

THE GOBS



Return of the Wrinkled Rockers

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Track One

“I will introduce you to the four who I told you about earlier, Carol,” said Mrs Chew with jauntiness in her voice. The pair walked into the warm recreation room and over to four elderly men sat in armchairs in front of a shiny, polished black Steinway piano.

The men stopped chatting and looked up at the women.

“Good morning, this is Carol. She has come for an interview for the Nursing Sister’s position to manage our new nursing home section,” said Mrs Chew.

Carol smiled and then furrowed her brow when she smelt an unpleasant aroma lingering around the four.

“Good morning Carol, I am Charles and delighted to meet you,” said Charles in his articulate English tone and he smirked when he saw the blond-haired woman smiling through a grimace.

“Hello Charles, It’s lovely to meet you too,” said Carol, thinking Charles reminded her of her grandfather in his smart shirt, tie, and cardigan.

Charles smiled and nodded at Carol.

“You look too pretty and young to be looking after old farts,” said a scrawny looking wrinkled geriatric who looked only slightly more alive than Keith Richards. “I can’t see a wedding ring, are you married?” he asked and leered at Carol who blushed.

“That’s John,” said Mrs Chew.

“It’s Boomer you old bat,” snapped John Varley.

Mrs Chew smirked as Boomer glared at her, knowing he hated anyone calling him John.

Carol looked at the scruffy old obnoxious man dressed in a tatty old stained ACDC T-shirt and grimy jeans. She thought Boomer’s face looked like an anaemic prune and he had a bald scalp with long greasy grey hair around the back and sides. She smiled, shook her head, and said. “No Boomer, I am not married, but I live with my partner in London.”

“Partner, does that mean a woman... are you a Lezzie?”

Carol giggled. “No Boomer, he is my boyfriend.”

“Huh, why didn’t you just say boyfriend then?”

“Allo Carol, I’m Elvin,” said a small elderly man as bald as a bell end, in a chirpy cockney accent. “I’m from the old smoke too, wot part of London are you from?”

Carol smiled. “Hello Elvin, I’m not from London, I am from Chelmsford, but I went to London University and have been living and working in Whitechapel for several years,” she said, trying not to stare at Elvin’s digitally challenged hands.

“Ignore Boomer, Carol, he is an acquired taste,” smiled a younger looking man with Latino looks and jet-black hair. “Hi, I’m Wayne and originally from Canada, but I have lived in England for many years.”

“Yeah, because they don’t sell grecian2000 in Canada,” whispered Boomer and chortled quietly so Wayne wouldn’t hear him, even with his new hearing aid, which Wayne hadn’t yet figured out how to use properly.

“Hi Wayne,” Carol said, and smiled at the four. “It’s lovely to meet you all. Mrs Chew told me you are all retired musicians. Do you still perform?”

Charles smirked. “Oh no, my dear, but we still practice sometimes and perform the occasional recital for the other residents, but nothing too strenuous,” he nodded toward his piano.

“We’re too old to be rockers,” said Elvin and smirked.

“Speak for yourself, baldy. You know we still belt out some great tunes,” said the brash Boomer and, being glared at by the other three, looked chastised and sheepish.

“Okay Carol, now you have met these and most of the residents, let’s go to my office and finalise the details.”

Carol nodded, and the pair walked out of the rec room and over to Mrs Chew’s office on the ground floor of the residence. They walked past several other elderly residents she had met earlier, still sitting on wooden benches in the well-kept grounds of Fosdyke residential home enjoying the sunshine on a beautiful summer’s day. Carol inhaled the sweet floral fragrances drifting on the soft summer breeze and removing the stench surrounding the four musicians from her nostrils.

“Charles, Wayne, Elvin, and Boomer are interesting characters,” said Carol, “but there was a strange smell. Does one of them have a bowel problem?”

Mrs Chew shook her head and said. “One of them did, but he passed away several years ago and the four blame the ripe smell on his ghost. The old guys call it Steve’s revenge,” she then chuckled. “Don’t worry; the contractor said it’s either a small blockage or crack in an old terracotta sewer pipe running under the floor beneath Charles’s piano. Since the smell quickly cleared and the rare times it happened was always after meal times, the contractor said that it wasn’t worth the upheaval of digging it up.”

Mrs Chew glanced at Carol as they walked. “Have you heard of Kipper?”

Carol raised her eyebrows and said. “Yes, who hasn’t; I am a big fan!”

Mrs Chew, grinning at Carol looking excited, thought. ‘She looks a bit old to be a star-struck teenager,’ and she asked. “Did you know he is from Cleethorpes?”

“No... really!” gasped Carol. “Hope, is my favourite album, I bought it years ago, and I still love it. Have you ever met him, Mrs Chew?”

Mrs Chew nodded. “Oh yes, he visits here often when he comes to Cleethorpes to see the four you just met, they are great friends.”

“Wow!” exclaimed Carol. “Perhaps I will get to meet him if I get the job.”

They went into Mrs Chew’s plush office and Carol sat down. Mrs Chew sat behind her desk and again picked up Ms Carol Jenkins Curriculum Vitae. She glanced at her certificates in nursing and elderly care management, impressed by her qualifications and university degrees. However, Mrs Chew couldn’t understand why Carol wanted to come from a high-class London nursing care home to a small seaside town like Cleethorpes and Carol had been vague when she’d asked her.

“Do the residents go to the local pub I passed coming here? It was close by and looked very impressive with the nicest beer garden I have seen. You don’t get that standard in London anymore.”

Mrs Chew looked up from the paperwork and said. “Yes, Baker Street is a lovely pub, but only a few of the residents go there. Cosmo, the landlord, is a friend of Lucy Fosdyke the owner here, and he comes here on occasions to visit the musicians,” Mrs Chew grinned. “That’s when he’s not gallivanting around the world on holiday looking for birds. He is in the Philippines at the moment.”

“Does Mrs Fosdyke come here often?”

Mrs Chew shook her head. “Not so much nowadays Carol; Doctor Fosdyke has a busy medical centre in Hull, so barely gets the time. It was her late father, Steve, who passed away and I still think she has painful memories.”

Carol smiled. “Well, I certainly like Fosdyke and the residents, I hope you will consider me for the position, I am sure I will be an invaluable employee.”

Mrs Chew again glanced at Carol’s C.V. and nodded.

“This is impressive, but I will need to contact your current employer. I imagine the Care Home Manager who gave you the glowing reference letter will be sad to see you go,” said Mrs Chew, picking up the

reference letter from Hawthorn Green residential nursing home and sanctuary care, in Whitechapel, London. "I will call her and..."

She stopped mid-sentence as the noise of a car driving along the gravel path and screeching to a halt outside the recreation room disturbed her. Mrs Chew smiled as she looked out of the window.

"Oh, Kipper's here. I see he bought another new sports car," she said as Kipper got out of his gleaming red Tesla Roadster, waved at Mrs Chew at the office window, and walked into the recreation room.

Mrs Chew waved back and smiled, she then looked at Carol. "Would you like to go back to the recreation room and meet him? He will be visiting the Fos... err, his old friends."

Carol smirked and then looking nervous, gasped and stammered. "No thanks, but maybe next time, if I am lucky enough to get the job. I won't take up any more of your time, Mrs Chew. Please call me if I am suitable for the position. I must leave now so I can be back in London before the rush hour traffic. It was a pleasure to meet you and some of the residents."

Carol extended her hand and, after shaking Mrs Chew's, she rushed out of the office, strode towards her car in the small Fossdyke car park, and drove off.

Mrs Chew furrowed her brow and then smiled and thought. 'Meeting Kipper must have overawed her, she must be a love-struck, thirty-something-year-old... mind you, she doesn't look much older than him. Who knows, perhaps when she and Kipper meet it will be love at first sight. He needs a good woman to look after him and who better than a Nursing Sister, and she seems like a very nice woman. Maybe I can be a new Cilla Black.' She giggled and impersonating Cilla, said. "Do I need to buy a new hat for Kipper and Carol's wedding, chuck?" Mrs Chew sniggered and picked up Carol's reference letter from Jane Sinclair, the Care Home Manager at Hawthorn Green, she dialled the phone number on the letter and spoke to Jane.

"Thanks, Mrs Sinclair, I will," said Mrs Chew before hanging up.

'Jane Sinclair sounded like a school principal, very disciplined... perhaps I should change my tone and instil dread into that lot,' thought Mrs Chew who chuckled and said. "Varley, you scruffy little Oike, wash that filthy T-shirt, immediately!"

Still chuckling, she sat back in the chair and looked at Carol Jenkin's documents again. Mrs Chew knew she had a hard decision to make that would be a quandary for the old remaining Fossils, and Kipper, especially now, but she needed an assistant. Her workload had increased since Lucy added a new wing to Fossdyke and made it with nursing home facilities. Mrs Chew had no nursing qualifications and before they could operate as a nursing Home, they needed qualified nursing staff and knew that Carol was the best candidate she'd interviewed for running a nursing team.

Carol's heart raced as she drove along the Cleethorpes beach road. She stopped in the Market Place, parked her 2015 Volkswagen Passat, turned off the engine, and breathed a sigh of relief. She felt exhilarated as she reset her GPS for the return journey to London and looked out of the windscreen at a small fish and chip restaurant nearby. 'I suppose I better try the greasy offerings they rave about up here,' she thought, and grimaced at the thought of having to spend time at this crappy northern seaside town. "I better call Billy and let him know that everything went as planned," she said aloud, took her smartphone from her handbag, turned it on, and dialled Billy Numan's number.

"Hi Susan," answered an anxious-sounding Billy Numan. "How did it go? Was it them?"

Susan McHale smirked. "Yes, I met Nobby, Chippers, and Sticks, but they have a new member who calls himself Boomer. He must be replacing Strat. He's a horrible little man. I wanted to iron the wrinkles out of his face with a hot steam iron."

Billy chuckled. "All in good time. Once we have our revenge on Nutley, we can sort out the other stuff; so they believed you were Carol Jenkins, a qualified Geriatric Nursing Sister?"

Susan sighed. “Yes, Mrs Chew, the manager of the home, believed my phoney C.V. and qualification certificates. She swallowed my story hook, line, and sinker. She was calling Jane at Hawthorn when I left Fosdyke.”

She heard Billy laugh as he reassured her. “Don’t worry, Jane is expecting her call, and we know she will convince her. She is a good friend as well as my sister-in-law and understands what we are doing will expose the lying, deceitful Kipper so we can be vindicated, clear our names, and return to our high life... with millions of pounds of compensation.”

“I suppose so, but we have a few unforeseen obstacles to contend with,” said Susan sounding wistful.

“Oh yes,” said Billy, hearing the concern in Susan’s voice, “and what might they be?”

Susan had a quake in her voice when she told Billy. “Kipper turned up while I was there and Mrs Chew said he comes to see them whenever he’s in town. Mrs Chew said Lucy Fosdyke rarely visited, but said Corrigan went occasionally, and those three know me. Although she said Corrigan was on holiday now, she never said when he was coming back.”

“Did Kipper see you?” asked Billy sounding alarmed.

“No, I don’t think so; he went into another building to see the four, so I got out of there quick.”

The phone went silent while Billy gathered his thoughts and then said. “I knew Kipper would be going there more often now to get his material for the new album but I didn’t know when, but that won’t be a problem. I still have contacts within his management agency, so I will just pay them a little extra to tell me every time he is due to leave London. That will give you plenty of time to arrange something to keep out of site. This Corrigan character however, will pose a problem which we needed to overcome beforehand... assuming you get the job.”

“Oh,” said Susan sounding confident. “If Jane plays her part, I am certain I have it.”

“Great, well done Susan, I will chill some Chardonnay for when you get home and we can talk more when you arrive. We can have an early night; we have a lot of planning still to do... I will call Ollie Smith and let him know.”

“Okay darling, I am grabbing a bite to eat first before I set off. I will see you at home in about five hours if the traffic isn’t bad.”

The pair hung up and Susan smiled as she walked into Steel’s restaurant and ordered from the ‘a la carte menu’ painted on the greasy wall above the deep-fat fryer: Haddock, chips, and mushy peas.

Billy smirked, sat back in his chair and thought. ‘You should have stuck to being DJ Kipper, and you are making a big mistake doing a new Fossils album, Mr Keven Gascoigne Nutley. You have no talent, but we know who does... and now we know where you go to get it. We will get evidence to expose you as the fraudster you are. The world will know I was right all those years ago and you are a talentless shyster. We will be back at the top where we belong.’

Billy’s intercom then buzzed and an abrupt sounding man ordered. “Numan, fetch me a Cappuccino and a Bagel.”

Track Two

When Boomer first arrived at Fossdyke, it had taken Charles, Elvin, and Wayne some time to accept him. He was an obnoxious, foul-mouthed character who didn't get along with any of the staff or residents. Always wearing tatty t-shirts and scruffy jeans, with more wrinkles than a bulldog's botty, he looked like an ancient 'Stig of the Dump,' who Mrs Chew kept threatening to wash his mouth out with carbolic. He stayed in his room most of the time when he first arrived at Fossdyke, only going for meals and occasionally sitting and chatting to the three remaining Fossils.

With the three not mentioning that they were Fossils, and with Boomer constantly banging on about his time playing with the famous bands in the 70's and 80's, it disrupted and annoyed the others. The atmosphere in Fossdyke was tense for the first year he was there, and Mrs Chew and Lucy felt disappointed.

Charles, Elvin, and Wayne spent most evenings at Baker Street chatting with Cosmo and his manager, Paddy. Nowadays, they barely spoke of their time in Southeast Asia. Although they all thought about it a lot, they all knew they would never return.

Occasionally, they would perform for the other residents at Fossdyke. Charles would play slow classical pieces, with Wayne and Elvin accompanying him on the double bass and drums. These recitals entertained the residents and pissed Boomer off as he kept appearing with his old Duane Eddy signature Gretsch guitar, but as the others played the slow melodies with no electronic amps or speakers, he ended up going back to his room and sulking, much to the delight of the remaining Fossils who smirked.

Life for the old men became mundane and routine, they often thought about their adventure with Steve, and they, and Cosmo, regularly toasted his old Stratocaster displayed in Baker Street's plush function room.

Kipper visited, and with Christmas only a few days away, he had brought presents for his old friends and Cosmo.

They sat in the centrally-heated recreation room in front of Charles's Steinway and Kipper gave them each a wrapped gift. The lads knew by the size and weight of the boxes that he had bought them gold watches again. However, they also knew it would be classy, lavish, tasteful, and the year's most popular brand name, as Kipper's gifts always were, because his PA did all his shopping, and she had impeccable taste.

"I will leave Cosmo's with you if that's okay. You can give him it when he comes back from his bird watching holiday in the Bahamas," he chuckled and handed Charles the same size package he had given them all.

The three gave Kipper his gifts, and he smiled. "Thanks fellas, I will take them back to London and open them on Christmas Day."

Kipper never knew what he would be getting. The geriatrics brought him something different every year, sometimes it was sensible clothing and sometimes, something not so sensible. He still chuckled every time he looked at his cheetah body truss and Elephant trunk underwear hung in one of his walk-in closets in his Mayfair Penthouse apartment.

They sat and drank coffee mid-afternoon on a mild winter's day.

With the gardens at Fossdyke looking sparse with no leaves on the trees or shrubs, and with a slight frosty nip in the air, the residents stayed indoors, and the recreation and TV room was full of chatter. However, Kipper and the others knew that wouldn't be for long, as Boring Bill and Crabby Sam were setting up afternoon Bingo in the new lounge next door, with the hairdresser and manicurist due in a few hours.

Charles, Wayne, and Elvin had noticed a change in their young friend over the years. After the hype and sensation of the Fossils saga had died down and with all the fame and adulation Kipper had received, he had turned into a humble, sensible young man. Although he had many adoring fans and recognised everywhere he went in the UK, he'd never let fame or fortune go to his head again. Although he still lived

the playboy lifestyle and his DJ venues were the busiest in London. He was no longer hounded by the media as Fossils and the Hope album was yesterday's news, but that was about to change.

Kipper took a drink of coffee, looked at the three, and grinned.

The three looked at Kipper with his mischievous grin and knew what Steve would say... so Wayne said it. "What are you looking so smug about buggerlugs?"

Kipper smirked. "I have an idea I want to run by you all," he said, took another mouthful of coffee, put his mug on the coffee table, and leant forward. "I want Fossils to make and release a new album."

The three looked stunned as Kipper then told them of his thoughts about making a new album, and he wanted to get their feedback. He hoped they would become involved, with money being no object. Kipper had made a fortune over the years, which Cosmo, Lucy and the three had benefitted from as Kipper had kept to his word and shared all the profits from 'Hope' between them all.

The three listened to Kipper and then looked mortified at one another.

Wayne shook his head. "No chance Buddy, I don't want to go through that shit again."

"Me neither," said Elvin cringing. "I am surprised you are even considering it."

Charles threw out his hands and said. "Why on earth would you want to bring back the problems Kipper? The world knows you as Fossils and you are a successful DJ, so I don't understand; you don't need the money."

Kipper sighed. "I understand that, Charles, it was just a thought, and it's not about the money. To be honest, I am bored with being a DJ, it's the same old shit every night, and I am fed up. I feel stuck in a mundane, repetitive existence and I need a change. Although we had loads of problems before with Fossils, it was the best time of my life. Things will be different this time, I am older and wiser and I know the music business inside out. I spoke with Fredrick, although he advised me to plan carefully, he said he would guide me each step of the way, and, as long as I performed on the album, it will be a legal Fossils album."

"Well, we know all about mundane existences, but we are safe and still too old for the rock scene," said Elvin, rubbing his bald head, "besides, we don't have a rhythm guitarist."

"That's the beauty," said Kipper smirking. "You won't appear on anything. I won't be doing live concerts, but if I do a guest appearance, my backing will be a dance video and lip-syncing. All you have to do is write the songs and I will do the rest in the studio. I know you don't have a guitarist, but I can hire a good session musician to add the guitar later because it would look too suspicious if a stranger kept turning up here with a guitar."

Elvin shook his head. "No, I don't fink we can help, mate, sorry," he said and frowned.

"Nah, Buddy, I don't think any of us want to risk it again, we are too old for that shit."

