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MOTORMART

by

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Synopsis

How easy is it to walk out of a Ministry of Defence office with top-secret plans for a new weapon?

How easy is it to then steal those plans to sell to the highest bidder?

To Kirk Becker – ex SAS officer, it was too damned easy.

Covertly seconded by the Prime Minister to recover the documents, he is plunged into a conspiracy of extortion, kidnapping and murder that runs far higher up the echelons of power than he thought possible.

Unable to trust anyone, recovery of the weapon plans quickly becomes a side-issue and Becker needs all of his specialist training just to stay alive.

'A fast moving, story of intrigue, espionage and deceit that will keep the pages turning right to the end'

Chapter One

**Monday May 1st.
Motormart,
Ealing Broadway
Ealing, London W5.**

"Bloody traffic gets worse," said Sergeant Blake, easing the Shogun through the congestion around the junction of Uxbridge Road and Hanger Lane. "If all the vehicles in the UK were on the road at the same time, there'd be a jam from Lands End to John O'Groats."

"Fuming isn't going to help, Sergeant," said Sir Gareth Tyndall, long legs perched on the dash, a cigarette held in a jade holder, dangling from his wide mouth.

"Alright for you, sir," snorted Aileen Dent to herself, squashed into the back seat, surrounded by suitcases, "you'll be enjoying your Glenfiddich malt in an hour, relaxing in your plush manor in Chalfont St Giles. Ken and I have to make this trip back.. Bastard."

"Eases the tension, sir," said Blake, seeing Aileen's eyebrows rise via the rear-view,

eyes heavenwards.

"You have to be patient with events over which you have no control, Sergeant Blake," said Sir Gareth, tapping the ash from his cigarette out the window.

Fucking marvellous, coming from you, sir, thought Blake, a more irritable bastard than you would be hard to find. Bollocked Marsh, the Pool man because the transport wasn't outside the MOD in Whitehall on the dot, tore a strip off me because I wasn't wearing regulation boots and poor Aileen because her skirt wasn't pristine after a long day in the MOD.

"Yessir," said Blake, choking back the acrid comment he'd love to make about privileged fuckpigs like Sir Gareth Tyndall, late of the Coldstream Guards, now an officer in Section 'K' MOD, responsible for development of classified weaponry. Plush office in 'D' Block, dolly secretary who spent her days tarding up her two inch nails, running her fingers through her hair and giving sir a blow-job when he thought nobody knew. One of these days, I'll drop an anonymous note to his toffee-nosed missus, who believes her shit is perfumed.. that should keep the snotty bastard occupied, explaining why nobody in the Regent Club in Charles 2nd Street could locate the bugger when she rang them asking to speak to her husband. The sod was either safely tucked up in the king-size bed next to Lady Solange Mester in her Eaton Square apartment, or lying in that Japanese Jacuzzi he'd seen when trying to find him because Her Majesty's Minister for Defence, Sir Robert Goodall needed him urgently. Big as a small swimming pool, gold-plated taps and plughole, and hot enough to boil spuds.

The traffic lights changed to green. An old dear in a beat-up Toyota Corolla stalled in front of the Shogun.

"Come on, come on, you silly moo!" bawled Blake, "Get going! The lights will change any minute now."

The traffic on the inside slid past, drivers grinning triumphantly. Blake tried to ease the Shogun into the inner lane, but nobody would let him in.

"Bastards!" yelled Blake, angrily.

The lights went back to red as the old lady got the Toyota started and nudged across in front of the traffic hurtling from Hanger Lane and Gunnersbury Avenue, forcing cursing drivers to jam on their brakes. The old lady blithely ignored the chaos she'd caused and vanished into the Mall.

"Do keep calm, Sergeant, there's a good fellow. No need to get upset," remonstrated Sir Gareth, "there's nothing we can do." He removed the butt from the jade holder, fitted another with elegant care, lit it with a gold plated lighter.

Fuck you tosh, I'll get home around nine tonight at this rate cursed Blake to himself.

The lights changed to amber, Blake let the clutch in, shot across the intersection, almost before the north south traffic had cleared. The jerk caused Sir to jerk his head back against the headrest.

"I say, do take it easy, old chap," said Sir Gareth, picking up his crocodile skin briefcase from the floor and dusting it off.

Blake saw Aileen's eyes go upwards again. They made progress as far as the Broadway before another jam prevented forward movement.

"I say! Will you take a look at that!" cried Sir Gareth, pointing his jade holder towards a car showroom. Blake risked a quick look. An electric blue Rolls Corniche stood glistening inside the plate glass fronted showroom.

"Pull over, old boy, I must take a look at that. Absolutely delightful!"

