wid ye want tae ... dae that tae me? Whit huv ah ... done tae ye?” Craig now spoke through loud sobs, snot bubbling and pouring from his nose.

“That’s the funny thing, Craig; ye’ve done nothing.” Jacko paused for emphasis. “Ah’ll admit ah don’t like wee junkie bams like you, but that’s by-the-by. Naw, this is just whit ah dae, an’ you invited yersel tae the party, wee man.”

Jacko got up and walked over to the window. Craig heard him picking up the bar with the weights on. He came round, and did a few squats in front of Craig.

Craig could hardly watch. Apart from it becoming almost physically impossible to strain his now exhausted neck muscles to keep his head high enough to see Jacko, he was having very bad thoughts about what the bastard was going to do with the weights, and he was feeling sicker and sicker by the minute. *Maybe that cunt was tellin’ the truth.*

Jacko finished his squats, laid the bar down on the floor, and started to unscrew the locking wheel at one end. He removed the two weights from that end of the bar, and showed it to Craig, but his head had drooped almost to the floor and his eyes were closed.

He propped the bar against the wall and picked up a bottle of water from the floor. He took a long drink, then poured the rest of the bottle over Craig’s head. It had the desired effect. It revived Craig a little and he groaned and cried out. Jacko couldn’t make out exactly what he was saying, but Craig, for the first time in his life, was praying. He didn’t know who or what he was pleading with for his life, making mumbled promises and offering anything for the big deal. “Just get me fucken out of here, man, an’ ah’ll get masel’ cleaned up an’ live wi’ ma mither. Ah’ll get a job. Ah don’t want tae die, fur fuck’s sake.”

He became slowly aware that Jacko had moved away from where he could see him, and he could hear sounds behind him, then nothing. *Had he gone?*

Then Jacko’s voice cut through everything,

“My advice tae you, wee man, is tae relax and take a deep breath, ’cos this might be a wee bit uncomfortable.”

Craig screamed. He knew he was going to be raped, and vowed to himself that if he ever got out of this alive, he would search down this cunt, and kill him.

Jacko stood behind him, spat on his hand and smeared the end of the weight bar with his phlegm, then gently slipped the tip between Craig's cheeks until it rested on his anus. Craig screamed again, and tried to struggle, but he was too weak by now, and tied too firmly to the bench to move much.

Jacko put all his weight behind the weights on the other end of the bar and pushed. For a few seconds, Craig made no sound at all other than a desperate gasp, as he fought to get air into his lungs. The pain was intense and at his very core. When he did finally stop breathing in, he let out a scream that would have woken all the residents of the flats in the block, had there been any. Jacko let the bar down, which caused the end that was inside Craig to suddenly angle upwards against the inside of his spine, ramping up the agony to a new level. Even though there was no one to hear, he came forward to stuff a rag in Craig's mouth and wrapped his head with duct tape, to stop it falling out.

“Can’t huv any passers by hearin’ ye, can we?”

“MMMMNNNNNNNNNGGGGGGGGG.”

“Sorry, mate, ah cannae really make that out, an’ tae be honest, ah don’t gie a fuck. Ah wis just bein’ rhetorical.’

Craig’s body arched in spasm as far as the restraints would let it. A little relief came when Jacko lifted the end of the bar from the floor and held it level, but it was only a prelude to Craig’s further torture, as he put his shoulder behind the weight and pushed again. Craig vomited as the pole inside him pushed further up, pressing on his stomach. He was pretty sure that all sort of things inside him were ruptured, but he couldn’t even think of a name for any of them.

Jacko seemed to be able to read his mind, because he started to give him a commentary on what was happening to him.

“Ah reckon it’s in about a fit noo; that’s quite a lot o’ metal bar tae be stuck up yer jacksie, ma friend.” He paused. “Now, ah’m nae expert, but a reckon yer rectum’s mair than likely burst noo, an’ yer shit is floatin’ aboot inside ye, which isnae that healthy.”

Craig struggled desperately, sweating profusely with the effort and the pain, alternately moaning and trying to scream. His bladder, which must have been intact, had emptied and soaked the carpet below. Vomit had come down his nose because of the gag, making it burn, and it was more difficult to breathe.