"Wayne's right, besides we have nowhere to rehearse without being caught. That Boomer character is a nasty sod and we couldn't avoid him indefinitely."

Kipper sighed and looked disappointed. "Okay fellas, I understand; does anyone want another coffee?"

He went over to the coffee machine and made four Lattes while the three looked at each other.

"Maybe you and Wayne can write a few tunes and lyrics without us practising them Charles?" said Elvin.

Charles shook his head. "No, we don't know how they will sound unless we tried them out and altered accordingly, and for that, we need a guitarist."

Wayne nodded his agreement.

Kipper came back and handed them each a coffee, and they sat drinking the creamy beverage until Kipper left Fossdyke and drove back to London.

After supper, the Fossils went to the recreation room. They felt relieved, as Boomer wasn't at supper, so assumed he had gone out on one of his mystery tours, which he did on occasions, usually after having an outburst of shouting profanities aimed at no one in particular.

As they approached the recreation room, they heard a guitar playing through a speaker and looked at each other.

Surprised, they walked into the room where Boomer was playing his Duane Eddy signature Gretsch guitar. The three, taken aback, walked over to Boomer, engrossed in his tune, and with his face contorting when he played, he looked like a constipated gargoyle.

The three went over, and Charles asked. "What the devil are you up too?"

Boomer stopped playing and smirked. "I bought a mini amp/speaker earlier and I am trying it out. The acoustics are better in here than my small room," he said and pointed to a box clipped to the waistband of his tatty jeans. "Sounds great, doesn't it? I am playing a tune I wrote a few years ago, what do you reckon? It sounds better than your boring stuff. I'll be done in a few minutes," and continued playing.

Wayne and Elvin raised their eyebrows and Charles frowned.

The three sat and listened as the constipated gargoyle rocked his way through his tune. Wayne, impressed with the catchy rock rhythm as a lyric popped into his head. He and Elvin tapped their feet along to the rhythm. Charles looked furious and glared at Boomer, oblivious to them until he'd finished.

"Right you can have your rec space back, I am going to my room," said Boomer.

"Good," snapped Charles, as Boomer opened his guitar case. He took out a page of sheet music, made alterations, and put the sheet music and his old Gretsch inside the case.

"You can read and write music?" asked Wayne, looking surprised.

Boomer looked at him and wrinkled his forehead, looking like a surprised old sea sponge.

"Yeah, of course I can, how do you think I write my songs?" he said. "I write tunes and can play most instruments, but I only play the guitar well, it's the only thing I enjoy playing. Oh, and I sing occasionally... why?"

"No reason," said Wayne and looked at Charles and Elvin looking bemused.

"Have one of you dropped your guts, it stinks," said Boomer, wafting a foul smell away and gagging. "Whoever it is should go take a dump... you reek."

Charles, Wayne, and Elvin looked at one another and smirked. Although none of them had farted, they knew that familiar foul ripe smell.

They looked at Boomer and then up at the heavens.

Boomer picked up his guitar case and headed to his room, mumbling about feeling ill.

The three stared at each other as the ripe smell cleared.

"Do you fink Steve was trying to tell us somefing?" asked Elvin, looking skyward.

Charles and Wayne didn't reply, they looked at one another, and then at Boomer leaving the rec room.

After Christmas dinner at Fossdyke, the old lads went along to Baker Street to celebrate Christmas. Kipper had phoned earlier to wish them Merry Christmas and Cosmo had returned home that morning from his holiday.

They took along Cosmo's gift from Kipper and intended to have a few drinks and spend the afternoon at the pub and listen to Cosmo's tales from the Bahamas. They knew it would centre around his twitching activities... it usually did. Bird watching was his passion and he spent most of his time jetting off to exotic foreign locations, to watch birds.

Wearing their matching 18-carat gold, Audemars Piquet Royal Oak watches, courtesy of Kipper, and wearing thick winter clothing, they made their way to Baker Street and into the busy function room. Baker Street was far more civilised than the Wellow was, and now looked plush, with the clientele more the wine bar couples and not the rowdy thugs of the past. Taylor Swift was playing over the pub's sound system.

The geriatrics sat at their usual table and Wayne was about to go to the bar when Paddy came over with three whiskies.

"Aye up, Merry Christmas, Cosmo's having a nap, he didn't get back until early morning, and he's knackered.

Paddy put their drinks down and went behind the bar to serve other customers.

"Paddy's a nice bloke," said Elvin.

"Yes, he is," said Charles, "but I still can't understand why they call him Paddy... he's from Burnley."

The others chuckled as they had asked Paddy about it before, and he told them that he had never even been to Ireland. They had given him the nickname at school because his name is Patrick McDonald, so his schoolmates nicknamed him Paddy McDonut and the name Paddy had stuck.

"He's a good bar manager and takes care of the pub nearly all the time now that Cosmo is an international jet-setter," said Wayne and chuckled.

The lads drank the whisky and as the amber fluid warmed them, Wayne went to the bar and ordered three more.

"Chewy said Lucy is coming to see us all tomorrow, which will be nice, it had been ages since she'd visited us at Fossdyke," said Wayne.

Charles nodded and said. "Lorraine and the grandkids are supposed to be coming to see me as well tomorrow," said Charles who frowned and looked disappointed, "if she has the time."

"My kids and grandkids 'av gone to Spain for Christmas," said Elvin and sighed.

"Never mind Buddy, we have each other, so it's the three musketeers as usual."

"Four," chuckled Cosmo, interrupting Wayne. He sat down and placed 3 more whiskies in front of them. "Merry Christmas lads," he said and sculled his whisky.

Charles handed Cosmo his gift from Kipper and they all handed him the gifts from them. Cosmo looked at his small box and the Fossils showed them their matching watches and smirked.

Several more whiskies later, with them all now wearing matching watches, the old guys felt spannered. They listened to Cosmo's account of his Caribbean holiday, which centred on his daily island hopping tours around the Bahamas and what birds he had seen and photographed of the 109 species inhabiting the many islands.

"Look, here is a flock of pink flamingos wading in a lake in Nassau." He flicked the picture on his phone and continued and here is the same flock in flight." He flicked that image and said, "ooh, now this one is interesting, it's a Bahama yellow throat."

Wayne, now bored, interrupted Cosmo's bird show by telling him about Kipper's visit and told him what he'd asked them to do.

Cosmo furrowed his brow and looked pensive, and then, sounding wistful said. "Why don't you do it? I know how bored you all are with your mundane life at Fossdyke. If Kipper has spoken to Fredrick, and he said it's okay, and Kipper's plan sounded okay, so as long as you will be safe... why not?" Cosmo looked at the faces of the spannered old fellas and said. "I will call Kipper later and give Fred a call after the Christmas holidays and check."

Cosmo puckered his brow, rubbed his chin, and said. "Mind you, it will be difficult rehearsing at Fossdyke with that obnoxious git Boomer sniffing around, but I have a large room upstairs empty.

A few hours later, the three elderly men staggered back to Fossdyke.

“I reckon we should do it, what do you think, Charles?”

Charles belched and slurred. “Don’t be ridiculous Wayne.”

“What do you think, Chippers?”

Elvin chuckled; he hadn’t been called Chippers since Thailand.

“Let’s talk about it when we’re sober, Sticks,” he slurred. “We can get Lucy’s advice tomorrow. What do you think Nobby?”

Charles stayed quiet but smirked as they tried to walk sensibly past Mrs Chew’s office and staggered to their rooms.

After breakfast, the three went to the rec room. They sat by the Steinway while other residents watched the Boxing Day TV programmes on the large theatre television system in the adjacent room.

With drooping eyes and hangdog expressions, they silently drank coffee and groaned.

Wayne took a bottle of paracetamol from his pocket and handed Elvin and Charles two each.

“I feel rough,” croaked Elvin after swallowing his tablets. “I wonder what time Lucy’s coming?”

Charles and Wayne shrugged, and then Wayne asked. “What time’s Lorraine coming, Buddy?”

“I don’t know,” said Charles sounding morose and looking pale as he sat back in his armchair and closed his eyes, “that’s if she can be bothered to come.”

“Hey guys, have you had any more thoughts about what Cosmo said?”

“What about, Wayne?” croaked Elvin, forcing a smirk, “the Black-bellied whistling duck?”

“Nah, Dumbo, about helping Kipper make a new album.”

Charles glared at Wayne through bloodshot eyes. “Don’t be ridiculous, Wayne. You can’t seriously be considering it. That was just the whisky talking.”

“Bloody hollering more like,” said Elvin, grinning.

Wayne shrugged. “Why not, we have nothing better to do?”

Charles shook his head and closed his eyes.

“Well at least we can think about it and discuss it,” said Wayne, frowning.

“There is nothing to discuss, the answer is no,” said Charles.

Elvin looked at Wayne and then Charles looking comatose, and said. “Cosmo said he would find out more when he called Kipper and said he would call that big wig lawyer after the Christmas ‘olidays.”

Charles said nothing and Wayne and Elvin looked at one another, smiled, and then looked at Charles.

“Why don’t we ask Lucy when she comes and see wot she finks?”

“I don’t want to discuss it now, Elvin,” said Charles who got off his chair. “I’m going to my room for a lie-down.”

Lucy arrived after lunch and went to see the old men in the rec room. She went over to them and shrilled, “Merry Christmas!”

She pecked each of the three on the cheek and sat.

“Merry Christmas Lucy,” they said in unison, and reached down to the side of their armchairs and gave Lucy her gifts.

Lucy took theirs out of a large plastic bag and handed one to each. “They are nice watches,” chuckled Lucy noticing them wearing identical gold watches. “They also do a ladies version,” she said and showed them her lady’s Audemars Piquet Royal Oak, and they all chuckled.

“They must ‘av cost him a fortune, they’re solid gold, and Cosmo’s got one.”

Lucy giggled. “So has Mrs Chew, Kipper bought her one as well.” She took a drink of coffee and said, “It’s the same every year, Kipper has always been kind and generous. Even though he is making a fortune and mingling with the stars, he never forgets us. We are his family and I am proud of the sensible boy he has become and not let fame go to his head again. I know Dad would have been proud of him.”

The others smiled and agreed. Wayne smiled and looked at Elvin who nodded.

“Speaking of Kipper,” said Wayne. “He came to see us a few days ago and ...” Wayne explained Kipper’s proposal, and how he’d requested their help.

Charles threw Wayne a curt look while he was explaining, but knew what Lucy’s reaction would be. He thought she would tell Wayne the idea was ludicrous and they should forget about it.

Charles looked shocked when Wayne finished telling the story and Lucy furrowed her brow and appeared to be pondering.

“Hmm,” mumbled Lucy, and sounding wistful said. “If Fredrick Farquharson-Jones said it’s okay... perhaps I should find out more. I will call Kipper later, and after the Christmas holidays, I will call Fredrick and ask his advice and find out what he told Kipper.”

Elvin said. “We told Cosmo, and that’s what he said he would do as well but suggested we should ‘elp. We said no at first, but the more Wayne and me think about it, and if you agreed, the more interested we are to help. Kipper sounded bored with his routine lifestyle.”

“Yeah,” said Wayne. “I can imagine how boring his lifestyle is... partying every night, gorgeous women hanging off his arm, driving around London in brand new sports cars, owning plush penthouse suites in the capital city, and making an absolute fortune... it must be mundane,” he chuckled.

Lucy smiled at the happy looking pair but saw Charles frowning and said. “If Kipper’s plan sounded feasible and safe,” Lucy shrugged, “and if Fredrick said everything would be fine... and providing you want to, I can see no reason why not.” She looked at the hangdog expressions on the hungover geriatrics, smirked, and sounding sarcastic, added. “Perhaps you can involve that charming man... Boomer. He claimed to be a great guitarist, maybe he can be Dad’s replacement.”

She then screwed up her eyes and grimaced. “Phwarr, what’s that awful smell?”

Lucy then left because the ripe but familiar smell lingered.

Charles, Wayne, and Elvin looked at one another in silence.

Wayne then smiled and opened the bottle of single malt whisky Lucy had brought him. Elvin made half a cup of coffee for each and then Wayne splashed a generous amount of the amber fluid into each cup.

“Ahh, ‘air of the dog,” said Elvin, wincing as he took the first mouthful.

The pair looked at Charles, who, although he said nothing, looked angry.

“We know you aren’t keen on the idea Nobby, but let’s wait and see what Cosmo and Lucy advise after they have spoken to Kipper and that Fredrick bloke, then we can decide,” said Elvin.

Charles took a mouthful of wobbly coffee, juddered as he swallowed the strong whisky, and then smiled and nodded.

Several weeks later, after the New Year’s festivities were over and the old fellas had recovered from their wankered sessions with Cosmo at Baker Street, they sat around Charles’s Steinway.

Lucy had phoned earlier and told them about her discussion with Fredrick Farquharson-Jones who had told her that if they follow his advice on the legal side as Kipper had planned, then everything would be fine.

Cosmo had recounted a similar conversation with the old barrister, but as both he and Lucy told them: it was up to them.

Wayne and Elvin were keen to do it, but Charles still had concerns and said. “What about a guitarist? We can’t write or alter the songs without first hearing a rhythm guitar and riffs when we rehearse. Even though

Steve couldn't read music, he could listen to a song, add the guitar, and we wrote down the music as he played it. It's as Kipper said, we can't have a session musician turning up here daily."

"Why don't we get Boomer involved as Lucy suggested?"

"She was joking, Elvin. He's a horrible man; I can't see any of us getting on with the obnoxious little sod."

Wayne nodded. "I agree Charles, but how about giving him a try? He sounded okay when we walked in on him playing. Why don't we hear what he can do without mentioning us being Fossils or what we are planning until we are certain?"

"Yeah, and he said he can read and write music... and reckoned he could sing."

"That's all well and good, Elvin, but I don't think any of us could work with him. He's obnoxious and I think bonkers... and what's with that facial tic he has on occasions before he bursts into swearing at everyone?"

Wayne sighed. "I know Charles, but I can see no other alternative without arousing suspicion and Lucy and Cosmo told us that's something we couldn't do."

"Yeah, and we need to let Kipper know whether we will do it so he can arrange everything beforehand," said Elvin and sighed.

Charles rubbed his chin and said. "Let's go see Cosmo before he goes on his holiday next week and ask him."

The trees and bushes looked bare and covered in a glistening translucent frost; the branches looked like thin brown skeletal hands reaching out for warmth and sunlight on a bitterly cold winter's day.

Boomer looked suspicious. 'Who can that be knocking? Nobody ever comes to see me,' he thought as he opened the door.

"Hi Buddy, sorry to disturb you, but we need your help if you have time?" said Wayne with a cheeky grin.

Elvin smirked. "Yeah, I bought an amp and speaker but I ain't got a clue how to use it. I only play me old double bass, but I bought an electric bass guitar ages ago so thought I would try it out," he chuckled. "How was I to know it doesn't work without being plugged into a speaker?"

"Yes, I'm afraid we are stumped, but we know you use a speaker amplifier for your instrument and would be grateful for your help," said Charles and smiled. "We wondered if you would set it up for us and show us what it can do."

Boomer frowned at the three and then stared at them individually. He then smiled and said. "Sure I'll get my stuff and meet you in the rec room."

With the other residents either in the TV room or lounge waiting for haircuts or manicures, the recreation room was quiet.

Carrying his Gretsch, Boomer walked over to Charles, Elvin, and Wayne, and saw Elvin's speaker/amp plugged in, and his Fender bass leant against the wall.

"Hi Buddy, thanks for helping," said Wayne, and got up and made Boomer a coffee while he took out his Gretsch, leads, and foot pedals from the case and went over to the speaker/amp.

"This is one of the best makes, it has an equalizer so that makes things simpler," said Boomer, looking impressed as he turned on the amplifier, plugged in his Gretsch, and set up the controls to his settings.

"You can also plug in your bass Elvin, but I will set it up differently. Let me show you how it sounds," said Boomer setting up his foot pedals and tuning up the Gretsch.

"This is one I wrote, it would sound better with bass and drums though," said Boomer before playing a catchy rock tune with several fast riffs.

Charles, Elvin, and Wayne looked at one another and smiled. ‘He sounds good,’ they all thought and laughed under their breath as the constipated gargoyle rocked away.

Boomer finished and smirked at the three. “Well, what d’ya think?” he picked up his coffee and took a slurp.

“Sounded good, Buddy,” said Wayne.

“Yeah,” said Elvin, pointing to his Fender bass. “I wish I could play like that. It’s not the same as my old Flores,” he chuckled. “Maybe we can add rock music to our repertoire, but I can’t even play the damn thing. Hopefully, I’ll learn.”

Charles smirked when he recalled his first meeting with Steve, Elvin, and Wayne and how they ended up being the UK’s top rock group, with Kipper being recognised as Fossils and having world-wide acclaim.

“Don’t worry, I will teach you to play your electric bass, Elvin,” said Boomer, interrupting Charles’s thoughts and taking another drink of coffee.

“Perhaps it was a little loud and rocky for my tastes, we would never perform songs like that,” said Charles, smirking. “Do you know anything a little less upbeat?”

Boomer smirked, looked in his guitar case, and flicked through his sheet music.

“Here’s one you might recognise, I love this song, it’s Fossils. Your mate Kipper wrote and performed it on his Hope Album.”

Boomer put the music on the Steinway’s music stand and moved his equipment closer so he could read it. “I know it off by heart but haven’t played it for a while,” said Boomer and played, ‘Consider me Gone.’

The following day, Boomer again joined Charles, Wayne, and Elvin in the rec room to give Elvin his first lesson on his Fender bass. Boomer looked shocked by Elvin’s electric guitar falsies and knew teaching him would be difficult as Elvin said. “I made these years ago, I think they should be okay.”

Elvin’s playing was awful, and even though Charles and Wayne knew he was feigning, they appeared shocked and disappointed.

“Didn’t sound so good, did I? I fink it will take you some time to teach me, sorry Boomer.”

Boomer smiled. “Don’t worry mate... free time is something I have plenty of, and with practice, you will get better.”

“Hey Buddy, why not play more of your stuff and give our ears a break from Mr Cackhanded’s attempt,” said Wayne. Boomer smiled and played his Gretsch.