Blake smothered a groan, eased the Shogun over, forcing the traffic on the inner lane to a standstill to an angry chorus of horn sounds.

"Come on people, have a look at this splendid machine," cried Sir Gareth, jumping out

and almost running over to the showroom.

The traffic behind the stationary Shogun began a furious fusillade of hooting. Blake turned on his hazard lights as Sir Gareth beckoned to them before vanishing into the showroom.

"Double yellow, Ken," announced Aileen. "Oh, fuck his luck, darlin', he can afford it. Come on, let's have a leg stretch," said Blake, getting out. Aileen followed him across the broad pavement into the showroom. Sir Gareth was enthusing about the gleaming vehicle to a bored salesman, running his manicured fingers along the coachwork, bending down to inspect the wheels.

"What do think of this, Sergeant?" crooned Sir Gareth, blissfully.

"Smart piece of tin, sir," said Blake, bored.

"Tin!" squeaked Sir Gareth, "this is pure magic. Never seen this colour scheme before."

"Arab gent sold it to us.. wanted the latest model to take back to the Gulf," said the salesman, smelling of underarm and aftershave, looking like a refugee from the men's outfitters at Harrods.

"What are you asking?" enquired Sir Gareth.

"Thirty-five K, sir," said the salesman without hesitation.

"Can you deliver it?"

"Certainly, sir, on completion of the formalities, naturally."

"Access Gold in order?" asked Sir Gareth taking the plastic card from his crocodile skin wallet.

"Would you care for a spin first, sir?" asked the salesman.

"Good Lord, wouldn't dream of it old boy, might get it knocked," said Sir Gareth majestically, winking theatrically. "I know your company.. very reputable.. wouldn't sell a bad product."

"I bet," muttered Blake, looking at a brand new Jaguar in the corner of the showroom.

"Hey! Ken, there's that Toyota!" said Aileen staring out of the plate glass window into the street.

"Toyota?" Blake didn't bother looking, "What Toyota?"

"The one with the old dear in it that held us up on the Common. She's parking it in front of the Shogun!" said Aileen, watching the antics of the driver of the Toyota, backing unskilfully into the space in the traffic created by the parked Shogun. The traffic was having a hard time passing the four-wheel drive vehicle, being snarled up as far back as Aileen could see.

Blake took a cursory look before turning back to the Jaguar. "Silly cow," he commented, "shouldn't be on the road."

Blake walked round the Jaguar, admiring the bodywork, opened the door, slid into the driving seat. "Fancy having the cash to buy this thing," he murmured, sniffing the leather upholstery.

"Here comes the KGB, mate," said Aileen, still staring out of the window.

A black female traffic warden, overweight, uniform stretched over massive hips and breasts, was waddling towards the two parked vehicles, a look of triumph on her face.

Sir Gareth was now seated in the sales office, talking earnestly to the salesman and another man, evidently the manager.

"We're getting a ticket," sang out Aileen in a pleasing contralto.

The black warden was busy scribbling away on a note pad, her sausage fingers trembling with delight. Blake was inspecting the dash of the Jaguar, envy on his rugged features.

"Bloody marvellous, isn't it?" he said, half to himself, "Nearly the price of a house... and that bastard has enough cash in the bank to pay for it.. just like that."

"Hey! Ken!" Aileen came over to the Jaguar. "That Toyota driver wasn't an old lady.. it's a man... he's wearing one of those funny masks... the sort kids wear at Halloween!"

"Some funny people about, darlin'," said Blake absently, turning knobs on the Jaguar's dash. The manager left Sir Gareth with his salesman in the office, hurried over. "Nice vehicle, sir," he said to Blake, "like a test drive?"

"I'd be wasting your time, petrol and trouble, mate," said Blake, "I couldn't afford one of the tyres on this crate."

"We have some easy finance packages, sir," said the manager, smelling of underarm like his employee.. His face was pink, double-chinned, shining with a film of perspiration.

"Like I said, mate, you're wasting your breath. We're waiting for his Nibs in your office.. just having a butcher's," said Blake.

"I see." The man's attention evaporated, he titivated his bow tie with pudgy fingers. "Don't mess the seats, will you?"

"I'll try not to be incontinent, mate," grinned Blake, getting out of the car.

"Hey! Drop that, you shithead!" Aileen was running out of the showroom across the wide pavement.

Blake saw the masked man hurrying away from the fat black warden. He was carrying a briefcase. On seeing Aileen, he broke into a sprint, dodging in and out of the crowds on the pavement, heading for the Underground station. Aileen was running after him, yelling something Blake couldn't hear.

Something was amiss, Blake decided. Aileen wasn't stupid. He hurried out of the showroom, started after his colleague. The masked man ran in front of the oncoming traffic, dodging vehicles with unerring luck, vanished into the maw of the crowds around the entrance to the station. Aileen stood helplessly at the edge of the pavement as the man disappeared into the station entrance.