“Ah’m gonnae shove it in a wee bit more. Ye might feel somethin’ a bit like heartburn, only worse, an’ there is a possibility, if I’m a bit heavy handed, that ye’ll maybe lose a lot o’ blood internal like, very quickly, an’ pass oot, an’ maybe die, but ah’ll try and keep ye goin’ as long as ah can.”

Craig arched his neck and tried to look round, grimacing with pain and hatred. He felt Jacko pushing again; there was an overwhelming pressure in the middle of his chest then a deep ripping sensation that released some of the pressure, but only added to the pain. His head slumped forward as he lost consciousness, mercifully.

If he had been able to listen, he would have heard the scrape of a chair on lino flooring, and footsteps from the kitchen into the living room, then Jacko's voice.

"Aw Spencey, man, ah'm sorry. Ah think ah've killed the cunt."

A new voice spoke out, one that it was doubtful Craig would ever hear.

"Jacko, yer aw right, man, ye did yer best. It's no' your fault if he's deid." The newcomer, also wearing surgical gloves, reached under Craig's head and pinched his nose hard. A feeble groan came from Craig's mouth. "Anyhow, ah don't think ye've killed him yet." He stood still and watched for a few seconds. "Look, he's breathin'."

Sure enough, Craig's breathing, which had seemed to stop completely for a few minutes, was now starting again, and was increasing in tempo rapidly, and becoming ragged again.

"He's comin' round, Jacko, ah told ye."

"Right, will ah shove this right up now?"

"Naw, gie it a minute, it'll be better if he knaws whit's happenin', the wee cunt. But fair dos, Jacko, ye've done it just like we talked about."

Jacko grinned. "Thanks, Spencey, ah don't know why you don't want tae dae somethin'; ah get aw the fun, and you just sit an' watch."

"Jacko, that's the bit ah like. Watchin' you enjoyin' yoursel', just the way we planned it. Now, the cunt's nearly awake again; away an' shove that pole in as far as it can go, you know whit ah want tae see, don't ye?"

"Aye, ah knaw, but I might need a haun. It's gettin' awfy tight."

"Hit it with thon other weight if it willnae go; ye'll manage right enough."

Craig was slipping in and out of consciousness, but he was sure there were two people talking. Through a blur of pain and weakness, he knew one was Jacko. There was definitely another man speaking; *perhaps somewan has come tae stop all this. Surely if they get me tae hospital, they can fix me up.*

A metallic thud deep within his body put paid to any more thoughts about getting out of this alive. He screamed as a second blow reverberated throughout his whole torso, and he realised that Jacko, or someone else, was hammering the bar into him, like a nail into wood. The pain had started again. It had never gone, but in between times when the bar wasn't being forced through his body, it subsided a bit, although it had now become incredibly painful to breathe in. Or out. With every thump it got worse, and his windpipe seemed to be on fire. He tried to suck air in but the pain was so intense that he had to fight hard to suppress the need to cough and clear his airway. His last thought before he lost consciousness again was that he could feel the pole pushing up through the base of his neck.

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"He's still alive. Get a doc up as quick as you can, and nobody moves anything here."

The distant voice reached Craig, but he didn't believe it. There had been too many false hopes, and each one that was shattered left him further in the depths of despair. He was in the same position and in the same place as before. He still expected Jacko to appear in front of him, grinning viciously.

But as he drifted in and out of consciousness, he gradually became aware that the people trying to help him were not imaginary. Because of the severity of his injuries, and the fact that he had a metal pole passing through almost the whole length of his body, it took the doctor a long time to get him prepared for transport to hospital, and even longer for the ambulance men and paramedics to get him down to the stairs. They'd had to sedate him before they moved him but just before the doctor had given him the drugs through the IV tube that the paramedics had inserted that would knock him out, they had allowed the police to have a word with him. Unfortunately, Craig's ability to breathe, far less speak, was so heavily compromised that he could do no more than grunt and mouth answers to the few questions they managed to ask before they were told that enough was enough, the patient was becoming too distressed and that they would have to question him after he was out of danger.

That never happened. Craig died, aged twenty-four, two days later. On arrival at hospital, his blood tests had demonstrated severe acute kidney failure, which had required twenty-four hours of dialysis to enable him to be taken to theatre the next day. In a complex operation, lasting over twelve hours and involving four surgeons, they successfully removed the bar but, despite further dialysis, his kidney function deteriorated rapidly and he died less than twelve hours after surgery, from a combination of kidney failure and overwhelming and out-of-control peritonitis and septicaemia.