Several weeks passed, and although Boomer was obnoxious, he patiently taught Elvin to play his electric bass. Elvin still pretended to have difficulties and sounded terrible. Boomer played to the three after finishing his lessons; some familiar tunes, and several new ones he had written over the years.

He sang lyrics to songs on occasion and the others smiled politely. However, they cringed when Boomer had gone to his room. Charles told Wayne and Elvin that Boomer would not be performing any vocals on their new Fossils material, much to the relief of them both. Elvin described his voice as, ‘sounding like a warthog with its knackers caught on a thorn bush.’

Charles, Wayne, and Elvin took Boomer to Baker Street on occasions. They introduced him to Cosmo and Paddy, who looked surprised to see them together after the three had told them what a horrible obnoxious git Boomer was. Boomer now felt happy as he had a sense of belonging, but the lads thought he was standoffish and hiding something.

One afternoon, while Boomer was playing, he didn’t do his constipated Gargoyle routine and Charles, Wayne, and Elvin noticed he now had a facial tic, which got more predominant as he played.

He suddenly stopped playing, glared at the three, whistled, and yelled. “Oy, cunts... gimme the ball.”

The three gasped.

“What?” asked Wayne, taken aback.

“What?” asked Boomer looking at the three shocked geriatrics.

“You called us cunts,” said Elvin looking angry.

Boomer looked confused. “No, I didn’t. He then whistled, twitched, and yelled. “Who threw that dogshit?”

The three old men looked at one another and felt confused as Boomer looked at them, and then realised his secret was out.

He unplugged his guitar, sat in an armchair beside them, and put his head in his hands.

“Wot ‘appened?” Asked Elvin, ‘ave you gone bonkers?”

Boomer looked up with tears in his eyes, and in a soft voice whispered. “Sorry, I have been keeping something from you. I get these attacks from time to time... I have Tourette’s Syndrome-TS, although I am getting help to control it and I don’t know I am doing it,” he then whistled and yelled. “Wankers!”

“Wot’s Tourette’s syndrome?” asked Elvin, looking shocked.

Boomer looked upset and his voice trembled when he told them what he knew about his illness and explained.

“I had it when I was a young kid. Doctors at the time knew nothing about it, so diagnosed me as having schizophrenia and I spent my younger years in a nuthouse. When I was 17, the attacks stopped, but my parents were too scared to have me home. I spent the next few years living in squats around Manchester. That was where I learned to play the guitar, from travellers and other squatters drifting through. I became good, and with it being the swinging 60’s, I worked with bands in the area and my first band was City Slickers. I later joined Herman’s Hermits who became big and I toured with them for a while until my reputation grew.”

Wayne brought Boomer over a coffee and, after taking a sip of the hot beverage, he smiled at Wayne as he tasted whisky in his brew.”

“Thanks mate,” he said and continued with his tale. “I toured with Procol Harum and other rock bands but they became outdated in the eighties, so I went to music school for a few years to study music. I then just played as a session musician for rock bands around the UK for many years until I retired.”

He took another slurp of wobbly coffee.

“The attacks started happening again not long after I arrived at Kings-Brook, that’s why I didn’t want to leave there. They accepted it was me being a cunt and thought nothing was wrong... I was terrified of being homeless and locked away in a nuthouse again.”

Boomer looked at the three smiling at him and he smiled back and felt reassured as he continued. “I watched a TV programme on Tourette’s Syndrome at Kings-Brook, and when I saw the symptoms, I knew that’s what I had. My local GP wasn’t sure and referred me to a neurologist clinic that specialised in TS in London because he told me they had few mental Health facilities in this area but none dealt with TS. It was bloody expensive for the treatment and staying in a London guest house. The head-shrink at the clinic gave me some pills and 10 hypnotherapy sessions.”

“So, they can cure it wiv pills?” asked Elvin.

Boomer shook his head. “Nah, there are no drugs available to cure TS, but neuroleptic drugs and Botox help alleviate the tics, and hypnotherapy proved useful. After I finished my sessions with the St George clinic in London, they referred me to a medical hypnotherapist in Louth, which is closer to home, should it reoccur.”

Boomer took another drink and smiled at the three. He felt warm and at ease, with the velvety wobbly coffee, getting his problem into the open, and discussing it with his new friends.

“That’s why I stay in my room a lot and act obnoxious. Then people would think it’s normal when I have an attack.”

“So, do you know what’s happening to you? You looked taken aback when we told you what you said,” asked Charles.

“No,” said Boomer, “I don’t remember anything; everything seems normal, but when the attacks happen, I know by people staring at me that I’d had one. I then make an appointment to see the hypnotherapist, but it can take days in hypnotherapy sessions.”

“Wot’s that like?” asked Elvin and chuckled. “Does he make you walk around clucking?”

Boomer smiled and shook his head. “I don’t remember anything about the sessions but it does the trick. The quack said he regressed me back to my teenage years and then to the time my TS reoccurred. He told me the fear and stress of being homeless and put in a nuthouse again had caused it to reoccur. He was right because when I got into the residential home system, and before I found out about TS, I was terrified.”

Boomer sighed. “And I feel stressed now because my money is running out. Because of the cost of my treatment before, and with my free year up at Fossdyke and having to pay towards the cost of staying here, I’m almost broke.” He took out his phone, sighed, and said. “I’d better call the hypnotherapist in Louth and book a few sessions.”

The others looked at Boomer, whose brashness and arrogance had gone, and all they saw now was a humble, scared, frail old man.

“Perhaps we can help with your financial situation,” said Charles, and looked at Wayne and Elvin, who nodded.

Boomer smiled, whistled, twitched, and yelled. “Go fuck a duck, you slap heads,” and then in a quiet voice mumbled. “Thanks Charles, but I don’t want charity. You are pensioners, and I wouldn’t let you waste your money on me. I hope I have your friendship now and that’s enough.”

“We ain’t offering you a free ride, buster,” said Wayne and sniggered, “you’ll have to earn your money.”

Boomer puckered his brow and looked confused.

“Call your Hypno guy while I get something from my room,” said Wayne.

“Elvin went to refresh their coffee and Boomer called his hypnotherapist and made an appointment.

Wayne returned minutes later with his iPad.

Boomer looked puzzled and Charles chuckled and told him. “We also have a secret we have been hiding.”

“Yeah, for the past few weeks you haven’t just been teaching me to play the electric bass; we were auditioning you,” said Elvin smirking.

“How would you like to join our band for a project we intend to work on?” asked Charles.

Boomer chuckled and said. “Sorry guys, I appreciate what you are doing, but I can’t play classical music, and my music and your music don’t exactly go hand in hand.”

“Are you sure?” asked Wayne, handing Boomer the iPad, and he, Charles, and Elvin smirked as Wayne pointed at the screen and said. “Just tap play.”

Boomer chuckled and tapped the play symbol.

Still chuckling, he started to watch Bernard Fossdyke’s video of Fossils playing in the recreation room several years earlier.

Boomer heard the mumble of chatter and the camera panned around the familiar faces in the audience, and then at the band.

He looked puzzled when he saw Elvin on the electric bass, Charles on an electronic Yamaha keyboard and, the old rocker Steve curling his lips and looking like an old, bald Billy Idol. Wayne was sitting behind them and Boomer tried to read the name on his old bass drum skin as he counted them in. He then gasped when they played, ‘Life Is Too Short To Be Sad’. Boomer puckered his brow and looking gobsmacked, stammered, “F...F...Fossils.”

For the next twenty minutes, Charles, Wayne, and Elvin saw the shock and disbelief on Boomer's face as he watched the video. He kept looking up at the remaining Fossils and each time they played the intro to their songs, he would croak the name of the track as if in a trance.

He saw Andrex Ethel dancing around the floor with toilet paper hanging below her skirt hem. He watched Pearl and Svend, Doreen and Stan, waltzing to 'Vulnerable,' and gasped when he saw a smiling Mr and Mrs Chew dancing.

Boomer's hands trembled, as he looked agog at the now blank screen. Wayne took the iPad off him and said. "We are writing a new album for Kipper... so, Buddy, do you want to help us and join our band... Fossils?"

"Yeah, but who we are, and what we are doing, must stay a secret," said Elvin.

Boomer was speechless and with his mouth still agape, he croaked and nodded. He then whistled, twitched, called them a Tampax, and then trembling, said. "Yes, please."

Charles smiled and said. "We better break the news to Kipper so he can arrange things."

Several weeks later, an ecstatic Kipper arrived at Fosssdyke. He went into the recreation room where the new Fossils had set up their equipment.

"Thanks for doing this, fellas. You have nothing to worry about, I have arranged everything, and I will inform you what's happening at every step along the way. All you need to do is write and make the tracks. Leave everything else to me. I know how great you are; it will be a fantastic album," said Kipper. He looked at Boomer with his Gretsch standing next to Elvin with his Fender, Charles on his Yamaha Keyboard, and Wayne sat behind his drum kit at the rear.

"Hi, Boomer, I have heard a lot about you from the old lads. I have seen you around here a few times before but we have never spoken. It's nice to meet you."

"Nice to meet you too Kipper, I am a big fan of yours," he smiled and looked at Charles, Elvin, and then behind at Wayne, and said, "and a huge fan of Fossils."

Kipper sat down and Wayne counted them in.

Kipper wanted to hear them live again after all the years of not performing, and he wanted to hear Boomer play, hoping that he sounded good enough to help with the album.

They played 'Consider Me Gone', and Kipper shuddered, felt goosebumps over his body, and the hairs on the back of his neck stood on end... the Fossils were back.

He smirked and thought, 'they were right when they said Boomer looks like a constipated gargoyle when he plays... but boy, can he play... those riffs sound perfect. It's a good job he won't appear in the videos though,' he chuckled.

"How did we sound?" asked Charles after they performed a few songs from Hope and sat down with Kipper.

"Wow! You still sound great, and Boomer, you can certainly play that guitar... You sounded as good, if not better than Steve ... bless him." Kipper chuckled. He then frowned and gagged. "What's that awful smell?" he asked, pinching his nose, "it smells like... oh," he stopped speaking when he saw Charles, Wayne, and Elvin smiling at him. He looked up towards the heavens and grinned, as Boomer looked confused.

Kipper made the arrangements and, several weeks later, Charles, Elvin, Wayne, and Boomer, started writing tracks for the 'Meaning' album.

Track Three

“Hi fellas,” said Kipper, who went over to the four, pulled over an armchair, and joined them.

“Hi Kipper, how’s it hanging?”

“Still to the left, thanks for asking Boomer,” replied Kipper and chuckled as he sat down and said. “Thanks for the call Wayne; it’s great news about finishing the track, only one to go and the album’s complete.”

Wayne smiled and took his briefcase from the side of his chair and opened it.

“We might have a new piece of totty starting soon. Chewy bought her in earlier and introduced us, she looked tidy but sounded snooty,” said Boomer and smirked, “I’ll soon win her over with my charm.”

“You’re ‘aving a larf, even Andrex Ethel turned you down... and she’s bonkers,” said Elvin.

“Carol’s a delightful young woman, but we won’t be seeing much of her. Chewy interviewed her to run the nursing home section,” said Charles.

Kipper smirked. “That’s a pity because I like nurses,” he said.

“Yeah, and models, air-hostesses, movie stars. In fact, most pretty females with a pulse,” said Wayne and chuckled as he handed Kipper the iPad.

Kipper grinned. “Well, I am a superstar.” He took the iPad and watched the four performing their latest track that they had written for the new album. The picture wasn’t great as they hadn’t got used to the technology, but that wasn’t a problem as Kipper would be making a video. The main thing was that it sounded okay and Kipper would have it re-mastered, mixed, and edited when he returned to the studios in London.

Kipper smiled as he listened to the lyrics of the rock ballad and looked at Wayne and Charles. “You have done a great job again fellas, it’s a beautiful song... I am surprised you didn’t call it ‘a tribute to Strat.’ You summed up his life in five minutes... It sounds fantastic.” Kipper then caught a whiff of a familiar smell. “Oh, and Steve likes it,” he said and burst out laughing as they all sniffed the air and joined in with laughter.

A few minutes later, Charles grinned with an air of pride and said. “We thought ‘Dream Chaser’ sounded more appropriate for the title.”

“Yeah, that about summed him up, well, either that or Old Ripey,” chortled Elvin.

Kipper tittered, nodded, transferred the data to his smartphone, and told them. “Once you’ve finished all the tracks, the album will be available to download online with all the major music companies. They will promote it once I give them a release date,” he smirked and looked at the four.

“What, it’s not on CD?” asked Elvin.

“Nah, they are out of date Elvin... But,” said Kipper and paused before announcing. “It will also be on vinyl, which is making a big comeback.” The four looked at each other and smiled.

Elvin chuckled. “I remember the good old 45’s, you can’t beat the old stuff,” he said, stood up, and sang. “*Let’s twist again like we did last summer.*” He gyrated his hips and arms doing the twist until a sharp pain shot through his back, and his old bones felt they were in a mangle. With the others’ laughter ringing in his ear, Elvin flopped back into his armchair and winced. “I fink I pulled a muscle.”

“You dopey old twonk,” said Wayne through tears of laughter.

“Yeah,” croaked Elvin, wincing. “I should have sung one from the erection section. Me and the Mrs loved ‘Nights in White Satin,’ it always got her excited,” he chuckled and grimaced.

While Elvin whimpered and the others chortled, Kipper played the new track through his smartphone.

“Technology is amazing nowadays,” said Charles. “I don’t understand any of it. How can you just press a few buttons on your phone and transfer everything in a heartbeat?”

“It’s all done wirelessly,” said Kipper as ‘Dream Chaser’ played again.

“Bloody marvellous,” said Charles, knowing little about smartphones, but knowing Kipper always had the most up-to-date device available, and they all thought the volume sounded amazing for such a small piece of kit.

They sat silently and listened to their track and then Kipper said. “I will take this back to the London studio and have it arranged, tweaked, edited, and a video made like the others. Do you want to see what we have so far? The other tracks are finished and look and sound fantastic.”

The others nodded and Kipper set up a small square box on the floor at the centre of them. The others looked intrigued and jumped back when the hologram-projector LED displays lit up when Kipper wirelessly connected it to his phone.

“I only got this the other day; it’s state-of-the-art from Japan. It hasn’t hit the markets yet, but Sony is paying me loads of money to promote it.”

They gasped as a holographic image projected up from the centre of the machine and started playing the completed tracks from the new, ‘Meaning’ album. The four gasped as they sat back in their armchairs, watching large holographic images and sounds projecting from the machine.

“It’s like something from star trek,” said Elvin, wide-eyed.

‘Meaning’ sounded different from ‘Hope,’ although still upbeat rock and rock style ballads, there would be an added jazz twist to several of the tracks on the album.

The first title/track, ‘Meaning,’ would be instrumental.

Choreographers and Kipper’s Production team had already made videos of the six tracks they’d done, with eight tracks planned for the album.

“Spectacular,” was the word Charles used as he watched the holograms which looked like action-packed movies, and the tracks sounded incredible and seemed to be coming from every direction with a sharp crisp rhythm. The four sat with mouths agape as they watched and listened.

‘Meaning,’ started slowly with Charles playing the opening to Claude Debussy ‘Clair de Lune’ on his piano, with Kipper narrating a short poem written by Wayne. Elvin and Wayne then joined in with the bass and drums, and then Boomer rocked in with a guitar riff and then the tempo changes. They all play their rock/jazz version of George Gershwin’s Rhapsody in Blue. The tune is a six-minute upbeat rock/Jazz, and, although the classic tune’s recognisable, it sounded different until the end, where it slowed again to Charles playing Clair de Lune for a few bars before fading out.

Kipper knows the ‘Meaning’ album will be something different that he will play at his venues and others, realising it will be a big hit with fans old and new, judging by the look of amazement on the old men’s faces. He knew it would be a best-selling album and could even stay top of the music charts as long as Hope, which broke all records.

Track 2- Fallen Angel - A rock ballad, with Kipper performing the lyrics with his voice added, dubbed, and altered to be in tune with the song, because although he was a great D.J., he was a tone-deaf git.

Track 3- Mary - Charles wrote the tune and lyrics and he performed the melancholy song with Wayne and Elvin doing the harmonies. Kipper wanted Charles to sing this song as he wrote it about his undying love for his beloved wife and no one else could have done it justice. Kipper started the track with a short intro of remixed music from Vulnerable.

Track 4 -Thunder Ocean – Kipper performed the lyrics on this fast-paced Rock/Jazz song with the video showing spectacular scenery of raging oceans.

Track 5- Every Cloud has a silver lining – Charles and Wayne had reworked their track and adding a jazz beat to ‘Consider me Gone’ from the Hope album and changed the lyrics, giving the song an unmistakable sound, with Kipper again doing the vocals.

Track 6 – Starlight and Sunshine – fast rock/hip-hop that Charles had rewritten: arrangements of several tracks from Holst’s Planets, with catchy lyrics, sung by Charles with rapping by Kipper.

Track 7 - would be Dream Chaser and they hadn’t yet started on the last track.

After they had finished watching and listening to the tracks, they all smiled.

“It’s bloody brilliant!” exclaimed Boomer. “But I still don’t understand why you didn’t let me sing on any of the songs, you rotten old gits.”

“Because you sound like you’re gargling sand, buddy,” said Wayne and chortled.

“Well, Mr Superstar sounds no better. Machines added and altered his voice,” he said pointing to Kipper.

“Yes, but Kipper has to sing, it is after all his album which he is supposed to have written and performed, and by law, he must be involved on every track,” said Charles. “Besides, you are lucky we let you perform with us at all.”

“Charles is right, you ungrateful sod. You play your guitar on every song,” said Wayne, throwing Boomer a curt glare, “and you were well paid, and will get lots more when we’ve finished and it’s released.”

Boomer looked at the floor feeling chastised as he recalled how they had allowed him to join them on the venture. “Yeah, you’re right, Wayne... sorry Kipper.”

Kipper smiled and pressed an app on his phone. “This is the front cover they’re working on,” he said.

A holographic image of the cover then appeared and slowly rotated.



They looked nodded and smiled. “It looks nice mate,” said Elvin.

Wayne then looked towards the door and said. “Heads up, guys, Chewy’s coming.”