"What's up love?" Blake caught her up.

"That shit's just nicked Sir's fucking crocodile briefcase!" panted Aileen.

**Tuesday May 2nd.
Sir Robert Goodall's Office,
Ministry of Defence, Whitehall
London SW1.**

"Let me understand this correctly, Sir Gareth," said the Minister, leaning back in his leather armchair, "you walked the drawings of the RK6 out of this building in your briefcase? Is that correct?"

Sir Robert Goodall was a small man, barely five three in his socks. The fact that there was a reproduction of Napoleon 1st hanging on the wall behind his desk was no peccadillo. David's portrait of the French Emperor showed the Corsican in characteristic pose, left hand inside his uniform, feet splayed, hair combed forwards to hide incipient baldness. Sir Robert was almost a doppelganger of the Emperor. The only difference being that Sir Robert didn't possess a millionth part of Napoleon's genius. What he had in common with the nightmare of British politicians of the Napoleonic era was the Corsican's relentless energy.

Sir Gareth knew that Her Majesty's Minister for Defence was at his desk at six a.m. seven days a week and he rarely left until seven at night. The problems amongst his staff of civil servants as a result of this obscene predilection was the subject of media jokes. There was never a day passed without the Minister being headline news. It nearly always involved

the resignation of yet one more disoriented high level civil servant unable to tolerate the vinegary temperament of the Minister, nor the long hours he demanded of every member of his staff. The officers of the General Staff were united in their implacable hatred of Sir Robert's midnight descents into their clubs, upsetting them with his acrid comments on their unmilitary behaviour.

The ordinary squaddies loved him - not only for his pitiless pursuit of sloth amongst the top brass. He was on parade with them at seven a.m. clad in camouflage tiger suit, doing a five mile cross country and keeping up with the best. He slept rough with the SAS on the Beacons, refusing any offer of privilege. Men on patrol in the jungles of Belize would suddenly be aware that the little man in the camouflage was non-other than the Minister of Defence. He could strip down an M16 in the dark in pouring rain and reassemble it in record time. He could also put six .45 bullets from a Smith & Wesson handgun into a target at twenty-five yards, all within a millimetre of each other. His fellow Cabinet Ministers also detested this miniature dynamo with his endless quotes from the utterances of Napoleon, wishing he'd suffer a major infarction whilst on one of his schoolboy manoeuvres with his favourite regiment, the Paras. No chance. The Minister for Defence could perform a hundred press-ups without breathing hard, he could march with a full pack weighing ninety pounds over terrain his overfed colleagues couldn't even walk, for twenty miles and show no sign of strain. Not a man to treat with anything less than healthy respect.

"That's correct, sir," said Sir Gareth, feeling the perspiration trickle down under his collar. He felt ill, longed for the solace of a cigarette. The Minister was implacable about smoking. Any civil servant caught having a crafty drag in the loo found himself transferred to a less salubrious post in Social Security within twenty-four hours.

"How can this happen, Hugh?" The Minister swung his immense arm chair to stare at the other occupant of the room, his brown eyes hard.

"I don't know sir, but I'll crucify the idiot that permitted it," said Colonel Hugh Shardlow, Head of Security in the Ministry.

"You'd better, or you'll be joining him on the cross Hugh," said Sir Robert softly, "along with this prize asshole." A stubby forefinger jabbed in Sir Gareth's direction.

Colonel Shardlow was six feet plus and his resemblance to General de Gaulle was also the subject of cartoons in the press. It was also hinted that his selection for the post related to the Minister's penchant for surrounding himself with tall men. They even called them Napoleon's Old Guard, derision implied but rarely supported by acts of folly similar to those suffered by Ministers of other Government Departments. No leaks ever emerged from the MOD. The lobbyists in the House had long since given up trying. It was easier to extract manure from the Wooden Horse of Troy. Sir Robert's hypnotic gaze transfixed the trembling Sir Gareth once more.

"You took them out in your briefcase, left it on the front seat of your unlocked, unauthorised Pool vehicle, driven by Sergeant Kenneth Blake, also not authorised to chauffeur junior staff, whilst you went to view and ultimately buy a used car from the showroom of Motormart in Ealing Broadway? Have I understood this correctly, Sir Gareth?" The Minister's voice was like acid dripping onto paper.

Sir Gareth prayed for a heart attack. He implored the Deity who fostered the well-being of all civil servants that something seismic would occur within the next few minutes.. like a six point nine quake on the Richter Scale.

He nodded dumbly, the sweat running in rivulets down under his collar. His shirt stuck to his back like an artificial skin.