The investigation changed from one of attempted murder to a full-blown murder inquiry.

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The website also contains a copy of the glossary and slang dictionary, with audio.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Peggy Ann Arthurs for being the first person to read the book, for being so supportive of my writing, and for all her helpful suggestions about promoting my books. Big thanks also to Greig for helping with my CID research, to Tel G. for checking all the lower speak, to Cara for the veterinary research and to Ronnie Milton for background on the Renfrew area.

The comments and feedback that I got from my other proof readers were very much appreciated. They were Michael, Elaine, Mark Johnstone, Theresa Murphy, Hamish, Mary, Julie and Katrina.

Thanks also go to Julie Lewthwaite, who edited the book for me, and to Keith Nixon for recommending Julie and his words of advice.

Thanks to Cat for the cover, again, although her comments about my valiant attempts at artwork bordered on the rude.

And once again, thanks to my wife, children and all my extended family and friends for their general support and encouragement.

GLOSSARY

Medical and Veterinary terms

[Abdomen] The body cavity that contains the liver, kidneys, stomach, intestines, spleen, pancreas and bladder, etc.

[Abdominal] Relating to or of the abdomen

[Addison's disease] The adrenal gland produces insufficient hormones to control levels of glucose, sodium and potassium

[Addisonian crisis] Sudden collapse when Addison's disease becomes critical

[Adrenal glands] A pair of small gland near the kidneys which produce the hormones aldosterone and cortisol

[Aldosterone] A hormone that controls the electrolytes, sodium and potassium, in the blood

[ALT] A chemical in the blood that is used to measure liver function

[Anal gland] A scent gland near an animal's anus used to mark territory. Sometimes becomes blocked or over-full

[Anti-emetics] Drugs used to control vomiting

[Assays] Measurement of levels of chemicals, usually in the blood

[AST] A chemical in the blood that is used to measure liver function

[Ataxia] Imbalance, lack of fine control of movement

[Barium study] Still or multiple frame X-rays taken after barium has been given to show gastrointestinal function

[Bile acids] A chemical in the blood that can is used to measure liver function

[Biochemistry] A study of how biology works at a chemical level

[Blood glucose] The basic fuel carried round the body by the blood; controlled by insulin, cortisol and other hormones

[Carpal] The wrist area

[CPL] Cat Protection League, a UK-wide cat welfare society, now called Cat Protection

[Contusion] Bruising

[Cortisol] A hormone that controls blood glucose and many other chemical levels in response to stress

[Cranium] The part of the skull that contains the brain

[Creatinine] A chemical in the blood that is used to measure kidney function, and also muscle damage

[Cruciate ligament] There are two of these ligaments in each knee; rupture of one causes severe lameness

[Deposits] Small amounts of a substance laid down within an organ, or in a tube such as an artery or the intestine

[Depression fracture] Usually the skull, when broken bone is forced into the brain by an external impact

[Dialysis] External cleansing the blood of waste products when the kidneys fail to perform this function

[Diaphragm] The muscular sheet that separates the abdomen and the thorax, allowing breathing to take place

[Differential diagnoses] A list of possible causes for a group of symptoms

[Distally] Further away from the torso, usually on a limb

[DNA] The chemical chain within a cell nucleus that is the blueprint for an individual, and is unique to them

[E. Coli] One of many bacteria that can cause serious blood poisoning, an infection called septicaemia

[ECG] Electrocardiograph, a measurement of the electrical activity of the heart

[Electrolytes] Ions within the blood that keep us alive, including sodium, potassium, chloride and calcium

[Entire] A male animal that has not been castrated

[Ethylene glycol] A chemical, similar to ordinary alcohol, which is used as antifreeze, and is highly toxic

[Exotics] Animals kept as pets, excluding dogs and cats, such as chinchillas, lizards, snakes and monkeys

[Fibrosis] An organ's normal tissue is replaced by scar tissue due to disease or trauma

[Fix] Preservation of a tissue by a chemical, usually prior to microscopic examination

[Foramen magnum] The opening at the back of the cranium, into the spinal canal

[Formol saline] A solution used to preserve pathological specimens

[Frontal area] The forward part of the cranium \ brain

[Gastric foreign body] A swallowed object in the stomach, usually plastic, metal or similar