“Oh,” said Charles as he and the others turned to look, “she looks happy about something.”

“Yeah,” chortled Elvin, “and we all know why. Her fancy-man’s here.”

The smirking geriatrics looked at Kipper, who sighed and puckered his brow.

Track Four

“Hello Kipper, ooh, you are looking well,” gushed a smiling Mrs Chew, as she looked gooey-eyed at him. “How are they getting on with your new album?”

Kipper nodded. “They are getting on great Hilda, it’s almost finished. Do you want to watch and listen to what they have done so far?”

Mrs Chew smiled and shook her head. “Not at the moment thanks, Kipper,” she said, and sat beside them on an armchair, looking pensive.

“What’s the matter, Mrs Chew, everything okay?”

“Oh, I’m fine Charles, but I need to discuss something urgent with you all that may affect you working on your record here.”

“And what’s that you old bat? Don’t tell us, you have employed that tasty nurse but she wants to be our groupie.”

Mrs Chew tittered. “No Boomer, I told her nothing about the band or Kippers involvement,” she said and grinned. “Carol turned out to be a veterinary nurse and wanted to geld you.”

“Ha ha! Very funny you old battle-axe,” said Boomer sarcastically and smiled.

“Boomer is correct though,” said Mrs Chew puckering her brow. “I interviewed Carol for the Nursing Sister position to head our new nursing home section Kipper.” She chuckled and smiled at him. “She said she was a big fan of yours but when I offered to introduce her to you she looked nervous and rushed out. She also lives in London and works at a high-end nursing home and care sanctuary in Whitechapel.”

Kipper smiled. “Yeah, the lads mentioned her... several times.” He looked at the four and said. “The dirty old sods.”

Mrs Chew smiled. “Anyhow, I have employed Carol; she is by far the right candidate for the job. Her current employer highly recommended her and she has excellent nursing qualifications and experience in nursing home care.” She then furrowed her brow and said, “The problem is that she needs to live on the premises. Although her nursing staff will be locals and live outside, Carol will be here 24/7 and allowed to go anywhere.”

Boomer sniggered. “She can come to my room anytime.”

Mrs Chew made a scissor motion towards Boomer’s bollocks and smirked.

“And, you think she might come in here and find out about us?” asked Charles, frowning.

Mrs Chew shrugged. “I don’t know Charles, but it is highly likely, especially when she plucks up the courage to speak to Kipper,” Mrs Chew smirked and looked at Kipper. “She’s an attractive, intelligent young woman. I know you will like her when you meet her, Kipper. She only knows you visit the old guys because you are their friend... I have told her nothing else.”

Kipper frowned and stared at the wrinkled old matchmaker as Mrs Chew continued. “She will be eating her meals in the dining room and I imagine she will walk around chatting to you all when she has nothing to do.”

Kipper rubbed his chin and sighed. “I agree, until we get to know and trust her we can’t afford any leaks until the album’s finished.”

“So wot do we do?” asked Elvin. “We still ‘av one track left to write.”

Wayne smiled. “Cosmo said before that he had a spare room upstairs at Baker Street we could use.”

“When does he get back from his holiday?”

“I don’t know, Hilda,” said Kipper. “You know what he’s like; he’s not on any time schedule. He usually comes back when he’s seen and photographed the birds he wanted to see.”

“Yeah, jammy bastard, going all the way to the Philippines and only taking snaps of the feathered variety of birds,” said Boomer, receiving a cutting glare from Mrs Chew.

Boomer had not had a TS episode since the hypnotherapist sessions he’d had over eight months ago. Although he still liked to annoy Mrs Chew, deep down they thought the world of each other as they argued and jokingly abused one another, which Mrs Chew didn’t mind as it reminded her and the others of her battles with ‘old ripey,’ deceased.

Boomer now appeared a happy, humble soul with a wicked, dry, sense of humour. Kipper gave him a large sum of money as an advance on his royalties for the new album, which left Boomer grateful and stress-free.

“That would be an ideal solution if you could use Baker Street, I can’t see Carol venturing there,” said Mrs Chew.

“Won’t matter if she does, if we can use the room upstairs to rehearse,” said Elvin.

Thanks for understanding, I will call Carol and tell her the job is hers if she wants it. She can start next week, which would give you time to get things organised and moved.

Mrs Chew smiled at them and left the recreation room.

“I am sure it will be fine with Paddy, but let’s call Cosmo to let him know we need to use Baker Street. It gives us a good excuse to speak to him and find out how the boring old bird watching is going,” said Kipper, and took out his smartphone.

“Yeah,” chuckled Wayne, “and like Boomer said, most people go to the Philippines to watch birds dancing naked around poles,” said Wayne and sniggered. “Cosmo must be the only person who goes there to watch real birds.”

Elvin chuckled and he and Wayne looked at Charles grinning like a Cheshire cat, recalling his romance with Danni.

Kipper dialled Cosmo’s number and a sleepy-sounding Cosmo answered.

“Hi Kipper, what’s up?” he croaked.

“Hi Cosmo, you sound tired, I am here with Charles, Elvin, Wayne, and Boomer. Can they use your empty room at Baker Street for a while?”

Kipper put the phone on speakerphone and explained their quandary and Cosmo listened and said. “Yeah, no problem. I will call Paddy and get him to send a couple of lads to Fosdyke and move their gear. They can use the spare room upstairs, it’s big enough, and I only keep brewery junk in there so they won’t be disturbed.”

They heard Cosmo yawning and Kipper chuckled and said. “Must be tiring for you doing bugger all except lazing by the pool and drinking cocktails... What time is it there?”

“It’s 11 pm, you Wally, that’s why I sound tired.”

“Sorry, Cosmo, we forgot about the time difference. What’s it like where you are staying?” asked Charles.

“Hi Charles,” said Cosmo, paused, and then told them he was staying in a bungalow in a five-star resort in Cebu.

He then described the Tranquillity Resort and Spa. “It’s set back from the resort’s warm, white, sandy private beach and nestled between an area of palm and tropical fruit trees. The resort and spa had blended into the lush tropical foliage with the chalets, bungalows, restaurants, pool, and spa, offering all modern facilities and services expected in a five-star resort. The scenic location offers spectac...”

“Hang on a minute,” interrupted Kipper. “You’re bloody reading that off their brochure.”

Cosmo sniggered. It sounded an idyllic location and Cosmo seemed to be having a relaxing time until his voice trembled and he relayed his exciting news. “I have to leave early morning because I am going on a jungle trek, twitching. If I find what my guide, Marco, said he saw flying over his village on an island, it

will blow the ornithological world's socks off. I think Marco found a breeding pair of Gold Tipped Hawk-Eagles." Cosmo now sounded wide-awake as his voice trembled with excitement as he explained. "Marco brought me a drawing he'd sketched after seeing the two birds flying high above the village the last time he went home. He found their large eerie high in a tree. He climbed up an adjacent tree and drew the birds and saw three eggs in their nest."

The lads heard Cosmo pouring a glass of water and, after taking a drink, continued. "Marco was unsure as to the species, although very knowledgeable on birds in the area, he had never seen these before. He said he rarely went to his village nowadays because they don't have electricity to charge his camera and other equipment. When he showed me the picture and described the vivid colourings and distinctive markings, I knew what it was right away: a Gold Tipped Hawk-Eagle. He confirmed it when I showed him the only photograph on record of this thought-to-be extinct species. I think he found the Holy Grail."

Kipper feigned a yawn as Cosmo described the bird and they all smirked as he rambled on excitedly about how the last known sighting was decades ago. He told them that a US army photographer took the only photographs on record to show the bird existed in the 1950s, when his squad were on jungle exercises not too far away from where Marco found the breeding pair.

"So," said Cosmo. "We leave early morning by boat to the island, so that's it for luxury living for now. Marco said it would take four or five days. It will take a few days to get to the island, hike through the jungle to the village, photograph the birds, and then another few days to get back here. You can call me Cosmo Grylls the next time we speak," he chuckled. "That's if the bloody insects don't eat me... bloody mozzies are bad here, I can only imagine what they are like in the jungle."

"Yes, and I think you might have more than mosquitoes to worry about in a hot sticky jungle," said Charles sounding concerned. "Venomous snakes and many dangerous beasties live there."

"Make sure you drink plenty of water, Buddy," said Wayne also sounding concerned.

"Yep," said Cosmo. "I am taking all the essentials with me including my solar packs so I can have power in the village to charge my gear. Marco and Erik are taking me; they are used to the journey as they both come from the village, so I am not concerned. They are great blokes and speak perfect English, and love ornithology and wildlife. I will be in safe hands and have my satellite phone with me for emergencies, but I don't envisage any. Have you got my sat phone number, Kipper?"

"Yes," said Kipper and looked concerned when he asked. "Are you sure you will be okay? You're no spring chicken and not exactly a fit specimen."

Cosmo chuckled. "Thanks mate, but I will be fine. I will be well looked after and I can't wait to see the Hawk Eagles, it will be an amazing adventure."

"Okay, well, take care and keep in touch," said Kipper, and the others echoed the sentiment.

"Thanks lads, I will call Paddy and arrange things now. I will be in touch and see you all soon. I can tell you all about my once-in-a-lifetime experience and hopefully new discovery when I get back," said Cosmo, who chuckled and, with a twinge of excitement in his voice added. "I wouldn't miss it for anything. I will be a superstar like you Kips... I will be a twitching god," he sniggered. "Good luck with the album! Bye for now."

"See yah old friend, stay safe," said Kipper, hung up, and looked at the four. "I've never heard him so excited. He sounded like a kid about to lose his cherry."

"Or an old fossil in an Angeles go-go," chuckled Wayne, and he and Elvin looked at Charles and smirked.

"Let's get our old touring instruments ready for the lads from Baker Street to take. It will make a nice change to play the old Yamaha again," said Charles ignoring Wayne and Elvin.

"I will head back to London and make a start first thing tomorrow on 'Dream Chaser' and I will call Cosmo Grylls in a couple of days and let you know how he's doing," said Kipper and chortled.

The two men that Paddy sent from Baker Street arrived an hour later in a van and loaded Charles's Yamaha keyboard, Wayne's drum kit, Elvin and Boomer's guitars, and several speaker amps and leads.

Kipper drove Fossils to Baker Street after a quick spin along the beach road to show off his new Tesla.

“I can hardly hear the engine, it’s very quiet,” said Elvin, as Kipper put his foot down and the car accelerated.

Kipper smirked. “Yep, and it goes like shit off a shovel,” he said, slowing down and going around a mini roundabout and back toward Baker Street.

“Hi lads,” said Paddy. “Cosmo rang and said you were using the spare room. I cleared out most of the rubbish, so there’s plenty of room.”

Paddy gasped and his eyebrows rose when he saw Kipper, who seldom went to Baker Street when in town in case he was recognised, so he had never met Paddy.

“Wow! Aye up Kipper, Cosmo told me you were his mate, but I never believed him. It’s fantastic to meet you. Do ya want a drink... on the ‘ouse?”

“No, but thanks Paddy, I need to get back to London.”

“No problem Kipper, me and the old guys are mates. I will take good care of them until Cosmo gets back... Drink, fellas? ”

Paddy went to the beer pumps and poured the four half a lager each and placed them on the bar.

“The lads put your instruments in the room. Take your drinks up when you’re ready and just holler when you want a refill... You know the way.”

“Thanks Paddy,” said Wayne, handing the others their beer and they sat at a table.

Kipper looked at his watch. “I’d better set off back to London. I will let you know when ‘Dream Chaser’ is finished. Keep in touch and take care.”

They said their farewells to Kipper, and Paddy, seeing Kipper stand, came from around the bar, took a selfie with him, and shook his hand.

Kipper smiled and left.

Paddy went up to the room with Fossils and showed them the electrical sockets. “There you go, fellas, you can plug your instruments in there. Anything you need just shout. I will get one of the bar staff to bring you up a coffee machine, cups, a kettle, and the makings, so you can make yourselves a brew. Owt else you need, just let me know.”

“Thank you Paddy, we will just set up for now and perhaps join you later for another beer,” said Charles and took a swig of his lager.

Paddy went downstairs to the empty function room bar, smiled, looked at his selfie with Kipper, and hoped now that his old mates were there, he would see a lot more of him. “That’ll impress the birds at Lite-House when I show them this and tell them I am his mate.”

Paddy looked at Steve’s old Stratocaster in a case hanging on the function room wall. Cosmo had told him that his old mate Steve, who died, was a member of a local band and told him that the band had played at the bar when it was the ‘Wellow.’

Cosmo had told Paddy when he called that they were Steve’s old band. Paddy knew from the brass plaque on the case how old Steve was when he passed, so assumed the band hadn’t played there for decades, judging by the ages of his band members upstairs, and when he’d asked the band’s name, Cosmo chuckled and told him they were called - The Gobs.

The large room upstairs smelt fusty and aged. Cosmo had used it as a storeroom for many years and although Paddy had it quickly cleaned and dusted, it still had a damp fungi aroma with layers of dust in several places. The windows at the front and side looked opaque because they hadn’t been cleaned for years. However, they let enough sunlight in to bathe the room... showing minute dust particles hovering around the room. The stuff that Cosmo had stored was junk and old promotional items from various

breweries he'd used over the years, some of which Paddy had trashed as per Cosmo's instructions. The other items he had stored in the corner of the large, 15x15m² room above the function room.

Charles looked around the room and at the high ceiling and smiled. "Right," he said. "Let's set up and do a sound check. I think the acoustics will sound great in here."

Charles was correct. With the large empty room providing an echo, they all smiled as they played, recorded, and then played back 'Dream Chaser,' on Wayne's iPad.

"Sounds better than it did in Fossdyke," said Boomer, and they all agreed.

"I think that's all we can do today. We can think about the last track tomorrow."

"Yeah, we can buy comfy armchairs and spend the days 'ere," said Elvin, touching one of the many large old radiators. "It will be nice and warm."

"The lighting there will be okay to set up the video equipment when we are ready," said Wayne, pointing to a spot near the window behind them, "but we are a long way off that."

Fossils went downstairs and, with the main bar/restaurant being crowded, they went into the function room. Cosmo employed plenty of staff to cover the busy daytime trade, so Paddy went with them to the empty room.

Paddy poured them another half pint of lager and himself a whisky and they went to sit at their regular table. With no customers going into the function room during the day, it was quiet and their voices echoed around the plush room as they spoke.

Paddy pointed to Steve's Stratocaster guitar and said. "Cosmo didn't tell me anything about you. What music did The Gobs play?" He shrugged. "I'm sorry, but I have never heard of you so you must have been playing before my time. No disrespect lads, but aren't you a little old to be performing?"

Charles, Elvin, and Wayne, taken aback, looked at one another and shrugged.

Charles, then realising Cosmo must have made the name up on the spot and Paddy knew nothing, chuckled, and said. "No Paddy, we are not performing and The Gobs only played local pubs and clubs decades ago," he smiled.

"Yeah," said Elvin, carrying on with the tale. "We are only 'aving fun now. They turned some parts of our old folks 'ome into a nursing 'ome, so we needed somefing to do to get out of there during the day."

Charles nodded. "We've known young Kipper for years and, knowing we were musicians, suggested we get back into music and have a bit of fun."

"Yeah," said Boomer, and I'm the new boy, so want to show them what I can do. I used to play with Procol Harum."

Paddy smiled and tried to look impressed, even though he had never heard of Procol Harum

Paddy's eyes widened. "Cosmo said Kipper/Fossils, used to play here, but he was vague and I never believed him."

"Oh, we know nothing about that. We never came to any functions... they were on too late for us old un's," said Charles, and Elvin and Wayne smirked.

Paddy looked at the four and smiled. He had only known them for a short time and used to seeing Elvin wearing falsies, but the ones he wore now looked different.

"Bass playing falsies," chuckled Elvin, wiggling his prosthetics after noticing Paddy looking. "They work, but I'm not sure whether my playing does... it's been a long time."

"Yes," said Charles smirking, "it has for us all."

"So what sort of music did you play?" asked Paddy, looking intrigued before taking a sip of whisky.

"Oh," said Charles looking at the others. "Rock and Roll mainly, we covered songs from the greats, like Buddy Holly, Bill Haley and other popular artists from our era."

“Yeah, and Chubby Checker,” said Elvin, grinned, stood, and sang. “*Let’s twist again, like we did last summer... let’s twist again...*”

He swung his shoulders side-wards with his arms up and was about to demonstrate the twist when he felt a twinge and grimaced. Remembering what happened earlier, he stopped, smiled, and sat. “Well, you know the one.”

Paddy smiled and nodded, although he didn’t have a clue who the old bands mentioned were, and had never heard of them, let alone listened to any of their music.

“I will make sure you won’t be disturbed,” smiled Paddy, thinking: ‘I can guarantee I won’t be watching these old farts squawking that ancient rubbish.’

“Another drink?” he asked, taking their empty glasses and walking to the bar, humming Ed Sheeran’s, ‘Shape of you.’

Elvin puckered his brow. “Why The Gobs?” he whispered as Paddy poured the drinks.

“He couldn’t say we were the real Fossils, Buddy, could he?”

Elvin glanced at Wayne and furrowed his brow, “I know that but why The Gobs?”

Charles, Boomer, and Wayne shrugged.

Elvin then chuckled, looked at Boomer, and said. “Maybe it’s short for gobshite.”

Wayne and Charles sniggered as Boomer frowned, threw Elvin a curt glance, and snapped. “It can’t be me. I ain’t known Cosmo long.”

“I wuz only joking mate,” said Elvin, smiling. “We can go along with being called The Gobs and find out more when Cosmo gets back... shush, here comes Paddy.”

“Here, fellas,” said Paddy, placing three halves of lager and 3 whiskies on the table. “Cosmo told me to take care of you and I know you like whisky.”

Several hours later, the four Gobs staggered along the pavement back to Fosdyke.

Still light when Susan arrived in London, she pulled into a parking space on the road outside her and Billy’s squalid apartment. She looked out of the windscreen and smiled. ‘I hope Billy got home early and has the wine chilled,’ she thought.

Susan walked down the crumbling concrete steps to their basement flat, opened the old wooden door, and went in.

