

THE SECOND NOVEL IN THE PENDRAGON TRILOGY

JACKCB



THE SPRINGBOARD

WHEN THE 'TALENT' WON'T DO WHAT THEY WERE
TOLD TO DO FIRST TIME AROUND...
... YOU NEED TO DO ANOTHER TAKE.

② OPERATION PENDRAGON

THE SPRINGBOARD

**WHISTLE BLOWERS GOING MISSING
PRESUMED DEAD...**

**THE GOVERNMENT COVERING UP THE
CARTELS THAT OPERATE THROUGH THE
MEDIA EMPIRES OF PENDRAGON MEDIA
AND JVS MEDIA...**

**THE FRONTS FOR ORGANISED CRIMINALS
ARE NOW SLOWLY FALLING APART
AT THE SEAMS...**

**THE PENDRAGON TRILOGY
1 - FIFTY-TWO BY ELEVEN
2 - THE SPRINGBOARD
3 - THE EDIT CLAUSE**

**E-BOOK
VERSION**

**JACKCB
OPERATION PENDRAGON**

The Operation Pendragon Series
Part One – Fifty-Two By Eleen
Part Two – The Springboard
Part Three – The Edit Clause
The Prequel – The Dark Pitch
The Intel - The Crime Association

Other Crime Thrillers by JackCB
No Fixed Abode

For my Father Colin

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When the 'Talent' won't do what they were told to do
first time around....
...you need to do another take.

The Follow Up to Fifty-Two By Eleven

Places throughout Scotland I wrote Bridging The Gap:

- Chapter One – Loch Lomond
- Chapter Two – Loch Lomond
- Chapter Three – Oban
- Chapter Four – Glencoe
- Chapter Five – Fort William
- Chapter Six – Mallaig
- Chapter Seven – Dornie
- Chapter Eight – Sheildaig
- Chapter Nine – Ardesie
- Chapter Ten – Ullapool
- Chapter Eleven – Ullapool, Ardmair
- Chapter Twelve – Little Assynt
- Chapter Thirteen – Lairg
- Chapter Fourteen – Durness
- Chapter Fifteen – Sangobeg
- Chapter Sixteen – Sangobeg
- Chapter Seventeen – Thurso
- Chapter Eighteen – Thurso Library
- Chapter Nineteen – Thurso Library
- Chapter Twenty – Dunnet Peninsula
- Chapter Twenty-One – Dunnet Peninsula
- Chapter Twenty-Two – Dunnet Peninsula
- Chapter Twenty-Three – Thurso Library
- Chapter Twenty-Four – John O’Groats
- Chapter Twenty-Five – John O’Groats
- Chapter Twenty-Six – Thurso Library
- Chapter Twenty-Seven – Thurso Library
- Chapter Twenty-Eight – Dunnet Peninsula
- Chapter Twenty-Nine – Dunnet Peninsula
- Chapter Thirty - Scrabster
- Chapter Thirty-One – Castle Dunoon
- Chapter Thirty-Two – Tain
- Chapter Thirty-Three - Inverness

Chapter Thirty-Four - Nairn
Chapter Thirty-Five – Lossiemouth RAF Base
Chapter Thirty-Six - Aberdeen
Chapter Thirty-Seven – Balmoral Castle
Chapter Thirty-Eight- Loch Lomond
Chapter Thirty-Nine – Faslane Naval Base
Chapter Forty – Glasgow Mitchell Library
Chapter Forty-One - Glasgow Mitchell Library
Chapter Forty-Two – Glasgow Mitchell Library
Chapter Forty-Three – Aberdeen Airport

This book is dedicated to all the
undercover secret service intelligence agents and
undercover journalists, who risk their lives on a
daily basis with no one knowing of the
hard work ~~they~~ we do,
all for the safety of our nation.

JACKCB

The Springboard

For ~~Queen~~ King and Country



By Solitude

One

The Judgement

Plumes of smoke filled the London skyline – a scene not witnessed since the Luftwaffe paid London a visit during the blitz. The glow from the setting sun illuminated the man-made cloud as it rose into the sky.