[Gross examination] Inspection of something pathological with the naked eye

[Haematology] The examination of blood cells

[Heart base] The part of the heart where all the vessels leave and enter

[Histological] Examination of a stained thin section of tissue using a microscope

[Histopathology] Microscopic examination of diseased tissue

[Hypoglycaemia] Low blood sugar, usually as the result of too much insulin

[Insuloma] Insulin producing tumour of the pancreas

[Intracranial] Inside the cavity formed by the bones of the skull

[IV drip] Fluid therapy given intravenously

[Mediastinum] The central part of the chest between the lungs that contains the heart, trachea and oesophagus

[Mesenteric] Contained within the thin sheet that connects the intestines to the body

[Metacarpal] The bones immediately distal to the wrist

[Metatarsal] The bones immediately distal to the ankle

[Microchip] A small electronic device injected into an animal as a unique identifier

[MRI scan] Magnetic Resonance Imaging: a way of visualising the internal structures of the body

[Neuter] An operation to remove a male or female animal's ability to produce offspring

[Non-pyrexia] Does not have a high temperature, or fever

[Oesophagus] The tube that passes food from the pharynx to the stomach

[Oxalate crystals] A type of crystal that grows within the kidney after antifreeze is ingested

[Parvovirus] A serious viral infection that causes severe diarrhoea and vomiting

[Pathology] The study of disease; the effect a disease has on the body

[Petit mal] A mild form of epileptic fit

[Pharynx] The part of the throat behind the tongue, before the oesophagus

[Phlebitis] Inflammation of the veins

[Physiology] A study of how biology works at a functional level

[Proximal] Closer to the torso, usually on a limb

[Pulmonary] To do with the lungs

[Rectal lavage] Where fluid is pumped into the rectum, then flushed out

[Renal failure] If kidney function falls below a certain level, filtering of the blood becomes compromised

[Spermatid] Connected with sperm production, or with the sperm themselves

[SSPCA] Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

[Syncope] Short period of missed heartbeats leading to a brief collapse

[Talus, calcaneus and the navicular bone] Some of the bones that make up the ankle

[Tarsal] Referring to the ankle

[Thoracic] Within the chest

[Thoracic opening] The small gap in the chest wall at the neck that the trachea and oesophagus pass through

[Thorax] The chest

[Toxicity] How poisonous a substance is

[Toxicology] Testing to determine the levels of a poisonous substance

[Trachea] The windpipe, carrying air to the lungs

[Transverse] Refers to something aligned across the body or limb

[Tubules of the kidney] Microscopic tubes that concentrate urine and filter impurities

[Unfixed] Tissue sent to the lab without being preserved, usually to test for bacteria or toxic substances

[Urea] A safe way for the body to excrete the by-products of protein metabolism; rises in levels of urea in the blood may indicate kidney failure

[Viral myocarditis] A virus infection of the heart muscle which can cause heart failure

Police terms and acronyms

[Actions] Police officers' records of their daily findings

[Black light] Ultraviolet light that shows up various bodily secretions

[CCTV] Close Circuit TeleVision

[CID] Criminal Investigation Department

[DC] Detective Constable

[DCI] Detective Chief Inspector

[DI] Detective Inspector

[DS] Detective Sergeant

[E-fit] An electronically assembled estimation of a criminal's appearance from eye witness reports

[ID parade] Identity parade

[PC] Police Constable, the lowest ranked uniformed police officer

[PF] Procurator Fiscal, the prosecuting arm of Scottish law

[PNC] Police National Computer; a database of criminals, wanted vehicles, missing persons, etc.

[Probationary year] The twelve months after police college when a new police officer works under supervision

[Productions Officer] The officer overseeing the material evidence relating to the investigation.

[Remanded in custody] A prisoner is sent from a court to be kept in prison

[SOC team] Scene of crime team, who complete the forensic examination of a crime scene