The apartment smelt of mould, with black patches on several walls. Their Pakistani landlord kept promising to fix it, but as he kept threatening to put up their rent, they said nothing to remind him or complain as they couldn’t afford anything better.

“Hi Susan,” said Billy, when she came into the small living room. Billy went to the fridge, took out a bottle of chilled Prosecco, and two wine glasses off the kitchen table and sat with her on the tatty sofa. He placed the glasses on the coffee table, popped the cork, and poured the sparkling wine. “If things go to plan, we can get back to drinking Dom Pérignon and no more of this cheap bilge water. How did things go?” he asked, sounding excited as he handed her a glass.

Susan took a sip of wine, nodded, and said. “Cleethorpes was a shithole, but the interview went great; apart from Kipper turning up unexpectedly.”

Billy smiled and said. “Don’t worry about that, I called my contact who will let me know every time Kipper leaves London, so you will have plenty of time to make yourself scarce. You said Lucy Fosdyke seldom visited, so it looks like that Cosmo Corrigan character will be our only concern when he gets back from the Philippines... that’s if you get the job.” He frowned, sneered, and said. “Don’t worry, we can deal with him later.”

Susan took another sip of wine and looked worried as she sighed. "He's not my only concern Billy, I know nothing about nursing," she shuddered, "and I hate the sight of blood."

"Don't worry, Susan, I doubt you will see any blood, you would just be a manager and leave the nursing to your nursing staff. You were a great manager and Jane showed you what you needed to do, and you said it sounded simple. All you need to do is make a contact list of the doctors Fossdyke used and get to know them. You will soon have them all eating out of your hands, darling," said Billy smirking.

Susan nibbled her lower lip and looked uneasy. She was confident when this was in the planning stage, but now Billy's scheming and planning were coming to fruition, she felt unsure.

Even though Jane had shown her how to run a nursing home and assured her that it was an administrative role, she'd told her the most difficult situation she would encounter was if a patient died in the home. That sounded like a lot of complicated work. Susan had never seen a dead body let alone had to cope with the processes involved. Jane advised her if a patient's condition was life-threatening, and with Fossdyke also being a private nursing home, she wouldn't have to accept them. That eased Susan's mind until Mrs Chew told her Fossdyke would accept any patients referred to them, private, and NHS.

"Oh, hang on darling," said Billy. He put down his wine and picked up his old Samsung Galaxy off the coffee table, read a new message, and smirked.

"Jane sent me a message. She said Mrs Chew called her a few hours ago and that's what she told her."

Billy smiled and handed the phone to Susan who read the SMS about what Jane Sinclair had told Mrs Chew about her, and she had reiterated what Susan had told her.

Billy smirked, "She must have believed the forged qualification certificates, otherwise, she wouldn't have called Jane, and with Jane's glowing reference and what she told her earlier, it looks like the job's yours."

"Hmm, I suppose so," said Susan, and her hands trembled as she took another sip of wine and thought, 'I still hope I don't get the job, it will not be as easy as we think.'

"Tell me about Fossils, especially this new man, Boomer."

Susan cringed and said. "He was a horrible old leech Billy. His face looked like an anaemic prune." She juddered, "and he kept glaring at me. I think if Mrs Chew and the others weren't there he would have been over me like a rash."

Billy smirked. "He sounds like the one you needed to work on, he will give us the most information. He wasn't involved with all the trouble before, and the others must trust him enough to let him in the band. Maybe a bit of seduction and he will tell you what we need to know."

Susan gasped. "Billy!" she snapped. "I am not a hooker, you bastard."

Billy, taken aback, chuckled. "I'm only joking darling," he said, grinning.

Seeing the rage in Susan's eyes, he picked up the television remote off the coffee table, tutted, and put it down. "Damn, I forgot the television's on the blink."

He leant over and kissed Susan. "We will have to find something else to do," he grinned and eased her legs up. Susan smiled and lay back on the tatty sofa, legs akimbo.

Billy eased off her panties and stroked Susan's moist chalice.

Susan groaned with pleasure as Billy massaged her little man in the boat before he replaced his fingers with his tongue.

Susan groaned for several minutes until she felt herself close to climaxing and she panted. Billy knew she was close to finishing and thought about the blowjob Susan would give him after he'd finished servicing her and he became aroused. He lapped Susan's love juices rigorously as her groaning and panting increased.

"Yes Billy, yes Billy," wailed Susan, holding his head between her legs.

Susan's phone then rang.

“Shit,” mumbled Billy.

“Don’t stop, don’t stop,” implored Susan as Billy pulled off her saturated geysir and looked at her.

“You’d better answer it, it could be important,” he said, wiping his mouth with his hand, before handing her the phone off the table.

Susan swung her legs off the sofa, and through glazed disappointed eyes, looked at the number.

“Oh,” she said and answered. “Hello, Hilda.”

Billy saw Susan smiling as she spoke to Mrs Chew and he smirked; knowing she had the job at Fossdyke, he topped up their wine glasses.

“Thank you Hilda, I look forward to seeing you then,” said Susan several minutes later and hung up.

She looked at Billy. “I have the job, and Mrs Chew told me to start Monday.”

Susan smiled as Billy handed her a glass.

“That’s fantastic darling,” he said chinking his glass against hers, “well done.” He could see Susan looked apprehensive as she took a sip and he said. “Good, that gives us 5 days to arrange things with Ollie. I called him earlier and he said he would be here when he’d raised enough money for the journey. He said it might take him a couple of days, as he needed to borrow the money from his parents to get here.”

Susan forced a smile, nodded, and sipped her wine.

Billy grinned, took the glass off her, placed it on the table, kissed her, slid his hand beneath her dishevelled skirt, and whispered. “Let’s go to bed and finish what we started.”

Susan juddered when Billy found her sweet spot and nodded.

Billy removed his hand and the pair stood. Billy picked up the two glasses, grinned, and said. “Why don’t you put on your nurses uniform?”

Several days later, Ollie arrived at their flat during the evening.

Ollie looked rough, with his pallid complexion, sunken eyes, and now shaven head, he resembled an anorexic Fester Addams. He sat on the tatty sofa and Susan made him a cup of cheap instant coffee.

Ollie now lived with his parents. For the past few years, he, Billy, and Susan had had a terrible existence.

The deal they’d had with John Sopel, the senior investigative reporter with Channel Four’s Dispatches program, fell through even before it got started, due to the selfish bastard dying.

Fortunately for the trio, he’d disclosed none of the information they’d given him, so those secrets died with him. Unfortunately for the trio, the proof they’d given John, the cell phone containing video footage that Ollie was given in Cleethorpes, photographs taken at the Wellow, and Steve’s funeral, were all destroyed when Channel Four cleared out Sopel’s office.

With Billy and Susan demoted to the lowest positions possible, they were now little more than gophers with Virgin and the BBC, on minimum wage.

With the threat of charges of fraud being brought against them by their companies powerful legal machines hanging over them should they leave or pursue Kipper and, with the BBC and Virgin executives wanting them around to ensure they didn’t try anything, the pair felt trapped.

Billy and Susan had been waiting a long time for another opportunity to clear their name and get back at the two powerful companies... and Kipper.

Billy heard rumours from an old work colleague several months earlier that Kipper was producing a new album. Billy’s contact had confirmed it, later telling him that Kipper had only a few tracks left to write and produce to complete the album. Billy, knowing Kipper would use Fossils to make the album, formulated his plan and needed Ollie’s skills as an investigative journalist.

They knew they needed to be cautious and understood the challenges they faced once they had their proof that Kipper had duped the British nation years ago. Billy needed to somehow let the populace know about the deception when the new album's released. He knew when the shit hit the fan; he and Susan would regain their money, power, and reputations. They had nothing now, so had nothing to lose.

Billy and Susan knew they had to act fast. They only had a month to get enough evidence they needed before Susan would tell Mrs Chew she was unhappy and wanted to leave Fossdyke and return to her old job in London.

They hoped that nothing about her phoney name surfaced before then, and knowing the inefficiency within the employment and taxation departments in England nowadays, they were confident that nothing would.

With Susan not having taken time off for holidays for years, and knowing the longest period anyone was allowed was one month, She told her department manager that she wanted a month off, but wasn't sure when. The day after Mrs Chew called; Susan booked a month's holiday, starting from Monday. Her boss at Virgin wasn't unduly concerned at the short notice as Susan was a pain in the arse at work and he, and Susan's workmates, didn't like her. She still had the brash arrogance from when she was a major department head, and she had insulted and verbally abused her current boss on many occasions in the past. Now, everyone in the department was her boss, even the offices' African grey parrot. The staff on the section tittered when Susan came in and the parrot saw her from its cage outside the manager's office. In a posh voice, it said. "Ah, Mzz McHale, would you kindly clean up my poop?" Susan smiled but felt enraged; she knew by the parrot's mimicry that her boss had taught the parrot to say it. She hoped their plan would work so she could exact her revenge on the man, his insignificant department, and the bloody parrot.

Unlike the devious duo, Ollie wasn't seeking revenge. He liked the old fellas and only wanted to complete and publish his exclusive story, regain his reputation as a journalist, and get out of poverty. But most of all, make his disappointed dad proud of him again.

Ollie now lived with his parents in County Durham. He was still treated like a leper within the journalist society, after James Wilson, Editor-in-Chief of the Daily Nation, tarnished his reputation years ago. No mainstream media outlets would touch his stories and before long, his bad reputation had grown nationwide, and he had spent the past few years on benefits. His journalist father had retired and Ollie gave all his paltry benefit money to them for letting him stay. Embarrassed by his son, Oliver Smith Senior had retired early, with he himself also tarnished with his son's bad reputation. The once close bond between the two was under strain and Ollie Snr was desperate to help his son.

Ollie spent most of his time nowadays on his laptop, researching and keeping in contact with several journalistic friends. Realising he was like Judas in the journalistic circles, they trusted him enough to let him help with their research. Knowing he could never steal their stories as he could do nothing with the information.

As they drank coffee and chatted, Billy bought over a cardboard box. "I've begged borrowed and stolen these from the BBC investigative reporters' trash bins over the past few weeks. Some might be crap and not work but can you check them out Ollie?" he said opening the box, taking out a spy cam, and handing it to Ollie.

"Sure," said Ollie, taking out his laptop and leads. "I bought a few with me that work, so I will check the ones you have and show Sue how to use them. They are wireless so simple to use, and as long as you have a good laptop, I can set your system up. All you needed to do was make sure they are hidden in places that gave the best views."

Susan sighed. "My laptop was top of the range when I bought it five years ago. I haven't used it for ages. Not much call for a laptop when all you do all day is run around coffee shops and sandwich bars, photocopy needless shit, and clean parrot crap." Susan forced a smile and asked. "Can you give me an idea of the best places and how to hide them, Ollie?"

Ollie puckered his brow, looking confused by Susan's job description. "No problem," he said as he put the spy camera on the table and said. "That one worked okay."

Billy smiled, handed Ollie another spy cam, moved his eyebrows up and down, and said. “You’d better not put one in Boomer’s room; I might get jealous if I saw it.”

Susan ignored him and fetched Ollie’s bedding for his next few nights sleeping on their sofa while they planned and prepared before Susan drove to Cleethorpes early Monday morning.

Track Five

Too excited and unable to sleep, Cosmo had a restless night.

He lay awake, looked at his watch, and sighed. ‘Three-thirty, Marco and Erik won’t be here for another few hours,’ he thought, rolled out of bed, and refilled the percolator with fresh ground coffee.

The machine gurgled while Cosmo sat on the bed. He looked at his backpack on the floor and several rigid camera bags, his iPad in its hard case, and solar battery packs and lights. ‘I hope I packed everything,’ he thought, ‘I will check again, just to be certain.’

Cosmo unpacked his survival pack from the large 60L backpack and tested the Lifestraw personal water filter in the toilet again. He made sure again that all his batteries were fully charged and wiped the small solar panels on the chargers and his cameras and binocular lenses... again. He put a dollop of cream from a large tub into a small plastic container and put it on the bed, ‘I will use this on the boat,’ he thought and put the larger tub back into the backpack.

A few hours later, he heard a car pulling up outside.

“Magandang Umaga, Cosmo, are you ready?” asked Marco smiling as he walked into the bungalow.

“Good morning Marco, yep, I’m ready,” said Cosmo, slinging the backpack over his shoulder. He picked up his iPad and binoculars and Marco took the other baggage. They loaded everything into the boot of Erik’s car, next to the two small rucksacks that his Filipino guides had.

The short drive was pleasant as the morning sunlight shone across the coast road and Cosmo saw the calm ocean and smiled. ‘Good, I hate bumpy sea crossings,’ he thought.

After a twenty-minute drive, Erik drove through a small village where the aroma of dead fish lingered in the air. Cosmo frowned. “It stinks like Grimsby docks,” he said and wound up the window of the car. Erik pulled up at a small rickety wooden jetty and Marco pointed.

Cosmo looked confused as he saw a small wooden fishing boat.

“Get on board Cosmo and we will load our gear.”

“I thought you said we are going by ferry Marco, that’s a fishing boat,” said Cosmo, pointing at the wooden fishing vessel.

Marco shook his head, smiled, and said. “That is the only transportation available to take us because no ferries go to my island... so this is our ferry,” he chuckled.

“Oh,” said Cosmo sounding surprised and feeling unnerved.

“Don’t worry my friend, I know the Captain, and he makes this journey regularly. It is a sturdy boat in any weather,” said Marco and placed a hand on Cosmo’s shoulder. “Now, get aboard, the Captain wants to leave before the tide turns.”

Cosmo nodded and walked along a thin wooden plank and got aboard the vessel. A crewman helped him walk along a narrow piece of the deck at the side of the wheelhouse and took him astern where the crew had hung a tarpaulin over the deck, and Cosmo sat underneath on a straw mat and watched the Filipino crew make ready to sail.

The smiling crewmen looked at Cosmo and said. “Kamusta, *Hello*”

Cosmo smiled back and returned the greeting. The boat reeked of rotten fish and Cosmo saw nets bundled under a storage compartment to his side.

The skipper barked out orders from his wheelhouse and then a puff of black smoke spewed from the small deck exhaust pipe as the engines started.

Marco and Erik came and sat with Cosmo after storing the baggage in the small cramped crew quarters below decks. Marco smiled and handed Cosmo his iPad bag. “Keep this with you, it will give you something to do during the voyage,” he said.

“Thanks, I will use it while we are sailing, what’s the name of your island Marco?”

Marco smiled and said. “It’s called ‘Mata ng ahas bato,’ Cosmo, which roughly translated means, Snake-Eye rock.”

“Oh,” said Cosmo taken aback, and with a nervous twinge in his voice, asked. “Why? Is it full of snakes?”

Marco smiled. “Don’t worry you won’t see many snakes, if any at all. That’s not the reason we call it Snake-Eye rock, you will see why when we get there.”

“Good,” said Cosmo. “I’ll google it when I get a clear signal.”

Marco grinned and shook his head. “You won’t find it on google or any tourist maps or sea charts. It’s tiny and there’s only one village on the island, and the beach was too narrow and rocky to attract tourism. Besides, you won’t be able to get any signals on the island and only for short periods when we are at sea.”

“Oh!” exclaimed Cosmo, “so how long will it take to get there?”

“Oh, it should take us around five hours,” said Marco and smiled.

Cosmo put down his iPad bag, took the small container from his pocket, and smeared the sunblock over his exposed forearms, face, and neck.

The fishing boat headed west along the clear blue Comotes Sea, passing through the Sulu archipelago. While the crew played a board game with Marco and Erik, Cosmo played a game on his iPad that he’d downloaded several days earlier.

The small vessel cut through the water, passing close to high mountainous jungle-covered islands along the archipelago.

With Marco losing the game they were playing, he decided to remove junk from his smartphone and free up some memory. He looked at his files and smirked. ‘I won’t need that one now,’ he thought and deleted the page he’d previously downloaded: ‘Rare and Thought Extinct Birds of Asia.’

Cosmo felt nauseous along the way by the smell of the black diesel smoke billowing from the exhaust and the smell of rotten fish. The sun beat down on the small vessel, although the thick blue tarp offered little protection, he couldn’t escape the blistering heat as warm sea breezes caressed the deck. Having brought a small cold box of bottled water with them, Cosmo went below decks and took a bottle from the box. He left the hot, claustrophobic compartment, returned to the deck, and drank the cool refreshing liquid, splashing some sparingly over his face and neck. He knew the few bottles he’d brought with him wouldn’t last long and realised he would be unable to get more on the island.

The boat’s crew, Marco and Erik were oblivious to the heat as they chatted and played the noisy game, slamming wood domino shaped pieces onto a wooden board, laughing and rambling in Filipino when one of them got knocked out or won. Cosmo, only knowing a few basics of the Filipino language, concentrated on his computer game.

Cosmo had just eaten the cheese baguette from his cold box when a crewman came on deck with a steaming hot pot of fish head stew and rice.

The skipper and crew, Marco, and Erik sat in a circle on the deck floor looking happy as they scooped the fish stew into wooden bowls with a dollop of rice, while Cosmo barfed his cheese baguette over the side.

‘How can these young men look so lean and muscular eating that shit all day,’ he thought as another chunk of soggy bread and undigested cheese hit the water.

Cosmo felt drained but relieved several hours later when Marco pointed to an island not too far away and said. “We’re almost there Cosmo.”

Thirty minutes later, as Cosmo glared into the clear shallow waters of a bay, the engines stopped and a crewman threw in the anchor.

“We have to wade from here Cosmo. The Captain can’t get any closer, it’s too shallow for the boat, but it’s a sandy bottom, so easy to walk on.”

The shore didn’t look too far away and Cosmo looked down into the crystal water at the rippled sand as a crewman hooked a metal ladder over the side. “How deep is it here, Marco?”

“Not too deep and the crew will help carry our stuff ashore.”

Cosmo went down the thin metal ladder into the warm blue water that came up to his chest. He smiled and waded toward shore.

The others followed behind, carrying the bags above their heads.

Cosmo walked out of the sea and looked at a large rock close by. The large boulder was oval shaped with a vertical elliptical shaped hole at its centre.

‘Oh,’ he thought, ‘that’s why the island’s called Snake-Eye rock.’