Air traffic control had now diverted the flight paths of Heathrow and London City airports and on ground level the cries of the emergency service vehicles deafened those that were fleeing the scene. The city of London police frantically doing their best to guide people to safety away from the Old Bailey.

Firefighters unable to gain access due to the smoke and flames that filled the courts from the bomb that was expertly crafted by someone that knew the reactive chemical process - and who wanted to keep a lid on the legal process.

The statue at the top of the old bailey holding the scales of justice still had her eyes blinkered - if she had been able to see what was happening below to her legal system - tears would have flowed like a weeping statue of Mary mother of God.

The ‘Seven Sorrows of Mary’ have a special place in the hearts of Irish Catholics, but it was the Seven Sisters area of Tottenham where the two Scottish

Protestant perpetrators James and Joe McInnis were now watching the result of their actions live on the BBC with the rest of the nation.

The shocked news anchor delivering what was to be another piece of history to the nation:

[Sources are now confirming that a bomb has gone off in court room four shortly after five pm this evening - we understand this to be the courtroom where the verdict of the IRA dissident Rob ***** was about to be delivered. At this time, we cannot confirm if anyone has survived but early indications suggest fifty people have been killed and many more have been injured]

A breaking news banner appeared at the bottom of the screen showing the 'death count' in numbers followed by the words 'old bailey under attack from terrorists. Sky TV had 'Criminal Justice System under attack' as their news scrolling banner.

There was nothing terroristic about this event, just the terrorized biased coverage which the conspiracy theorists could rightly argue, that if you knew the backstory, and the key facts this event was as fake as the wigs the judges wear when delivering human misery to innocent men.

"Follow me!" – the policeman shouted to Louisa's brother who was sitting in the courtroom when the bomb exploded and still in the same seat with hardly a scratch on him.

He barely heard him as the ringing in his ears from the bomb blast was overpowering.

His sister 'Louisa' who was sitting next to him in the gallery at the time was unlucky enough to have been hit directly by the shrapnel - piercing her neck - slowly unable to breath as she swallowed her own blood and fading out like the justice that was on show that day.

“Leave her - we need to get you out - it’s not safe in here!.” - the officer was now pulling at Louisa’s brother, dragging him away screaming and crying from her dead body.

The fire service was desperately trying to put out the flames that had now took hold in the court which was mostly made of oak.

A smart idea by the bombers was to use an incendiary device therefore maximising the fatalities and the damage with the fire ravaging its way through the court, choking those that didn’t have respirators on.

Rob started to come round - his head spinning from the blast which he was miraculously protected from due to the bullet-proof Perspex screen that encased around him in the dock.

The last thing he remembered was hearing his sentence of life in a mental institution - thinking he had collapsed due to the shock of the injustice and not because of the carefully timed bomb that was placed in front of the prosecution council on a desk.

“*Get up - concentrate - I’m going to help you*” - said Matt the voice in his head over the ringing in Rob’s ears - “*Stand up for fucks sake, you’re fine, just shock that’s all, we need to get out of here*” - he commanded.

Looking at the bodies strewn all over the courtroom, limbs hanging, Rob saw his barrister who had a leg missing - he wasn’t moving. The smell was unbearable,

a rubber-like tar burnt smell mixed with copper was making him gag. The court room police officers either side of him were both dead, as was the judge who was slumped in his chair with his wig comedically slanted at an angle on top of his head.

“Climb over the dock and lay down on the floor near the prosecutor’s desk – make it look like you were on the prosecution side and not the one in custody.” – Matt said - *“It will only be a matter of time before a member of the emergency services comes in and takes you out to safety – look, see that man on the floor – rummage through his pockets for his wallet and if he has a phone grab it – take his photo ID out and chuck it on that fire there - and put some of his blood from his chest wound on your face so it looks like you’ve got a bleeding head – when they come to you groan and moan – then pretend to pass out.”*

“We’ve got one over here!” – shouted a fireman who was pulling on a hose that had got stuck in the rubble reducing the water pressure.

Two paramedics ran to Rob and knelt beside him.

“Can you hear us Sir?.”

“Yes...” – he said with a weak voice followed by groans as instructed by Matt.

“We’ve got to get you out of here – hang tight we are going to get a stretcher.”