Glasgow Slang

[Aboot] About

[Ae] Of

[Aff] Off

[Ah] I

[Ah'll] I'll

[Ain] Own

[An'] And

[An' aw] As well

[Anither] Another

[Arse-bandit] Gay man

[Askin'] Asking

[Auld] Old

[Aw] All

[Aye] Yes, Always

[Awready] Already

[Baith] Both

[Bam] Nutter, stupid

[Barras] Glasgow's famous East End market

[Bas] Short for bastard

[Bein'] Being

[Boattle] Bottle

[Boufin'] Smelly or disgusting

[Broo money] Social Security payments

[Buckie] Buckfast fortified wine, favourite of young Scots drinkers

[Burd] Woman \ girlfriend

[Burst ma baws] Annoy me

[Calm the beans] Calm down

[Cannae] Cannot

[Comin'] Coming

[`Cos] Because

[Coupon] Face

[Dae] Do

[Deid] Dead

[Dilutin' juice] Concentrated fruit squash

[Do-ins] Beatings

[Doon] Down

[Doss] Sleep \ find a bed

[Drinkin'] Drinking

[Dyin'] Dying

[Efter] After

[Fae] From

[Fanny] Woman \ sex

[Faur] Far

[Filth] Police, derogatory term

[Fir] For

[Fit] Foot, twelve inches

[Frae] From

[Fucken] Fucking

[Fuckwit] Derogatory term for someone stupid

[Fur] For

[Furst] First

[Fuzz] Police, derogatory term
[Gaff] Home \ house \ place to stay
[Gaggin'] Desperate \ needing
[Gear] Drugs
[Gettin'] Getting
[Gie] Give
[Gimme] Give me
[Goat] Got
[Goin'] Going
[Gonnae] Going to
[Greet] Cry
[Grun] Ground
[Guid] Good
[Hadnae\hudnae] Hadn't
[Hame] Home
[Haud] Hold
[Haun] Hand
[Headin'] Heading
[Heid] Head
[Hoose] House
[Hud] Had
[Hunner] Hundred
[Huv] Have
[Huvn't] Haven't
[Huvvin'] Having
[Intae] Into
[Isnae] Is not
[Ithers] Others
[Jacksie] Backside

[Jakey] Alcoholic \ street person
[Jestin'] Kidding
[Jist] Just
[Kiddin'] Kidding
[Knew] Know
[Knawn] Known
[Lappin'] Consuming \ soaking
[Lend a few quid] Borrow some money
[Ma] My
[Ma] Mother
[Mair] More
[Maistly] Mostly
[Man] Often added to the end of the sentence, addressing the listener
[Masel'] Myself
[Maw] Mother
[Maybees] Maybe \ Perhaps
[Melted] Battered \ hit firmly
[Mind] Remember
[Minge] Vagina \ derogatory term for woman
[Missus] Wife
[Mister] term for a child addressing a man
[Mither] Mother
[Mooth] Mouth
[Nae] No
[Nae probs] No problems \ OK
[Naebody] Nobody
[Needin'] Needing
[No] not
[Noo] Now

[Nuthin'] Nothing

[O'] Of

[Oan] On

[Offy] Off-licence \ liquor store

[Onywan] Anyone

[Onyway] Anyway

[Oot] Out

[Park yer arse] Sit down

[Perr] Pair

[Pig] Police, derogatory term

[Plook] Spot, Pimple

[Polis] Police

[Poontang] Girls \ sex

[Ripplin' the pish] Taking the mickey

[Roon] Round

[Rozzer] Police, derogatory term

[Score] Get drugs

[Scran] Food

[Seen] Saw

[Shirt-lifter] Gay man

[Shitehole] Disgusting building \ room

[Sleekit] Untrustworthy, slimy

[Smack] Heroin

[Snidey] Sneaky

[Somewan] Someone

[Spanner] Daftie

[Special brew] Very strong lager, favoured by alcoholics

[Stayin] Staying

[Stevo] Nickname. Many names are shortened and have 'o' added on

[Stupit] Stupid
[Sumfin' / somethin'] Something
[Swallae] Drink
[Tae] To
[Tanned] Drank \ beat up \ break into
[Tap] Ask to borrow something
[Taxi ferr] Taxi Fare
[The berries] Brilliant
[The dug's baws] Equally brilliant
[Therr] There
[They'rr] They're
[Thon] That \ Those
[Topped] Killed
[Trustin'] trusting
[Til] Until
[Voddy] Vodka
[Watter] Water
[Wan] One
[Weans] Children
[Wee] Small
[Wernie] Weren't
[Wherr] Where
[Whit] What
[Wi'] With
[Willnae] Will not
[Wir] were
[Wis] Was
[Wrang] Wrong
[Wummin] Woman \ women

[Wunderin'] Wondering

[Wunnered] Wondered

[Wur] Were

[Ya] You

[Ye] You (singular)

[Yehs] You (plural)

[Yer] Your

[Yersel'] Yourself