Marco and Erik waded ashore and walked past Cosmo. “We have a hut at the edge of the jungle, we will stay there,” said Marco. Cosmo followed the pair the short distance across the hot sand to the edge of the jungle, where a small wooden dried palm-leaf-roofed hut nestled under a clearing in the shade of the dense tree canopy.

“Here,” said Marco, and he and Erik put the backpacks inside.

The fishing boat crew dropped off the rest of their baggage and waded back to the boat. The boat churned up the silt as it reversed out of the shallows, leaving a brown patch of sand stained water in its wake, which soon dissipated, leaving the clear shallow bay, once again looking pristine.

Cosmo felt relaxed sitting under the shade of a large palm tree, with its thick brown trunk resembling light brown pineapple skin, with densely packed green fan-shaped segmented leaves of its canopy providing a welcome relief from the blistering afternoon sun. He sat on the sand outside the hut, gazing out over the ocean, and smiled. ‘It’s beautiful here, very quiet and tranquil,’ he thought. ‘It looks like a picture postcard of a deserted tropical island. All I need is a beach bar serving ice cold beer served by an olive-skinned beauty,’ he sniggered.

“Here Cosmo, you only have one cold bottle of water left,” said Marco handing him a bottle.

Cosmo chuckled and smirked at Marco as he unscrewed the top and took a drink. ‘Not quite the olive-skinned beauty I had in mind,’ he chuckled.

Cosmo heard faint bird calls from the trees further back into the tropical jungle and smiled.

Marco and Erik came from the hut and laid an inter-woven straw mat on the sand.

“Don’t sit on the sand my friend, there are too many sand-flies and the bites are painful and annoying.”

Cosmo sat on the mat and Marco said. “It will be too hot for you to travel through the jungle to the village today. We can stay here and leave first thing in the morning.” He pointed to the hut. “The villagers built this so they could come here and fish. A few men come every few weeks and stock up with sea fish because the river fish in the village streams are not as tasty. We also use the hut to wait for a boat off the island.”

“How long will it take us to get to your village?” asked Cosmo, eager to get his first glimpse of the Hawk-Eagles.

Marco smiled. “It’s difficult to say because we usually hike as soon as we get here and stay at a transit shack overnight. We get to our village the following morning, but it is too hot for you to be able to travel through the jungle in the afternoon. Even though it’s the start of the rainy season, it rains very little here and you will find it too hard going. You are a lot older than us, and a little unfit.”

Cosmo chuckled and nodded. “Thanks Marco, I’ve already been reminded by my mate in England that I am no spring chicken.”

“Plus, we have a lot more gear to take with us, we normally only bring small rucksacks,” said Erik.

Marco nodded and said. “Erik and I will go fishing. You stay here, it will be too hot for you on the rocks so take a look around and we will see you later.”

Cosmo nodded and the two Filipinos took small fishing nets from the space beneath the low stilted hut and headed off along the beach toward the rocks.

Cosmo finished his water and thought, ‘I’ll just potter around here,’ he looked at his watch. ‘It’s 12:30, the boat made good time.’ He looked pensive and smiled. ‘That lazy little bollix will still be festering in his pit. Let’s see how he likes getting woken at silly o’clock,’ he sniggered, went into the hut, took out his satellite phone from his backpack, and switched it on. He got a signal and called Kipper.

Cosmo spent the afternoon close to the hut. After lathering himself with sunblock, he explored around the rocks on the beach. Cosmo hadn’t seen many tropical beaches on his travels, preferring to be bird watching from nature trails, but he could see the attraction and felt amazed by the sea life in the shallow rock pools. He took a few snaps with his DSLR camera and thought. ‘I will buy an aquarium when I get home.’

He wanted to identify and photograph the bird calls that he’d heard earlier. He’d recognised some individual bird chirps and squawks, but after walking a little way into the jungle which looked dark and menacing, he imagined what monsters could be lurking and watching him. Cosmo quivered, thought, ‘sod that,’ went back to the hut, and listened to audio files of tropical bird calls on his iPad.

Early evening as the sun cooled, Cosmo walked along the beach to see if he could find Marco and Erik. He knew the sun set around 7 pm in the Philippines and he felt hungry, as the last meal, he had deposited over the side of the boat. The thought of eating fish again churned his stomach and the smell of rotten fish still lingered on his clothes. Along with the sickly coconut smell of his sunblock covered skin but fearful of sharks, he decided not to wash it off in the ocean.

“Hi Cosmo,” said Marco, coming around the rocks. “Sorry we took so long, you must be hungry.”

“Starving,” said Cosmo, as Marco and Erik held up two plastic bags containing fish.

“We will cook a few of these, which we can eat with these,” he said holding up two coconuts.

“Great,” said Cosmo. “Fish and coconut, two of my favourite things,” he grimaced as they all walked back to the hut.

While Marco gutted and prepared the fish and coconuts, Erik lit a fire using charcoal stored under the hut.

Although Cosmo envisioned eating the fish head and coconut stew, the smell of the barbequed fish smelt good as fillets sizzled on a flat stone above the fire. Cosmo’s stomach rumbled as he swatted away the insects hovering around him.

They sat on the straw mat and tucked into a veritable feast. Along with the fresh chunks of plump Snapper and the creamy coconut sauce, Erik had boiled vegetables he had collected from the jungle.

“That was delicious,” said Cosmo, patting his stomach. “I just need a beer to wash it down,” he chuckled and looked at the spectacular view of the sun setting over the horizon. “Wow!” he exclaimed.

They chatted for several hours around the fire and Cosmo told them of his previous twitching adventures... again. The Filipinos saw how excited he was every time he mentioned the Hawk-Eagles. He repeatedly told them how grateful he was to them for giving him a once in a lifetime opportunity, and how he couldn’t wait to see and photograph the birds. Marco and Erik listened and smiled.

The full silvery moon glowed over a calm sea and Cosmo took in the wonder of the breathtakingly starry night as the ocean glistened and Cosmo felt euphoric as he went behind the hut and took a leak.

Inside the small wooden hut, Marco and Erik had set up their bamboo hammocks and hung Cosmo's quilted sleeping bag hammock with a mosquito net attached, to the walls. With all their baggage, there was little room to move in the small hut.

"We have an early start so we better turn in," said Marco, and Erik threw a pile of bark onto the fire, which billowed out thick white clouds of smoke.

Cosmo coughed at the strange smelling smoke as it filled his nostrils.

"That should keep the mosquitoes and other insects away," said Erik, "they get worse later."

'You could have done that earlier,' thought Cosmo, scratching the bites he had already received as they went inside the hut.

Exhausted from lack of sleep the previous night, the boat journey, the day on the beach, and the big fish supper, Cosmo fell straight to sleep.

Five hours later, he sat on the mat on the sand outside watching the ocean and enjoying the sea breeze.

He had woken up earlier covered in sweat and felt stifled under the mosquito net. Although lying on top of his quilted sleeping bag, the heat inside the hut felt unbearable. With a small opening for a window cut in the side of a wooden wall, there was no ventilation. He tossed and turned for a while, and when he heard a faint whining buzz from within his mozzzy net and, realising one of the little beggars was in there, he unzipped the hammock and climbed out. With his eyes now accustomed to the dark and the moonlight shining onto the hut, he tread carefully so not to disturb the sleeping Filipinos, took the last bottle of cold water from his cooler box, and went outside. He knew that would be the last cool drink he would get until they got back to civilization. 'But I suppose the cold box is one less thing to lug with us,' he thought and sighed as he sipped the cool water.

Several hours later, Cosmo watched the sun rising. It was glorious and Cosmo had never seen such a dramatic sunrise before. The cloudless sky glowed orange as the sun made its appearance over the horizon. The night sky looked like someone had turned up a dimmer switch as it changed to a bright sky blue as dawn now reigned on the tranquil Philippine island.

"Good morning Cosmo," said Marco standing in the doorway of the hut. "We will eat breakfast and set off," he said and smiled. Erik relit the fire with charcoal and cooked more fish while Marco boiled water and went into the hut. He smirked as he put something into the pot of boiling water, scooped out a mugful, and handed it to Cosmo. "Here drink this," he said, "it will give you energy," he and Erik smirked.

Cosmo looked into the murky brown fluid. 'It must be a jungle herb, it looks disgusting,' he thought as he tentatively took a sip and his eyebrows rose. "It tastes like... tea."

Marco and Erik burst out laughing as Marco fished several pyramid t-bags from the pot.

"It's a good job one of us came prepared," said Cosmo and chuckled before taking another drink, "where on earth did you find Tetley tea?" he asked.

They ate barbeque fish before setting off toward Marco and Erik's village, with Cosmo carrying Marco and Erik's small light rucksacks slung on his back along with his iPad and binoculars. He resembled a packhorse with everything hung around his neck and shoulders.

Marco and Erik carried Cosmo's backpack, camera, video equipment, and bags of the remaining fish.

Dressed in a long sleeve thin shirt, long trousers, and hiking boots, Cosmo soon felt hot, sticky, and exhausted, as he lagged a short distance behind Marco and Erik, who hacked away the low overgrown foliage with machetes.

Even though they followed the familiar trail, with overgrown and tangled vegetation at ground level, the going was tough for Cosmo who swatted flies that relentlessly buzzed around him. They stopped several times for Cosmo to catch his breath and take a drink of brown warm stream water, which he drank through his Lifestraw filter. Overhead, the branches of the giant trees' leafy canopies adjoined, shading them from the sun's rays, keeping the air a little cooler during the morning.

The going was slow and, after five hours of trekking through the sticky jungle, Cosmo looked pale and uncomfortable with his clothes drenched in sweat. Marco and Erik realised they would not make it anywhere close to the village that day as they hadn't even reached the halfway transit stop.

They feared for Cosmo's safety as he looked exhausted and when the tropical forest heated with the midday sun, he'd complained of headaches and the Filipinos realised he was dehydrated. They knew if they made it to the transit shack they would be okay and could rest there and continue the following morning. However, due to the constant stoppages, the journey that usually took them a few hours was taking twice as long with Cosmo and they knew they couldn't travel through the jungle at night.

Cosmo had lost all passion for the quest as he sat on the ground in a small clearing near the trail. 'What the fuck was I thinking?' he thought, cupping his throbbing head in his hands. Survival now was the only concern of the middle-aged pub landlord and he was not holding up well.

"We need to get you to water my friend, so we need to push on," said Marco, looking concerned.

Marco and Erik took what Cosmo carried, helped him to his feet, and continued their slow trek through dense vegetation with dead fallen leaves crunching underfoot as they walked along the trail.

"We're almost there," said Marco thirty minutes later, and Cosmo heard running water.

They walked out from the undergrowth and Cosmo breathed a sigh of relief.

He jumped into the cool refreshing pool fed from a small waterfall. Cosmo looked elated as he wailed and gulped mouthfuls of cool refreshing water. "Don't drink too fast," said Marco as he and Erik got into the pool.

Once refreshed, the rippling stream and small cascades of water tumbling over the rocks and bird song made Cosmo feel his joy for life again. He appreciated the brightness of the scene and the beauty of this tropical forest. The air had a damp musky smell and the green moss that covered the large boulders in the pool looked like different shades of Jade.

Marco and Erik now felt relieved, knowing the hard part was over and after a good rest, they would reach the village the following morning.

After an hour in the pool, they got out and went to a nearby clearing where a thin corrugated tin roof supported by wooden struts stood. It had four cloth hammocks attached to the struts that hung a few feet above the wooden base.

"We're at the transit stop," said Marco, and put their bags on the wooden floor. "We can stay here and rest until morning," he said, much to the relief of Cosmo.

Marco opened one of the plastic bags of fish and a stench of fish going rotten hit Cosmo, making him retch.

Marco spoke to Erik who nodded and went into the jungle. "You rest my friend; we will smoke all the fish and prepare a meal for us with some."

Cosmo smiled, got into a hammock, and, as it gently rocked, he fell asleep.

Cosmo awoke with a start. 'Where am I?' he thought and, as his faculties returned, he smirked and looked over the side of the hammock.

Now twilight, he saw Marco and Erik sitting on their haunches beside a fire, with thick bamboo sections suspended over charcoal fuelled flames. Cosmo saw a large conical bamboo structure above another fire, with smoke billowing out from the top, making the surrounding air smell smoky and aromatic.

Cosmo groaned when he moved, every muscle and bone in his body ached as Marco asked. "Did you have a good sleep Cosmo?"

"Fantastic," said Cosmo, trying to sit his weary old carcass up in the hammock. He swung his legs over the side and stood.

Creaking his neck and shoulders, he felt his old tired joints clicking. He heard crickets chirping and frogs croaking as he went to sit on the floor next to the Filipinos.

“Food will be ready soon,” said Erik, and went to fetch Cosmo water from the pool, while Marco cut the tops off coconuts.

“Thanks Marco,” said Cosmo, as Marco handed him a scorched bamboo segment and removed a section cut in the top. “That smells delicious,” he said, smelling the boiled vegetables in the stew still bubbling in his bamboo pot. Erik brought him over a filleted smoked fish and the three tucked into the hearty meal.

“It tasted like the Grimsby smoked haddock I loved as a kid,” said Cosmo, discarding the fish’s sucked-clean spine.

They turned in for the night and Cosmo fell fast asleep in the hammock.

Cosmo felt trepidation as he swam in the waterfall’s pool as the sun rose the following morning. Unlike the beach, there was no spectacular sunrise. In the clearing surrounded by jungle, the sky just went from midnight blue to sky blue and sunny. ‘I don’t fancy another trek through the jungle,’ he thought, ‘even though Marco said the village wasn’t far and wouldn’t take long, I am bloody knackered.’ He dunked his head underwater, felt the cold water refreshing him, and enjoyed the silence.

Cosmo, was still finding the trek hard going, because they followed the stream that meandered from the waterfall, so each time they stopped he could take a refreshing drink. Marco told him how a small stream ran behind the village, which was their main source of water, so he told him not to piss in it.

They came out of the jungle around noon. Cosmo breathed a sigh of relief. He smiled as he could now refocus his thoughts on the Hawk-Eagles as they walked the short distance into the village.

‘Good,’ he thought looking up as the sky went dark. He saw dark clouds rolling above the village and smirked, ‘I could have done with you earlier, Mr Rain,’ he chuckled.

Cosmo’s relief soon turned to alarm as they walked to the village centre, which looked nothing like he’d imagined or what Marco and Erik had described. ‘I thought it would be a village full of wooden houses on stilts with families sitting around open fires, cooking. It looks nothing like a village community that had supposed to have been there for generations. It looks more like the sparse Vietnamese jungle prison camps I’ve seen on war films,’ thought Cosmo, feeling uneasy. “Can we go see the Hawk-Eagles before it rains, Marco?” he asked.

Marco shook his head. “No Cosmo, the rain here when it comes is torrential, so getting to the eerie would be too treacherous. Besides, you look worn out and need to rest after I have introduced you to the village chief. He’s looking forward to meeting you, my friend.”

Cosmo smiled and nodded but something in Marco’s tone now unnerved him, and Erik smirked. They walked under a structure similar to the one at the transit stop and Marco told him to sit and wait while he and Erik fetched the village chief to meet him.

He sat on a wooden platform where a girl, dressed in camouflage-coloured pants and a black T-shirt came from a wooden hut and handed him a mug of water. He thanked the girl who scowled and then smirked at Cosmo who glimpsed something leant against the wall inside the small hut before she closed the door.

“Hmm,” mumbled Cosmo and thought, ‘that’s strange, it looked like a gun.’

Cosmo took a gulp of the warm water and looked around the sparse village. The arid ground was dried mud with several thin trees and clumps of drab dry foliage scattered around. He saw basic wooden huts around the small area and several of the transit structures like the one he was sitting at. He furrowed his brow and thought. ‘I can’t see many people here,’ only seeing several young men and women sat in transit structures wearing scruffy combat fatigue trousers and black T-shirts.

He saw several piles of embers scattered in around the village and then a group of men at a transit shack stood and headed toward the jungle with rifles slung over their shoulders.

‘Hmm,’ thought Cosmo. ‘The others must also be in the jungle hunting, fishing, or gathering food. They must have big animals here if they are using Ak47s, they would blow the shit out of something small.’

He looked at another group of men sat under another corrugated tin roof shack and Cosmo saw five rifles stacked outside in a pyramid formation and thought. ‘The few people I’ve seen so far have guns,’ he looked at the small hut where the girl had brought his water. He shook his head as if waking himself up from a trance. ‘I’m getting paranoid; what do I know about Philippine jungle villages,’ he thought and chastised himself aloud. “Stop believing those stupid fictional movies Corrigan, you daft twat. There’s nothing to worry about; it must be just their way of life here and most of them have probably never seen a foreigner before. Besides, soon you can see and film the birds and then get out of here.” He tapped his pocket and thought. ‘You have your satellite phone, so don’t worry.’

Cosmo looked out of the transit shack as the sky darkened, and the group of men at the other transit shacks fetched their Ak47s inside the shelters.

He then saw Marco, Erik and a small stocky man walking towards him. He frowned and thought. ‘Marco and Erik changed their clothes, they now looked the same as the others... and what’s with the black bandanas I wonder.’

Cosmo stepped out of the shelter as the men stopped and he went to meet the new man.

The stocky Filipino wore a pistol holstered on his belt and a sword tucked into his waistband. With harsh weather-beaten features and a menacing tone in his voice when he spoke to Marco, Cosmo felt uneasy. Marco replied, sneered, and nodded.

Cosmo furrowed his brow and thought. ‘That doesn’t sound Filipino; it must be their jungle dialect.’

The man glared at Cosmo for several minutes, which unnerved him. He felt drops of rain on his head and heard thunder rumbling in the distance.

The man then spoke English. “So, you’re the wealthy English man Asif told us about?”

Cosmo, taken aback, juddered and looked at Marco, who was smirking.

Feeling nervous and confused, Cosmo looked at the stern-faced man and, with an uneasy feeling in the pit of his stomach, shook his head, and replied. “No, I am the English bird watcher who has come to see and film the once thought extinct Gold Tipped Hawk-Eagles that Marco found,” he pointed at Marco who sniggered.

The stocky man laughed, looked at Marco, and said. “You were right when you said this man was a fool, Asif.”