“Ok – Bobby when the stretcher comes don’t move, stay still until they put you in the ambulance - then I’ll tell you what to do” – Matts’ advice was decisive.

As they emerged into daylight he could see a helicopter hovering above him, as he laid on the stretcher, its noise and stationary motion in the sky

reminded him of Tower Bridge and his stand-off with Callum. The paramedics were shouting at the assembled journalists to get out of the way. Rob glanced to the side and could see the journalists, one of the camera men pointed the camera right at him.

“Oh fuck, you’ve just been filmed coming out of the old Bailey” – said Matt.

“Don’t worry it was only for a second” – Rob said to Matt, which the paramedic thought he was talking to him so responded – “Yes that’s right we get you out of here in a minute, don’t worry mate.”

As they got him into the ambulance one of the paramedics ripped Rob’s shirt off as the other one jumped in the driver’s seat and they sped off – he attached the ECG heart monitor pads to his chest and began to examine him.

“White male, mid-forties, no signs of any serious injuries, possible superficial cut to his head.”

The paramedic started to feel Rob’s body for any signs of broken limbs.

“No broken limbs either – when we get moving Dan radio ahead to Barts – tell them we need a crash team to check for any internal injuries” – said the paramedic who was now going through Rob’s pockets and found the wallet of the dead man he had just plundered as instructed by the schizophrenic nutcase voice that was now living in his head.

“James ***** – aged 41 – says here he’s a news reporter for The Post”. – said the paramedic to the driver whilst reading the rest of the business card such as phone number, email and then placing it back in the wallet – the ambulance was now blue lighting it through the city to the A&E department of Barts.

“Rob - can you hear me?” – said Matt - “Squeeze your hand if you can” – he said.

Rob squeezed his hand acknowledging that the voice in his head was coming through loud and clear.

“Ok, this is good, they think you’re that journalist, that journalists face would have ended up mangled and dental records take a while to identify the body - but we need to get you out of here before we get to the hospital. So, on the count of three jump up, remember your combat training from Steve – see those scissors there – grab them and plunge them into his neck at the side making sure you twist as you insert.” – Matt was now in control.

“One”

“Two”

“Three”.

Two

You Are Doing Well

The scissors plunged into the paramedic's neck and as instructed Rob twisted them, forcing them at an angle and puncturing the windpipe which was now starting to fill with blood. The paramedic grabbed at Rob's arm as an involuntary muscle reaction – staring into his eyes at the shock of what was happening to him. He fell to his knees as Rob continued to exert pressure on the scissors pushing it in deeper and deeper with his palm.

The driver was unaware of what was happening to his colleague. You wouldn't expect a military sleeper cell, trained psychopathic, schizophrenic, criminal killer to be stabbing your shift buddy to death in cold blood - this certainly wasn't an occupational hazard of the job.

Rob pulled the scissors out - well and truly severing the windpipe from inside. The paramedic's throat gushing blood due to the pressure being released by the puncture wound - it started to spray uncontrollably through the opened curtain to the cab and onto the windscreen making seeing for the driver difficult.

“Fucking hell Simon?! – he's bleeding out – it's going everywhere – do I need to stop?” – the driver thinking the bomb victim was the one bleeding to death looked around to see Rob standing up with a pair of blooded

scissors and his colleague laying on the floor of the ambulance dead.

There was no time to fend Rob off, who started to forcibly insert the scissors into the back of his neck – this time now with precision as he had just practiced on the other paramedic. The ambulance was now dangerously out of control - his foot putting pressure on the accelerator instead of clumsily trying to find the brake - getting faster and faster but looking like it was going to topple over due to his twisting of the steering wheel and using his left arm trying to fend the crazed assailant off.

The ambulance hit a car and turned on its side, sliding along the tarmac of the road before coming to a stop - it's siren now cut out but the blue lights still flashing.

People had run from the impending scene of carnage, and that was a smart move because a murderer in cold blood was starting to open the back door and climb out into the London streets with only a few minor bruises.

A bomb blast and now a vehicle accident, seemed Rob was one of the luckiest men alive, and demonic angels were guiding his path.

