

CHAPTER 1

Martha Patterson gasped as she watched the live CCTV video of the harrowing scene erupting in the square outside Lewis Bank.

Earlier, she had been looking forward to an easy day, one that would begin at London Municipal Police Headquarters with a morning-long seminar on new anti-crime technologies. She knew she would have to check an archived surveillance video at midday, but after that her calendar would be clear for the rest of the afternoon.

On her way to the morning seminar she ran into Michael Pembroke and said, "Michael, stay with me afterwards. We'll go over to a CCTV suite to see that video of the flash mob at the Arsenal match."

"Good idea, Superintendent," Pembroke said, even though he was disappointed because he'd have to miss his tee time. No golf for him that afternoon.

After the seminar, they skipped lunch and hurried to the CCTV suite where they spotted the row of analysts monitoring the output of the high-resolution street cameras in London's West End.

Scanning the screens, Patterson recognized the areas around Harrods and along the Edgware Road. She made a quick mental note: "Harrods ... gift for ... baby shower for Amanda."

One of the analysts -- Billy -- glanced around and saw the visitors. "Uh-oh. Look who's here," he whispered to his colleague Helen. They turned to greet Patterson and Detective Inspector Pembroke, who smiled and waved.

Four minutes later, as Patterson was watching the Arsenal video, she heard Billy shout out to her.

"Superintendent! Over here! Please!" he said, going full-screen on the live feed from an overhead camera. "Something big ... Now! ... The Edgware Road ... at French Street ... the square outside Lewis Bank."

The superintendent and Pembroke rushed over and caught their breaths when they saw two men waving guns and clutching bulky green bank bags. One man fired two shots into the air.

Gasping, Patterson whispered, "Terrorists?"

"Bastards! Bastards!" Pembroke said. "Bloody bastards!"

The tourists and shoppers milling around the fountain in the square froze at the sound of gunshots. For two seconds they seemed caught in a still photo. Then, realizing the danger, they panicked, hurtling away helter-skelter, stumbling into each other.

Patterson blinked furiously as she watched the turmoil but she remained calm. Taking two steps back, she pulled out her mobile and punched in a code.

“Crime in progress! Shots fired!” she barked out, keeping her eyes fixed on the CCTV screen. “Lewis Bank! The Edgware Road at French Street! Cars ... Go! Outside the bank! Get uniforms there! NOW! Go! Go!”

She grimaced as she saw a frightened older woman throw aside her Waitrose bag. It hit the ground and bounced, spilling her groceries and sending oranges, soup tins, milk cartons, and a cereal box tumbling around her. A young woman in a black dress and heels tripped on a soup tin and fell onto her back.

“Somebody help her!” Patterson said, covering her mouth.

The distraught woman on the ground watched her leather purse skid away. Struggling to get to her feet, she looked around the square, unsure whether to retrieve the purse or take off running.

“Go, woman!” Patterson shouted, dropping her hand from her mouth. “Go!”

“Forget the purse!” Billy said. “Leave it. Go! Go!”

Helen screamed, “Run!”

At that moment, as if she had heard them, the woman kicked off her black high heels. Waving her arms to warn others, she dashed barefoot from the square and ran straight into the traffic in the Edgware Road. A white Range Rover slammed to a stop, barely missing her.

The gunman who had fired into the air knocked a grey-haired older man out of his way. As the man lost his footing and fell, his young female companion worked feverishly to help him. She hurried him away and shouted something at a man nearby who was pushing a child in an expensive-looking pram. He looked befuddled but shook his head, “yes” to her.

“Screw the pram,” Pembroke cried. “Take the kid! GO! Damn it! GO!”

“Good, good,” Patterson said as the man grabbed the child and ran.

Though she was relieved that the gunmen were not shooting people, it was clear to her that their intimidation was working, opening a broad escape path across the square and through the frenzied crowd. The gunmen began running toward the Edgware Road.

“Where’s bank security?” Pembroke asked. “Did they try to stop them? Did the gunmen shoot them? Where’s the bloody getaway car? Do they see it? Where are our cars? Should be there by...”

Patterson said, “The demonstration ... in Trafalgar. Uniforms were pulled away to cover... probably not enough in the area.”

“Another angle here, Sir!” Helen said to Pembroke. “Better view of the road.” She had been scanning the other cameras’ outputs and then went full-screen on the feed from a lower-level camera. The gunmen had nearly reached the edge of the square and were looking down the road to their right.

“Getaway car ... farther down the road?” Billy asked.

“No, closer, closer!” Patterson said. “Coming for them. Has to be.”

The crowd fleeing the square frightened the drivers passing the bank. In the pandemonium a blue Volvo slammed into a FedEx truck while a black Removals van narrowly missed hitting two young women on yellow bicycles.

“That van. The getaway...?” Patterson guessed.

“No, no,” Pembroke said, “Not the van. Where’s their bloody driver?”

Suddenly a dark blue Ford sedan pulled around the Volvo-FedEx crash and nosed its front end directly at the two gunmen. It came to a jolting stop to avoid hitting two stragglers escaping through the barricade of pillars protecting the bank and the square. That left a large gap between the pillars and the front of the car.

The car doors flew open.

“That’s it,” Helen said. “The getaway!”

“No. No,” Pembroke said. “I think... I think...”