Cosmo looked stunned. “Hang on,” he said with a quake in his voice and, as realisation set in, he glared at Marco. “So, if your name’s not Marco; then who are you people?”

Track Six

“Any ideas Wayne?” asked Charles, sitting at his Yamaha Keyboard staring at a blank music sheet.

“Not yet buddy, but it always takes time. Hopefully, one of us will have an epiphany,” Wayne replied, as he twirled a pen between his fingers like a drumstick and stared at a blank notepad on the coffee table.

“It’s only been a couple of days and we got nofing exciting happening to give us inspiration,” said Elvin, reclining in his new leather La-Z-Boy armchair.

Boomer, relaxing in another La-Z-Boy armchair, said. “How about nurse Carol who came this morning? She looked amazing at breakfast in her sexy nurse’s uniform. How about we write a song about sexy nurses?”

“No!” said the others in unison.

Boomer chuckled, pushed the button to make his chair upright, got up, took their empty mugs off the coffee table, and went to the percolator. “What’s that horrible music?” he asked turning around.

Wayne sniggered and took his smartphone off the table. “It’s the new ringtone theme on my phone. Paddy put it on... it’s some geezer called Sam Smith.”

Wayne looked at the screen. “It’s Kipper calling on Skype.” He pressed the accept call button. “Hi Buddy,” he said as Kipper’s smiling face appeared on the screen.

Boomer took over the coffee, and they all sat on the sofa next to Wayne at the coffee table.

“Hi fellas,” said Kipper, with a shrill in his voice as Wayne held the phone for them all to see.

“Good morning Kipper,” said Charles, looking at the smiling, but tired looking Kipper.

“Morning Kipper,” said Elvin and Boomer.

“Sorry I didn’t call you earlier, but I’ve been running around getting my production team working on the ‘Dream Chaser’ track and I’ve been in the recording studio in the afternoons trying to get my vocals right so I can do the song justice,” said Kipper and smirked. “It’s amazing what the mixing and tech boys can do with my crappy singing voice. It should be finished in a few weeks.”

“That’s great news Buddy. We haven’t been able to come up with any ideas for the final track yet.”

Kipper smiled. “Don’t worry Wayne, something will come to you, and you will write another great track, you always do. There’s no rush, we have plenty of time. Hopefully, we can release the ‘Meaning’ album before Christmas and that’s still over four months away.”

The old men nodded and Kipper told them. “I called to let you know that Cosmo called a few days ago. The bugger woke me up at 6:30.”

The four tittered, knowing Kipper rarely woke much before 10:00 am, as he usually didn’t get home until after 3:00 am.

“How is Cosmo Grylls?” asked Charles and chuckled. “Still enjoying the Philippines?”

“He said he was going to an island looking for a sparra’ didn’t he?” said Elvin and sniggered.

Kipper laughed and said. “It sounded like he was still enjoying himself, and I don’t think it was a sparrow. He said it was some kind of eagle or a hawk, Chippers, but I am not sure. I don’t listen to him when he rambles on about birds. Anyway, he called and said he had arrived safely on a tropical Island. He moaned about the journey taking over five hours on board a smelly old fishing boat... ha, ha.”

The old men chuckled as Kipper continued. “He said he was trekking through a jungle the next day to get to the village where his Filipino guide had seen the birds and said he was looking forward to the journey... Oh, and get this, he said the island they were on was called, Snake-Eye Rock.”

“Oh,” said Charles, taken aback. “That sounds dangerous.”

Kipper grinned and nodded. "That's what I told him, but he laughed and said it was called that because it had a big rock on the beach that looked like a snake's eye."

"Oh, it still sounds dangerous," said Charles, looking concerned, "I hope he will be okay. Did he say how long it would take to get to the village?"

Kipper shook his head. "No, he wasn't sure, but he called me from his satellite phone and said he would call again when he had reached the village. It must be taking them a while because he rang three days ago." Kipper chuckled. "I bet old Cosmo Grylls is slowing them down. The furthest he walked was to the bog and his car."

"Unless he was already there and too busy photographing the Spogden 'airy arsed sparra," said Elvin and grinned.

Kipper chuckled and said. "Yeah, that sounded more than likely." He looked at his watch and said. "Okay fellas; I'll grab a snack before I go to the recording studio and then I have a date with Kathryn Austwick tonight, so I will call you again when Cosmo gets in touch."

"Will that be Caviar and Champers at the Savoy, Kipper?" asked Elvin with a cheeky grin.

"Nah Chippers, I don't like Caviar, I will just grab a steak lunch at Gordon Ramsey's new place," said Kipper. "You lot can enjoy your boiled cabbage at Fossdyke," he chuckled

"Yes, we will, and we can talk later. Say hello to Miss Austwick for me, tell her I love her new movie," said Charles, and they said their goodbyes and hung up.

"I hope Cosmo will be okay," said Charles, puckering his brow.

The others nodded and Boomer had an epiphany. "Hey, how about doing a jungle theme for the new track?"

The others looked at him as he said. "There have been a few good ones over the years, 'Welcome To The Jungle,' 'Running Through The Jungle', 'The Lion Sleeps Tonight.'"

"Yeah, and some crap ones," interrupted Elvin, who stood, put his thumbs into his waistband, and sang. "*It was the jungle, jungle, jungle jungle Rock*". He swung his shoulders from side to side for a few seconds and then thought better of hurting his back again, so smirked and sat.

Wayne rubbed his chin. "Yeah, it will give us something to work on."

"Yes," said Charles, wagging his finger to the jungle rock song now embedded in his mind. "Good idea Boomer."

"We can toss ideas around after lunch," said Elvin, looking at his watch.

"I thought of one idea... Cosmo Grylls meets Tarzan," said Boomer and smirked.

The others tittered and Charles said. "We will go to Fossdyke and eat lunch, and then come back here and see what we can come up with."

"Good idea," said Boomer, "I'm starving and that tasty nurse might be there."

"She's a Nursing Sister you ingrate and even if we were all forty years younger, we would all still be out of her league," said Charles.

Susan had left London at 4:00 am and drove to Cleethorpes. She pulled into Fossdyke at 8:30 and parked in the space Mrs Chew had allocated her. She checked her hair and make-up in the mirror and thought her uniform looked a little dishevelled after the long tedious drive, so she straightened it when she got out of the car, reminded herself she was now called Carol, and walked to Mrs Chew's office.

"Good morning Carol," said Mrs Chew, "I hope the drive was okay... London's a long way, you must be exhausted."

Carol smiled and nodded. "It was fine thanks Hilda, but tiring."

“I’m glad you made it here safely. We can go eat breakfast with the residents in the dining room and then I will show you to your quarters and you can relax for a few hours. This afternoon your nursing staff and a Doctor are coming so you can all become acquainted. They will start working with you from tomorrow in the nursing home section. You can prepare for our first patients, who arrive Friday.”

“Thanks Hilda, that sounds good. I can meet the residents I never saw on my last visit and chat with the ones I already know.”

Mrs Chew smiled and said. “They don’t do a lot of talking at meal times, just eat, belch, and fart.”

Carol chuckled and Mrs Chew handed her several folders and said. “These are the medical records for the first patients due to arrive and a list of Doctors and departments at the Princess Diana of Wales hospital. Leave them here and you can pick them up later and familiarise yourself over the next few days and discuss it with your staff. They are all local and qualified SRN Nurses and they have all worked on Geriatric and intensive care wards before.

Carol glanced at the pile, smiled, and placed them on Mrs Chew’s desk.

The chattering stopped when Carol and Mrs Chew entered the dining room. Carol smelt fried bacon and, being vegetarian, her stomach churned.

Mrs Chew announced. “This is Carol. Some of you already met her when she came last week for her interview. She is the Nursing Sister in charge of our new nursing home section and living here, so you may be seeing a lot of her.”

“Hello Carol,” the residents mumbled before they went back to eating, farting, and mumbling.

The dining area had been modernised and now looked like a plush school dining room, with four seater tables with large glass-serving cabinets and a stainless steel counter in front of the kitchen.

Mrs Chew took Carol to the serving counter and handed her a sectioned tray.

“The usual Mrs Chew?” asked a friendly faced chubby woman. “Yes please Betty,” Mrs Chew replied and handed her the tray.

Carol looked at the selection on offer from the large heated and cold sections of the glass cabinets on the stainless steel counter.

“Just waiting for the toast Mrs Chew, you sit down and I will bring it over when it's done,” said Betty, handing Mrs Chew a full tray with bacon, eggs, sausage, black pudding, beans, and mushrooms.

“What can I get you, Carol?” asked Betty holding out her hand for the tray.

Carol looked at the cold section and said. “Please can I have the muesli, strawberry yoghurt, and an apple?”

Betty smiled, took the tray, put on a bowl of Muesli, a pot of strawberry yoghurt, and an apple.

She handed her the tray and said. “Milk’s in the fridge next to the tea and coffee pots, Mrs Chew will show you... there is also fresh juice in there.”

Carol went to the fridge, poured milk over her muesli and a glass of freshly squeezed orange juice from a glass jug and sat down at the table next to Mrs Chew.

“There’s a great range of food choices, Hilda.”

Mrs Chew nodded, swallowed a lump of fried egg, and smiled. “Yes, and the food here’s delicious,” she looked at Carol's bowl of muesli and said. “Even that is made here in the kitchen... but there aren’t many of the old folks who eat it... it gets stuck in their dentures,” she chuckled and stabbed a sausage.

Carol ate a spoonful of the nutty, fruity, oat cereal and said. “Mmm, the muesli tastes delicious.”

While Mrs Chew rambled on, Carol watched the four old musicians eating and chatting. She looked around the dining room and thought. ‘Here won’t be any good for spy cameras, it looked like they sit at

any table, and there is too much chatter. I think the only place will be the recreation room, so I will go and look later for the best place to put them and hide them tonight when everyone's gone to bed.'

Charles, Wayne, Elvin, and Boomer got up, put their empty trays on a trolley, and left the dining room.

"Wasn't that the musicians? Charles, Wayne, Boomer and... Elvin."

Mrs Chew smiled and looked impressed. "Yes, and you have a good memory Carol."

Carol smiled and Mrs Chew told her. "You won't see much of them. They go out in the morning, come back for lunch, and then go out again to Baker Street."

"Oh, erm... Baker Street," said Carol. "Yes, you mentioned it before, and said the owner was away... is he back yet?"

Mrs Chew shook her head as she mopped up bean juice with a slice of bread and said. "Cosmo... no, not yet, nobody knows when he'll be home, it could be days or weeks."

Carol smirked and sipped her fresh orange juice.

"Good afternoon fellas, did you have a good lunch?" asked Paddy polishing glasses. "Do you want to take some beer up with you?"

"Lunch was okay buddy and I don't think we want any beer, we have a busy afternoon," said Wayne.

"We didn't see you earlier as you were busy and we didn't want to disturb you. Kipper Skyped and told us Cosmo called him a few days ago and said he was on a tropical island."

Paddy nodded. "That's a relief Charles, I was worried about him," said Paddy. "The last time I heard from him was the end of last week when he said you were coming and he asked how the pub was doing. I knew he was going to an island because he told me he was going there to see a rare bird. He said he had to get his head down as he was leaving early, and I haven't heard from him since and he usually called me every few days to see how things are."

"Don't worry mate, Kipper said he had to trek through a jungle to a village and he would call him when he got there, so he will call you as well I imagine," said Elvin, and grinned. "He's probably too busy chasing and photographing birds."

Paddy chuckled and looked relieved. "Thanks fellas... sure you don't want a couple of beers to take up?"

They shook their heads and went up to the room upstairs.

After giving her the folders and showing her to her room, Carol showered and stayed in her room for the rest of the morning. She read the files Mrs Chew had given her and felt confused and overwhelmed as she read the medical jargon in the files, but understanding none of it, rang Jane.

"Good morning Susan, or should I call you Carol," she chuckled. "How are things going, did you get there okay?"

"Hi Jane, it was a long drive, but I got here okay. Things aren't going so well and the food is terrible. Breakfast was a choice of greasy dead animal flesh or cardboard muesli."

Jane chuckled and Carol, sounding desperate, said. "I have folders from patients due to arrive on Friday and I understand hardly any of them. I remember some things you told me about the symbols and Latin abbreviations they use, but little else."

"No problem, fire away," said Jane and heard the tremble in Carol's voice as she described a triangle and the letters CVA(L).

"The triangle means diagnosis and the patient had a Cerebrovascular Accident... a stroke... on their left side, so the right side of their body will show the effects. Depending on the severity, they will certainly have a droopy mouth and more than likely paralysed and unable to walk unaided..."

Jane explained about the medication and treatment as Carol continued reading the file to her and then explained about the other patient's diagnosis and treatments.

Carol's head spun as she finished her call with Jane and she felt out of her depth. "I can't do this," she said aloud and cupped her head in her hands.

Noon, Mrs Chew knocked on her door and said it was lunchtime.

"Did you have a good rest, Carol, you still look tired?"

"Yes, thanks Hilda. I fell asleep and only woke a few minutes ago," she lied.

"We can eat lunch and I will take you to your new department so you can familiarise yourself with the equipment before your staff and Doctor Samuels arrive in an hour. I can't help I'm afraid, I know nothing about the equipment or nursing, but I imagine it will be familiar for you," said Mrs Chew, and they walked into the dining room and over to the counter.

While Mrs Chew chomped on a large portion of shepherd's pie, Carol nibbled her cheese salad and watched the old musicians finish their food and walk out of the dining room. "Are the musician's leaving again already, Hilda?" she asked.

Mrs Chew chewed on a carrot and nodded until she'd swallowed her mouthful and said. "Yes, that's the last we will see of them again until later, maybe not until breakfast. They usually come in and go straight to their rooms to sleep... dirty old stop outs," she chuckled.

Carol smiled and asked. "Where do they go all day?"

Mrs Chew puckered her brow, shrugged, and said. "Who knows? We don't keep tabs on the residents, they can come and go as they please as long as they aren't back too late. We have security here at night to let them in and patrol the grounds, so you and the residents are safe."

"That's good to hear Hilda, I wondered about that."

"Don't worry Carol, it's very safe and quiet at night here. Security starts when I leave at 7 pm and finish their shift when I arrive at 7 am. Most of the residents go to their rooms around 8 pm apart from those four old stop outs," said Mrs Chew and chuckled.

Carol smiled and Mrs Chew said. "One of your staff will be on permanent night shift and I imagine that most of your evenings will be spent in the wards. But if you want to go out, don't worry, the nurses are experienced and they can call the on-call Doctor should anything happen. As long as the night nurse has your number in case of emergency, take as much time off as you like."

Carol smiled and poured cool bottled water into a glass and took a sip.

The pair finished lunch and Mrs Chew took Carol to the nursing section, which was daunting at first. Fortunately for Carol, the only technical thing that Mrs Chew knew how to operate was the ward's light dimmer switch, so handed the keys to Carol and left her to familiarise herself with everything, while she went back to her office to await the new medical staff.

Everything was new and the beds were still in plastic covers. Carol felt nervous at first as she looked into each of the ten private wards, but felt relieved when she saw the Bitmap machines were the same as the ones Jane had shown her how to use at Hawthorn. She panicked again when she went to the nursing station and saw the crash trolley with the defibrillator, sterile intravenous and tracheotomy packs, and a grey plastic box, which she had seen at Hawthorn and knew it contained a laryngoscope and various sized ET tubes to perform Endotracheal Intubation. She juddered and then thought. 'Don't panic, remember what Jane told you about the chance of her having to use that in a month would be very slim and said the crash cart at Hawthorn hadn't been used for years, although they checked the equipment and changed the sterile packs regularly.' She took a deep breath and thought. 'By the time the first patients arrived, I only have three weeks.' Feeling relieved, she found the key on her bunch to the medical locker, checked the drugs inside and in the fridge against a list in the paperwork Mrs Chew had given her. She shrugged. 'Yeah, I'll be okay,' now feeling confident that she could blag her way through the next few weeks.

Mrs Chew fetched three SRN Nurses and a Nigerian doctor to the ward and introduced them to one another. Doctor Samuels discussed the patients arriving Friday and gave Carol his phone number and left. Carol and the Nurses chatted and decided who will work what shift and, after familiarising themselves with the equipment, which they were all proficient in using, decided to wait until later to get the beds prepared, and the three Nurses left several hours later.

Carol ate the evening meal with Mrs Chew and at 7:00 pm she introduced her to the night security guard before she went home.

Carol called Billy and after a short conversation, she told him the plan could be a waste of time as Fossils spent no time at Fosdyke. He'd told her to give it a couple of days and find out more. She hung up and walked to the recreation room, took a book off a shelf, spoke to a few residents who milled around, and then sat on a sofa reading while glancing at the best place to plant the spy cameras. One hour later, when the wrinklies had gone to their rooms, Carol checked no one was in sight and went over to Charles's Steinway.

Nine pm, Carol sat in her room watching the five split screens on her laptop. The spy cam she'd put on her uniform only showed inside the wardrobe where it hung. The other four showed a dimly lit section of the recreation room from the spy cameras she'd placed in strategic locations to show several angles around the Steinway and armchairs where the fossils sat. The picture quality from these button-sized spy cameras she had planted in several ornaments on shelves around the room was excellent. She'd adjusted the lighting settings as Ollie taught her to make the pictures bright, even in a dark room. She smiled and thought. 'Well, that's the set, now all I need are the actors,' she yawned.

Carol felt exhausted and studied the Cleethorpes street map from a folder Mrs Chew gave her and looked for main street shops and off-licences. 'I'll buy a bottle of wine tomorrow,' she looked at her laptop screen, yawned, and thought. 'This will be a waste of time.' She put her hands behind her head and sighed. "Fuck this, I'll take a shower and go to bed."

Carol came from the shower and blow-dried her hair as she looked at the computer screen showing an empty room. She looked at the time. 'Ten o'clock, waste of time, they aren't going in there tonight,' she thought and as she was about to turn off the computer the four walked into view.

Carol smiled and pressed record, as Fossils stood in a circle in front of Charles's piano. She zoomed in on Charles's face and puckered her brow. 'He looks terrified, why is he trembling?' she thought.