“Dump the scissors – pick up the wallet – you still got the phone in your pocket?.” – Matt shouted before pausing - *“Actually - NO! – Wait! - keep the scissors – the old bill has your fingerprints and DNA on file – although I expect that ambulance to be going up in flames at any moment”.* – he advised.

“What do I do now?” – said Rob out loud.

“Fucking run Bobby – there’s a couple of gawkers looking our way.” – came the good advice.

As he ran he could tell he was near the Euston Road. It was late so not many people were around having left work urgently, back to the safety of the suburbs like they did when an IRA bombs in the nineties were coded in - and the area was evacuated by the Police.

"This is looking good Bobby." – said Matt.

"How can it be? - I'm a fucking fugitive." – he replied not overly worried anyone thought he was mad and talking to himself.

Although sounding mad, he still looked respectable. His suit was intact, he still had his tie on as well – if you saw him you would just say he looked tired, and not involved in a bomb blast and had just murdered two innocent people.

"You definitely picked up his wallet, didn't you?." – asked Matt.

"Yep" – he got it out and felt the brushed leather with his thumbs before opening it - looking inside he could see credit cards, a press card, a season train ticket to Cambridge and fifty in cash.

*"You're not a fugitive Rob – you're now James ***** reporter for The Post."* – laughed Matt.

Rob saw there was a small folded up piece of paper with a list of names on.

"What's it say?, let me see...." – asked Matt.

"My fucking name is on it – so is Callum's..." – replied Rob.

“Well, I suppose the guy was in the courtroom no doubt writing a piece on your case.” – replied Matt.

“It’s got Steve the PI’s name on it and his mobile number – he wasn’t mentioned in the case so why is fuck is his name in this guy’s wallet. Fucking hell Chloe’s name is on it as well, a Louisa ***** - don’t know her – a boy called ***** ***** - Alex that’s Callum’s PA as well - Sgt Willis he’s on it. It’s got Penworth’s name and number on it”.

Rob went silent.

“What, what is it? - who else is on it?” – asked Matt.

“It’s got James and Joe McInnis’s names and phone numbers - with the words in brackets - The Money Men.” – said Rob.

Three

Last Train to Cambridge

You could still hear the din of sirens coming from the Old Bailey as he was nearing Kings Cross Station. It was the burglar alarms that were the loudest, all sensitive to activation as a result of a bomb blast, and with no one around to turn them off this orchestra of alarm and panic had been going on for a few hours.

You could still see plumes of smoke rising into the night sky from the Old Bailey, and one could assume that other buildings were now starting to catch fire adjacent to the courts. It had only taken him twenty minutes to walk through a deserted London to Kings Cross train station.

Rob had found the reporters address in his wallet from his driver's licence - Flat 12, Regis Rise, Cambridge, CM2 ***. Matt even observing that to someone looking briefly at the ID of the guy that he and Rob looked alike, and if he cut his hair a bit shorter and have a shave it would be a good likeness.

The reporters Nokia phone which was no doubt a 'burner' phone as it looked like something you walked around with in your pocket in 1997 was fully charged.

You could leave these brick phones on standby for a year and they would still work.

Rob was taking to Matt out loud and saying that he remembered a story that a Nokia phone had been on standby since 1998 and still wasn't needing charging.

Scanning it for any clues that the guy might have had a wife or partner came up negative, also there were no missed calls either which was strange because surely someone would have known he was at the Old Bailey and would be calling to check if he was ok.

There were no messages along the lines of – 'see you later for dinner darling' or 'mums coming round at the weekend can you pop to M&S and pick up some of that fizzy drink she likes on your way home'.

Rob walked onto the concourse of Kings Cross station having paid in cash for a very cheap non-descript blue baseball cap with the word LONDON on the front. The station was quiet for this time of the evening – late rush hour. Perhaps a major incident had taken place laughed Matt and that only dickhead tourists like Rob were wandering about in stupid hats.

The crap cap did the job of distracting his face from the public though, he would be not easy to recognise anyway because the only picture out there of him was an artist's impression of him in court.

The home office and MI5 had put a D Notice, or '*Defence*' notice ban on his image being put out there in the press, as they stated there are still ongoing enquiries into terror cells operating in the UK.