"Why did you remove a highly classified document from this establishment, Sir Gareth?" The Minister's eyes never left Sir Gareth's.

"We are behind in the development of the RK6... I needed to do some more work on it

before passing it on to the Small Weapons Executive to produce the prototype," stuttered Sir Gareth, feeling faint.

"So, you left your office early, removed a top secret document from this building, in order to take it home with you, intending to place at risk one of our most promising developments since the end of the Second World War in the confines of your home in Chalfont St Giles... a location where the incidence of house burglaries is higher than most other parts of the South?" The Minister slid out of his chair, walked round the massive leather-topped desk. Colonel Shardlow moved aside hastily.

Sir Gareth nodded, miserably.

"Hardly the act of a responsible member of my Ministry, is it?" rasped Sir Robert, his mesmerizing gaze transfixing his victim. "In fact an act of consummate folly. We now have a situation in which a criminal has in his possession one of Great Britain's most promising weaponry details and from the circumstances related to me by the two personnel from the security staff accompanying you on this unauthorised journey, the whole episode was carefully orchestrated by the thief. Not only were you followed from the moment you left this building, but you failed to take even the most elementary precautions to ascertain that such surveillance was not a factor." He paused, took a deep breath.

"You left an expensive briefcase, not MOD issue, at the roadside in a busy thoroughfare, in an unguarded and unlocked vehicle, whilst you indulged your incredible egotism in a car showroom. Thus providing the thief with an unprecedented opportunity to effect his objective without even the slightest risk of detection or apprehension."

"You can have my resignation, Minister." bleated Sir Gareth, "I am aware of the gravity of the situation. I realise I acted without due regard to security and I feel this would be the most satisfactory conclusion." He felt faint, legs weak, longing for a cigarette to settle the twitching of his nerve endings. Sir Robert paced up and down, hands clasped behind his back in the manner of the French Emperor, head bowed.

Sir Gareth stared mutely at Colonel Shardlow, pleading for some act of absolution from the head of MOD security.

"Resignation eh, Sir Gareth? You honestly believe that solves the situation, do you? Absolves you from the heinous responsibility for this cretinous behaviour?" The Minister was implacable. Shardlow looked away from Sir Gareth to studiously examine the portrait of Napoleon.

"I don't know what else I can do Minister," muttered Sir Gareth, "It will at least take some of the heat from you."

The Minister gave an explosive snort. "Heard of Section Two of the Official Secrets Act, Sir Gareth? The section referring to the passing of classified information to a potential enemy or foreign power for pecuniary gain or political motivation?"

"But I didn't do that. It was an accident, a random act!" blurted Sir Gareth.

"That we have yet to establish, Sir Gareth. The Colonel endorses my view of this incredibly stupid act that you must have contemplated this move for some time in order to have circumvented the strictly enforced security measures designed to prevent such unauthorised removal of classified documents from this building." Sir Robert didn't stop his pacing.

"That's utter nonsense, Minister," burst out Sir Gareth, "I resent this imputation."

The Minister came to a stop before the wretched Sir Gareth.

"You resent it, do you? Feel I'm being unjust, do you? Feel you are being made a scapegoat? Think your family background precludes any suggestion of disloyalty, acts of subversion?"

"Yes, I do!" snapped Sir Gareth, "My Father is a retired judge and a member of the Higher House."

"Anthony Blunt was keeper of the Royal Art collection.. that didn't dissuade him from perpetrating the ultimate act of treachery." said the Minister, acidly. "In fact his exalted position, enabled him to carry out his acts of treachery without fear of discovery."

"I have not performed any such act," snapped Sir Gareth. "If you persist in these allegations I demand to see my lawyer. I will not have my character impugned in this disgraceful fashion!"

The Minister gave another snort. "Don't worry, you'll have ample opportunity to discuss your situation with your lawyer Sir Gareth. I'm arraigning you under Section Two of the Official Secrets Act. You are to be detained at Her Majesty's pleasure in Wandsworth Top Security Wing until such times as we can fully investigate your culpability"

"You can't do this!" roared Sir Gareth, anger supplanting his fear.

"Oh dear," said Sir Robert, nodding at Colonel Shardlow. The door opened to admit two burly men.

"Take this disgusting creature out of my sight before I forget we live in a liberal society," said the Minister.

The two pasty-faced men forced Sir Gareth's arms behind his back, placed the handcuffs around his wrists.

"You'll pay for this indignity, mister, I promise you!" yelled Sir Gareth as the two men hustled him from the office.

Sir Robert picked up the parking ticket from his desktop.

"We can keep this as evidence Colonel," he said, "what was the name of this officer who you feel can conduct this investigation with discretion?"

"Captain Kirk Becker, sir, late of the SAS," said Shardlow.



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