A well-dressed woman and a man in shirt-and-tie jumped from the car and crouched down behind the car’s opened doors with their weapons drawn.

“I think ... *Claire!*” Pembroke said. “Claire Grainger. My D.I.!”

“It *is* Claire,” the superintendent said. “Oh Lord! And Stanley. Is that Stanley ... Martin Stanley?”

“Yes,” Pembroke said. “We lent Claire ... undercover ... to Serious Fraud.”

“Oh, Michael,” Patterson said as the two gunmen looked at each other and realized they were trapped. “They’re caught!” she said.

Pembroke shouted, “Drop your guns, you scum.”

One gunman panicked. He was six feet tall and burly. Throwing down his weapon, he tossed his green bank bag to one side and put up his hands. But the shorter, wirier man held onto his bag and fired three shots at the two detectives, hitting the car’s doors but missing them.

Instantly, Grainger and Stanley fired back and hit him once in the shoulder and once on his gun hand. He dropped the bank bag and tried to hold onto his gun, a Beretta, but he couldn’t control it. Throwing it out of reach, he put up his hands and wet himself.

“Oh, oh, oh,” Patterson whispered. “Have they got them?”

“Got ‘em,” Billy whooped, knocking over his coffee cup.

“Quiet!” Patterson said. “It’s not a movie!”

The two detectives burst from behind the car doors and charged toward the gunmen. Suddenly, a white SUV screeched away from the curb, aiming for the gap between the pillars and the police car. It sheared the door of an Audi and headed directly for them.

“The SUV, Claire! Move!” Pembroke cried out. “The getaway. Move! Move!”

“Martin!” Patterson said. “Oh, no.”

Martin saw the SUV but had no time to fire. Pushing Claire to one side, he lurched to his right and fell hard onto his hands and knees. His weapon tumbled away. Claire rolled on the pavement and hit her head but kept hold of her gun.

The SUV clipped the police car’s front end as it raced away. The second gunman shook his bloody fist at the SUV.

Martin scrambled to his feet and looked left and right for his weapon. Claire was already on her feet. Running to pick up the first man’s gun, she scooped it up and turned back to check on Martin.

The second man knew he was cornered. Seeing the two detectives distracted, he lunged for his Beretta. This time he managed to steady his bloody right hand with his left. He fired twice in Martin’s direction.

“Oh God! Oh God!” Superintendent Patterson cried out.

“He’ll kill them,” Pembroke whispered.

Martin twisted sideways at the last split-second.

The first bullet missed him and hit their car’s front windscreen. The second bullet tore into Martin’s left arm as the gunman bore down on him and aimed directly at his head. Martin cringed, clutched his arm, and tried to scuttle away.

Claire was just 10 feet from them. Planting her feet, she braced herself and aimed her standard-issue Glock.

“Shoot, Shoot!” Patterson and Pembroke screamed.

Her first shot slammed the gunman in the chest. His left arm flew straight up. He shuddered, turned, and tried to point his gun at her.

She fired more shots into his chest and his head.

He spun around violently, collapsed, and lay motionless.

Martin recovered his own weapon and the gunman’s Beretta. He looked over at the other man, who had his hands in the air. Claire turned her head from side to side, watching both gunmen. Martin put the Beretta in his belt and knelt by the downed man to check for a pulse.

He shook his head “no” as he looked toward Claire.

The other man dropped his hands and tried a runner.

“The idiot!” Pembroke shouted. “Claire! There he goes!”

Martin pointed at the man. Claire trained her gun on him and he stopped immediately and knelt down on one knee with his hands in the air.

As he lowered his head his body language said, “defeat,” but when she approached him he jumped up and rushed at her.

“Oh, Claire!” Patterson said. “Don’t shoot. He’s crazed. No gun!”

“Shoot! Claire. Shoot!” Pembroke shouted. “He’s after *her* gun!”

It looked as though she would shoot, but instead she kicked the man in the crotch again and again, doubling him over. He fell and flailed on the ground like a wounded animal. Grabbing wildly at her leg, he managed to knock her off balance.

“Shoot! Shoot!” Billy cried. “Oh ... oh ... oh,” Helen said simultaneously.

Claire fell to the ground again, this time landing on her right hip, but she held onto her gun. The man tried to rise but Martin, holding his wounded arm with his gun hand,

kicked him in the head, knocking him on his back. Then Martin aimed at him. Though Claire was sprawled on the ground she was still able to train her gun on the man.

“No, no, no,” Patterson cried again, “he’s finished.” When it was clear they weren’t going to shoot, she said, “Good, good!”

Claire struggled to her feet and held her hip. Then she and Martin dragged the gunman to their car. Forcing him to lie face down on the ground, she kept her gun pointed at his head while Martin pulled handcuffs from the boot. Then Claire removed the keys from the car’s ignition and they cuffed him to the steering wheel.

Martin flinched as Claire touched his wounded arm and removed his tie and bloody shirt. She tried to make a tourniquet with the tie but couldn’t make it tight enough. She threw it aside and unbuckled his belt. When she was sure the belt was tight enough to stop the bleeding she limped over to cover the dead man’s face with Martin’s shirt.

Struggling back to Martin’s side, she managed to pull out her mobile. With her hands quivering, she called for help, speaking without taking her eyes from the man’s body. She finished her call and then, wilting back against the car next to Martin, she let her mobile fall to the ground. They stared at the body.