The government and press do this sometimes when cases attract other individuals who can be monitored and hopefully charged.

A good example is when the media would audio dub Gerry Adams voice on UK TV - they wanted to control the situation and wanted to make sure the UK public didn't know what he sounded like. It made no sense really because you could see what he looked like.

Rob's social media accounts were also gone as was any mention of him on search engines. It was as if he had been wiped from history.

The train was on time – the 7:06pm - platform 4 fast train to Cambridge seeing a free newspaper by the ticket barrier he picked one up and put the reporters season ticket in the barrier which to his delight let him through, also it was valid for a good nine months as well so didn't mean any raising of suspicions by applying for a new one and him having to give a new photo ID.

'Old Bailey Burning Long Into The Night' – the headline read – '56 People Killed – 28 Injured – Defendant Rob ***** killed instantly in explosion.'

"They think you're dead Bobby! – this is great news" – shouted Matt, whooping inside his head.

"Bullshit, this is false flag for the press." – Rob said out loud – "I don't trust these fuckers one bit." This made the ticket barrier inspector look over to him as if he was talking to him and seeing him holding the newspaper replied – "Yeh I agree mate – that bombing was well dodgy, probably planned by the government, defo a setup."

Matt jumped in and gave some good advice.

"Callum over time learnt not to reply to me mate out loud – he had inner monologues with me instead – suggest you do the same sunshine. I mean you was close enough to being put in a padded cell with a strait jacket on so just remember to talk to me inside your head from now on."

Getting on the train was unlike any normal rush hour because it was fairly empty, he went to the quiet part of the carriage and crammed himself into the window double seat – hiding some of the blood from the paramedic that was still on his shirt with the newspaper which he couldn't be bothered to read given he had lived what had happened and knew the real story.

The reporter's phone was a distraction as he looked at the personal messages of someone who had died earlier that day. There were some messages from The Post's editor that just read 'James - fucking leave it that's an order' - and - 'You're on a cold lead – that's from the top'.

Rob knew 'The Post' was owned by Pendragon Media because Callum used to talk about the paper.

One message jumped out at him – it was from a man that was in his contacts as - 'CB'.

The message was a few weeks old – it just read – 'follow the money James.'

“This reporter was onto something Bobby – he was trying to help you I reckon” – said Matt – “He may have got punished for doing so and attending your trial, maybe the bomb was for him and not you? – I mean you was going to be out of the equation – incarcerated and unable to communicate with the outside world for fucking life! – maybe they were going for him?”

“Matt I know – all the names connected to what's happened are on this list” – he said now holding an inner monologue with the intruder in his brain.

A woman sat down on the other side of the carriage and smiled at him. He smiled back.

She noticed some of the blood stains on his jacket.

“Are you ok?.” - she asked concerned.

“Pardon?” – he replied confused, and a good act.

“You have some blood on you?.”

“Oh - this ha – it’s ok, I’m fine” – realising he looked like a butcher from Smithfield Market.

“Wait... you.... you weren’t at the Old Bailey was you?.”

“Yes – I helped some people out of the building as I was walking by.” – a good cover story Matt thought.

“Oh my god, you hero.” – she was now gushing at him for being so bloody brave.

An elderly woman and a man were in ear shot of the dialogue and got up to come and meet the hero.

“You’re so brave, risking your life like that.” – said the elderly lady, holding his arm for support and her own support as she was elderly.

“It’s nothing honestly. The paramedics are the true heroes.” – he replied wanting to now deflect it from him.

“Nonsense, what you did for those poor people was so brave – but I hoped you didn’t help that awful man.”

“What awful man?, oh you mean the man in the dock ha, No I didn’t, I don’t like to gloat, and No – I think he died instantly.” – he really didn’t because he was sitting in front of them and now wished they would bloody leave him alone in peace.

“They should do an article on you.” – said the elderly man pointing at his free newspaper.

“Actually, I could ask my editor if you like?.” – the younger woman jumped in.

“Your editor?” – now confusion and inevitable panic setting in from Rob.

“I’m the features editor of The Union Newspaper” – she replied.

“Well, isn’t that a bit of luck” – said the old dear.

“Tabitha O’Brien, nice to meet you... and you are?” – she pulled out her business card and handed it to Rob.

The old couple had now slowly returned to the seat as the train had now started to pull out of Kings Cross Station and they were unsteady on their feet. It was now on its way out of the smoke and towards the intellectual capital of the world - Cambridge.

“Well mate, you’re fucked now aren’t you, Bobby. We wanted you to avoid the bloody press, but they are sitting right opposite you. Fuck me this is going to be a long two hours to Cambridge – but hey, she has lovely tits Bobby.” – said Matt.

Four

The Dead Buoy

“Oscar – Charlie – Tango – Four - Is that fucking camera off us Frank! – over.” – said the River Squad Police Sargent into his lapel radio as Callum’s body appeared from under the water and floated bobbing along on his back towards his boat.

Frank, high above him, was a seasoned commercial helicopter pilot and former RAF chinook pilot during the Iraq war was operating the Pendragon TV helicopter. Loving this job, because no one was shooting up from the ground to kill him, unlike in Iraq and the Balkans.

Frank turned to Les who was filming the bridge scene from the open door of the chopper, looking like a Vietnam vet about to spray napalm over the jungle that was London.

“Les mate!!.” – Frank shout – “They need to get the cadaver into the boat – can you pan the camera to the embankment, so we don’t show the gruesome scene to the world. Although it is going out on the BBC, and they will show anything to be fair... I’ll let you know when we’ve got the ‘all clear mate.’”

He got a thumbs up from Les the napalm cameraman and Frank then radioed down to the river boat Police

officer who now had the greenlight to retrieve the body from the dirty old Thames from them.

Frank couldn't help noticing Steve the Private Investigator who was sitting in the seat next to him upfront was looking distraught at having taken the killer head shot of Callum from the chopper.

"Is he alright – thought he was trained?" – he buzzed over the radio to Les in the back – still expertly controlling the helicopter dead still so the cameraman had an easy job of filming the ant sized people running away from Tower Bridge.

"Yeh, he'll be ok..." – Les said not overly giving a shit and now going back to filming the police cordon on the Southbank of the bridge with the cars backing up to the elephant and castle roundabout.

The Police Sarge killed the engine and the river boat steadied itself on what was luckily a calm River Thames, any choppiier, then the body would be moving at speed and would be a nightmare to pull on board. Callum's head hit the side of the boat and the body opened its eyes before closing them.

"Serge – I think he's alive!" – said the junior officer.

The River sergeant aided by his new junior cadet PC Shaw pulled him into boat and they laid the body out flat in the footwell putting a blanket over him.

"He's dead sonny - they sometimes open their eyes pal." – he said moving Callum's arm under the blanket before continuing – "It is electrical brain pulses that does it, fucking hilarious sometimes." – said the sergeant who was still training his junior.

A second river police boat came over to check on their colleagues and turned into the tide to drift port side of the dead body carrying vessel.

"Any sign of life?" – shouted the second unit officer.

“Negative pal, bullet head wound – we will take him in – can you control upriver in case any journos hire some boats and come looking for the body” – he shouted back.

“Good idea Sarge - affirmative!” - came the reply from the second boat, and with that the second police boat sped up the Thames towards the Houses of Parliament and would be acting as river traffic police for the next few hours whilst the cadaver boat would speed off down towards Essex and out into the estuary.

PC Shaw took the ankles of Callum, and the Sarge grabbed of his wrists, and they carried the body down into the hold in case someone with a long lens was getting shots like the scumbag Paparazzi on the night of Princess Diana’s fatal tragic car crash in Paris back in 1997.

“They’re even heavier if they’ve stayed in the water a long while. Sometimes their guts explode, and shit comes flying out.” – he laughed trying to make his junior puke - “We better get the cadaver back to shore but down river so there’s no chance of photographers.” “Where’s good do you think Sarge?.” – said his second mate who hadn’t really gotten over the sea sickness since joining as a new cadet a week before and was going even greener now as he was handling his first dead body.

“Shoeburyness and Foulness Island – out by Southend – Essex - be a long slog but there’s the military base there and no doubt MI5 will be happy we made that call and make sure he is on MOD land.”

“Let’s get up on deck and shut the door – make sure you pull the curtains too son – don’t want anyone twigging what cargo we’ve got onboard.”

The Sarge turned the rudder and the boat faced East, he then pushed hard on the throttle and the powerful police boat roared into life, unlike the dead body below. “How well do you know London lad?” – asked the sergeant who was checking the oil and water temperatures and making sure the engine didn’t overheat as they had a long way to go.

“Not long at all Sir – I’ve only been living down here in London for a month now.” – said Shaw.

“Where you from Pal?.” – The Sergeants Scottish accent giving away that he wasn’t a true cockney and born within the sounds of Bow bells either.

“Padstow – Cornwall”

“You should be used to the open water then Pal” – he laughed.

“My brother was in the Royal Navy, but my dad said you’re going into the force because it’s on dry land.”

The Sergeant laughed - “Why the blinking heck did they assign you to me then.”

“I’m asking the same thing Sarge” – Shaw said turning green from the boat now hitting the waves with great speed and slamming down once the wave had broken.

“Well that there is Greenwich laddie.” – he said pointing to the huge palace like building on the south bank of the Thames – “Home of the greatest sea fairing nation on the planet. Nelson cut his jib there – your brother probably went there – what happened to him?.”

“He was killed in action – missing at sea.” – came the reply.

“Ah I see, sorry to hear that, what tour was he on...”

“No, he wasn’t on a tour; It was up at Faslane.”

“Not on active tour?, in peace time yeh?.”

“Yes, there was an inquest and an open verdict.”

“Sorry to hear that son, happens to us all, I remember being in Northern Ireland and having to pick my mates

body parts up and put them into black binbags. The things we see in this job eh son.”

As they got further down the river the Sergeant was trying to keep the conversation going and keep it light by pointing out the tourist sights - The Thames Barrier, The Docklands and Canary Wharf and giving his cadet insightful historical knowledge of what the docks were like back in day.

The Queen Elizabeth the second road bridge in Essex came into view and his junior crew mate was blown away by its size as they passed underneath her. The constant stream of cars going back and forth from Essex to Kent.

“Impressive isn’t she – they built that because the two tunnels that go directly under us just couldn’t take the traffic anymore. You still have to pay the fucking toll charge even though the thing was paid for all those bloody years ago though.”

They were approaching the East London docks at Tilbury, not one of the most glamorous locations on the river. The RSPB were trying to encourage birdlife to come back by re-managing the Marshes that went past Fobbing, Pitsea, Benfleet and all the way down to Southend at the end of the Thames and out into the North Sea.

Something in the distance on the shore had distracted the junior cadet.

“There’s a flashing light from that boat over there.” – he said pointing to the shore – “Can you see it Serg?”

“Where? – oh yeh you’re right – what’s a small vessel like that doing moored up next to such large container ships – bit out of place.” – said the questionable and suspicious police sergeant.

He continued at speed but kept looking over at the flashing light.

“The flashes are definitely directing us - what do you think it is?.” – asked the Sarge.

“No idea Sir.” – came the novices reply.

“Well what code is used when ships want to communicate with each other without using a radio, meaning someone doesn’t want anyone listening into a public conversation.”

“Morse code sir – is it morse code! – I know morse code?, my brother had taught me it years ago.” – he said excitedly, I learnt it in the sea cadets.

“Dot, Dot, Dash – you betcha it is pal – I bet your older brother would have been proud of you for working it out.” – The Sarge reduced the throttle and the noise subsided to leave the gentle lapping against the boat.

“Good time for you to practice your morse code reading son.” – he handed the junior officer a pair of binoculars.

“Ok – you think you can decipher.” – he asked the lad.

“Yep” – searching for his notepad and pen.

“Nice – what’s the message then?.”

“Erm... N – O – B – L – E – C – A – U – S – E.....”

“Is that it?.” – asked the Sarge.

“Yes – the message reads – ‘Noble Cause’ – what does that mean?.” – he said still staring at the vessel through the binoculars and seeing a man now waving at him.

The chief pulled out a Glock 9mm handgun from his life vest and pointed it at the back of the cadets head.

“It means your training is over laddie and you failed.”