She zoomed in on the four who looked concerned and nervous. She then realised Charles was speaking, but she heard nothing. "Shit, no bloody volume," she cursed and looked at the keyboard. Unsure what to do, she tapped several keys but still heard nothing. "Damn!" she exclaimed as she tried to think about the instructions from Ollie. She glared at the screen and then called Ollie.

"Oh, hi Susan," said Ollie and she explained the problem. Ollie chuckled and told her what to do.

She felt stupid when she hung up and pressed the unmute button on the screen as Elvin said. "Well, we can't do anything tonight. Let's get our heads down and wait and see what Kipper's found out tomorrow."

"None of us will sleep until we learn more, but it's no good fretting, it's like Elvin said, there's nothing we can do tonight," said Charles and the four left the room.

'Hmm,' thought Carol, 'I wonder what happened? Whatever it was, it looked serious, and I missed it.'

After lunch earlier, the four sat in the room at Baker Street chatting, drinking coffee, and throwing out ideas all afternoon.

Early evening they went downstairs, sat in the busy restaurant bar and ordered food.

"How are the rehearsals going fellas?" asked Paddy as he fetched them over four cold beers.

"Great buddy," said Wayne, "and the cottage pie tasted delicious."

"Thanks, I will have some later Have you heard any more from Kipper?" asked Paddy.

The lads shook their heads and drank the beer.

“Do you want to go to the function room, we ain't got a band on tonight, and it's busy in here.”

“Yeah, thanks Paddy,” said Elvin and the Fossils took their drinks through to the function room and sat at their usual table.

Having achieved little during the afternoon with the new track, they sat silently drinking their beer and thinking about tunes and vocals. Although Boomer had thought of a title they all liked, ‘Roaring Jungle,’ and they all agreed it would be a fast beat rock song. They didn't go with Elvin's suggestion, although thought, ‘Cosmo where's your loin cloth?’ sounded amusing.

Paddy came in with a plate of cottage pie and joined them and they chatted and drank beer.

Elvin told him they had nearly cracked, ‘Rock Around The Clock,’ and when he started singing the Bill Haley classic, Paddy smiled politely, made an excuse, and cringed as he took his empty plate and walked back to the bar restaurant.

Thirty minutes later, Paddy came back, brought them over another three beers, and asked. “Do you want whisky chasers?”

“No thanks mate, we need an early night, we've lots to do tomorrow,” said Boomer.

Elvin yawned and looked at his watch. “It's nine o'clock, let's head back to Fossdyke and get some sleep.”

Paddy stood. “Okay, see you in the morning... oh, Sam Smith,” he said and chuckled.

Wayne picked up his smartphone off the table and looked at the screen. “It's Kipper on Skype.”

“He must have heard from Cosmo,” said Paddy and sat next to Wayne.

Wayne pressed the button and Kipper's face appeared on the screen. “Hi buddy, have you heard from Cosmo Grylls?” he asked and smirked as the others squeezed next to him and he held the smartphone so they could all see.

Kipper shook his head.

“Are you okay Kipper, you look terrible?” asked Charles.

“No Charles,” said Kipper, his voice trembling.

“What's wrong, Buddy?” asked Wayne.

Kipper's voice quivered when he said. “We have a serious problem.”

“Why what's ‘appened?” asked Elvin, furrowing his brow and looking concerned.

Kipper looked pale as he cleared his throat and said. “A man from the British Embassy in London called me. Cosmo put my name and number on his passport forms as the person to contact in case of emergencies.

Paddy juddered. “Cosmo!” he gasped. “Why, what's happened to him?”

The others stared with mouths agape at the screen as Kipper said. “He didn't say much because he was waiting for more information to come from the British Embassy in Manila tomorrow. The man said he would let me know when he knew more ... but what he told me was,” Kipper cleared his throat, but still had a croaky tremble in his voice when he said.

“Cosmo's been Kidnapped!”

Track seven

The stocky stern-faced man glared at Cosmo, which sent shivers down his spine as he said. “Who we are and our names are not important. What is important and all you need to know infidel was that we serve Allah, the great and only god, and your life now belongs to us... Allahu Akbar.”

“Allahu Akbar,” repeated the two Filipino guides in unison.

The man unsheathed a gleaming, wide-bladed, Khanda style sword from his belt, and pressed it against Cosmo's throat. Cosmo gasped and looked surprised and the man sneered. “Your life is irrelevant to our jihad and your sacrifice is inevitable unless we get what we need.”

Cosmo, feeling the steel against his throat, felt sick and trembled as the rain now beat down heavy from a dark foreboding sky. “W... what do you need?” stammered Cosmo, his voice trembling.

“All in good time,” snarled the man who took the sword away from Cosmo's throat, stood back, and smirked. Cosmo touched his throat and felt a small trickle of blood oozing from a cut as the man said something to Marco and Erik, calling them Asif and Abdul in a language that Cosmo couldn't recognise. The pair nodded, walked into the transit shack, took all Cosmo's bags, and splashed through the wet mud in the now torrential rain towards a wooden shack a short distance away. The man sneered at Cosmo, pushed him into the transit shack. “Give me all your electronic devices,” he said, holding out his hand.

Cosmo handed the man his satellite phone, and the man glared at him as if he expected more.

“All my other electronics are in the bags,” Cosmo stammered, turning out his pockets. The man then pointed to his 18-carat gold, Audemars Piquet Royal Oak watch. Cosmo took it off his wrist and handed it to the man.

The man looked at the watch, smirked, put it on, and glared at Cosmo before following the other two to the hut.

Afraid and confused, Cosmo sat on the wooden floor trembling with his head cupped in his hands and thought. ‘What the fuck's happening? Who are these people and what do they want? I've seen those nutters ISIS on telly wearing those bandanas. Those bastards cut foreign prisoner's heads off for fun.’

Although terrified, Cosmo chuckled and thought. ‘Those two useless bloody guides have brought me to fucking Bradford.’

Cosmo listened to the torrential rain pelting against the thin tin roof. The noise was deafening and, with dark foreboding skies and deafening thunderclaps growling from above, the structure shook. Cosmo thought he was either having a nightmare or had died and gone to hell. Drenched from the short time he'd spent standing outside, he felt cold and shivered while he sat in the shack and pondered his dire situation.

The violent tropical storm cleared as suddenly as it arrived an hour later.

Cosmo walked out of the transit shack and saw a blue cloudy sky. He felt warmth returning to his jungle prison and as the sun warmed his face, he looked at the start of the jungle not far away and thought. ‘They haven't left anyone to guard me.’ He looked at the wooden hut where the three had gone in and scratched the stubble on his face as he saw the damp earth with several slushy mud pools and empty transit shacks.

He looked at the jungle again and remembering his harrowing journey getting there, thought. ‘No wonder no one's guarding me. Marco and Erik knew I wouldn't run off into the jungle.’

Cosmo sat on the wooden step outside the transit hut while the sun warmed him. He swatted flies buzzing around him from small swarms brought out by the drying rain. Ten minutes later, he saw Asif leave the hut and walking towards him.

Asif had a harsh tone to his voice as he stopped in front of Cosmo and said. “There is nowhere to run, we can easily find you, so accept your situation, and if your government or family pay, you won't be harmed. He shouted something toward the small hut near the transit shack and the girl came out with another glass of water.

“Who are you people?” asked Cosmo, now realising he had been duped to get here and was now being held captive for ransom.

“Stay here and I will bring you food later... Allahu Akbar,” said Asif ignoring his question.

Asif then went back to the hut and the girl put the glass on the floor, looked at the now clear blue sky, and walked behind her small wooden hut. Cosmo saw several older girls coming from other huts and going behind the hut.

Cosmo drank the cloudy water and thought. ‘I saw somewhere a while ago about bands of ISIS groups being on islands somewhere in the Philippine archipelago,’ he scratched his head. ‘I think I saw it on BBC news, but the Philippine government forces claimed they had found and eradicated them. Cosmo frowned and sighed, ‘Bloody religion’s rearing its ugly head again, aren’t these people too old to have imaginary friends?’

Having lived his life thinking all religion was pointless, Cosmo could never understand why people didn’t care more about the planet, instead of concerning themselves with whom, or what they thought created it. His attitude was that if the human race respected our beautiful little blue planet and the creatures we share it with while alive; instead of the paradise they read and believed in books when they are dead, they would be a lot happier.

Cosmo’s clothes had almost dried from the heat of the sun. He could now smell charcoal burning and saw wispy curls of black smoke emanating from behind the small hut. He had heard chickens clucking and chicks chirping since he’d arrived, so knew they were in enclosures to protect them from jungle predators.

Over the next few hours, Cosmo sat in the transit shack and saw several groups of Filipino men return with their weapons shouldered and carrying machetes. Some went into wooden huts and others went into transit shacks. Most ignored Cosmo, but some sneered, made a slicing motion across their throats, and sniggered. That unnerved Cosmo and he ignored them.

With the heavy rainstorm in the jungle, the men and women looked grimy and dishevelled. Cosmo saw men wrapped in tatty towels going behind a low bamboo fence and tipping buckets of rainwater from large plastic containers over themselves.

Cosmo counted fifteen men and five women of varying ages along with the three in the hut. Thirty minutes later, he watched them take their rifles and gather in the village centre in front of the hut that the chief and Cosmo’s two ex-tour guides went into earlier. He had not seen them all day, now late afternoon and the flies that had been annoying him throughout the afternoon had gone, much to his relief.

Cosmo, looking out of the open shack, watched the Filipinos forming three lines, and rolling out straw mats, which they knelt on.

The village chief, along with Asif and Abdul came out of the shack, stood in front of the kneeling crowd, and spoke. Cosmo expected them to fire rifles in the air shouting, screaming, and wailing, “Death to the infidel,” like he had seen them do on television.

Cosmo looked taken aback when the chief chanted and then sang to the silent audience.

Cosmo stood with his mouth agape as the man sung in a voice so relaxed, Cosmo imagined people could drift off halfway through. It sounded timeless, and the man’s melody had a gentle swing and Cosmo thought about Fossil’s new album with Wayne playing a jazz drum beat behind to give it some oomph. Soon, the man layered his voice, so it sounded like a whole choir trading lines, as the song’s impact grew.

‘Wow!’ thought Cosmo, “I wish the old lads were here to listen to this. I am sure Charles and Wayne could adapt this for Kipper’s album, it’s beautiful.

The tempo changed and the men and women kneeling, stood. The chief went silent and raised the sword above his head and the men and women stomped their feet on the muddy ground, firing stuttered volleys of gunfire into the air and shouting.

‘Huh,’ thought Cosmo. ‘That was more like what I was expecting.’

Gunfire and yelling went on for several minutes and with daylight fading, movement in the branches of a nearby tree caught Cosmo's attention.

He looked and smiled. 'Ooh, a Writhed Hornbill,' he thought as he saw the large bird's black body, white head and tail feathers, and a large pink bulbous beak before it flew off. 'Wow! They are rare, I haven't seen one before.'

With gunfire ringing in his ears and a cordite haze drifting through the camp, Cosmo looked at the hut where the noise had quietened down and he thought. 'I wish I had my camera.'

He smelt a pleasant and familiar smell coming from behind the hut and he heard the chief chanting, Allahu Akbar. The others repeated the chant three times, and then the village chief, followed by Asif, Abdul, and the other men and women silently went behind the small hut.

Cosmo's mouth watered and his stomach rumbled. 'I hope I get some smoked fish... I'm starving.'

He watched Abdul and the chief walking back into their hut and then Asif came into the transit shack with plates of food. "Here, my friend," he said, handing Cosmo a plate of smoked fish, rice, and vegetables. Asif now had a calm tone to his voice when he told Cosmo that it was the fish they caught on the beach. He then sat on the floor and motioned Cosmo to sit. Cosmo sat on the floor facing him and Asif smiled and ate. Having no cutlery, they both ate with their hands with Cosmo licking his fingers when he'd finished.

Asif smiled. "Did you enjoy that, my friend?"

Cosmo nodded but feeling confused, thought. 'This does not sound like the same man who came earlier. This Asif sounded more like Marco again,' he thought. 'Maybe it's because the head geezer ain't here.'

Cosmo saw several groups of armed men going into the jungle while others remained in transit shacks, and Asif said. "I know you have a lot of questions, Cosmo. I also have several for you. I am sure you now know that you are not in a Filipino village and we are not simple villagers?"

Cosmo nodded. "So who are you? And why kidnap me? I'm not rich, and I certainly am not religious or have any political connections, I have come here bird watching, that's all."

Cosmo saw the rage in Asif's eyes and quivered as the Filipino glared at him and snapped. "We are Jihadist soldiers of Abu Sayyaf, the soldiers of Allah, and I know you have no religion, infidel, which is why you are here. We will wipe all godless and false god worshippers from the planet. You have no cause to die for and no great god to welcome you to his kingdom and nothing to..." Asif, then realising he was flying into a rage without getting the information he needed, panted like a Bull. He calmed down and in a calm voice, said. "The nights can sometimes get cold, so I will bring over your bedding hammock, and one of your solar lights."

Cosmo, shaken by Asif's outburst and now stunned by his gentle demeanour, nodded. "Thanks."

Asif smiled. He wanted to change the subject quick, so he didn't get angry with this dumb ignorant infidel and do something stupid, like slit his throat.

"Do you want to know how I found out about the Gold Tipped Hawk-Eagle and got you here?"

Cosmo did not, he wanted to forget about his stupidity and how he got easily duped and ended up in this mess. However, he thought he had better listen to the barmy Filipino gloat in case he lost his rag with him again, so he smiled and nodded.

Asif grinned and said. "Don't feel bad Cosmo, you are not the only stupid man I have duped with something similar to this. I entrapped an American bird watcher when we were on Jol..." he checked himself, "somewhere else."

"So what happened to him?" asked Cosmo, wishing he hadn't.

Asif sounded nonchalant. "Neither his family nor the US government would pay, so I beheaded him."

Cosmo gasped at Asif's blasé indifference and again fear gripped him and, wanting to let Asif feel good by gloating, smiled and said. "Your plan was brilliant and I suspected nothing. How did you find out about the Hawk-Eagle and how did you know I would go along?"

Asif smirked and told him. "We target individuals." He leaned forward. "I thought bird watchers made ideal and easy to deceive targets." He grinned at Cosmo who puckered his brow as Asif continued. "I know few people come here bird watching due to the diverse ecosystem, so I made the only website dedicated to bird watching tours in the Philippines. I learned about the different species and areas where they inhabit to ensnare dumb infidels. However, most booked my tour as an excuse to tell their partners at home, so they can come for sex in one of our sex tourist cities. They don't turn up for the tour, so I ignore them. A few others come to watch birds but once they become entrapped in the sex scene their interest soon waned. I always get a feel for the customer and find out about their interest in birds until they have almost finished the tour." Asif sniggered. "Like you, my friend. You and the American are the only people I've met who were obsessed with bird watching."

Cosmo shrugged and thought. 'I should have listened to the old guys and gone shagging.'

Asif continued. "I asked you one day what you hoped to see and you laughed, brought up an eBook from your Google library, and showed me the cover on your iPad screen." He chuckled. "Do you remember what you told me?" Cosmo nodded, sighed, and said. "Yeah, and under the circumstances, it was a poor choice of words."

Asif laughed and repeated the statement Cosmo had made. "If I saw any of those species, I would die a happy man."

Cosmo nodded and forced a smile as Asif said. "I bought and downloaded the book you showed me, 'Rare and Thought Extinct Birds of Asia' to my phone and read it. I knew which bird to target when I read the story about the Gold Tipped Hawk-Eagle and how it had only been photographed once, which was near here. It was perfect and Abdul and I came up with a convincing story, and here you are." Asif smiled and then glowered at Cosmo. "As for dying a happy man, that was down to you, your family, and your government's cooperation."

'Good luck with that mate I have no family, only Kipper and the old fellas, but I'd trust them with my life, which I now need to,' thought Cosmo as Asif looked at his watch.

Night had fallen and Cosmo heard a small generator start and a light from a single bulb on an electrical cord tied on a beam, dimly lit the transit shack and the others in the camp.

"Okay Cosmo, let's get down to business."

Cosmo now looked into the now cold dead eyes of Asif as he said. "We are jihadist and fighting for Allah and to get a home. We want our own free state for our Philippines Muslim brothers and sisters where we can live our lives in the teachings of the greatest god. We want an Islamic state, free from Infidels and their false gods, and that's why we are fighting and willing to die to serve Allah.... Allahu Akbar," he chanted.

Cosmo sat with a vacant expression as Asif continued. "To do that, we need money." He leaned over, glared, and asked Cosmo. "How much would your family pay for your release?"

Cosmo sighed and shrugged. "I don't know, how much do you want?"

Asif frowned and glared at Cosmo. "You must know how much value you think your government and family put on your life?"

Cosmo shrugged again and with a quake in his voice, said. "I don't think the UK government pay ransoms to terrori.... err, Jihadists. As for my family... I have no idea."

Asif intertwined his fingers and said. "Cosmo, you are a good man and I like you. I want you to return to your country and enjoy a long, happy life, and look on this as an adventure, but I can't do that unless we are paid... do you understand?"

Cosmo nodded.

“Could your family raise \$1million? That’s a small price to pay, don’t you agree?”

Cosmo knew he could easily get \$1million but thought. ‘I doubt whether they will let me pop to the bank.’ He shrugged. “I don’t know, perhaps,” he said, knowing Kipper probably carried \$1million in loose change.

Asif smirked after seeing Cosmo’s reaction. Asif knew from his past interrogations that the hostages whose family had little money looked and sounded terrified when he’d mentioned \$1million, but Cosmo appeared calm. Asif had his answer, so stood and said. “I will fetch you your hammock and a light.”

Cosmo looked at Asif and asked. “How long will I have to stay here?”

Asif looked down at him and smiled. “That was down to your family and your government. Abu Tarik will call the British Embassy in Manila tomorrow morning. They know who we are,” he smirked, “and our reputation. He will give them our demands for your safe release.”

Cosmo rubbed his chin. ‘Abu Tarik, so that’s their leader’s name,’ he thought as Asif continued.

“The Embassy will check to confirm with immigration on who you are; when you arrived in the Philippines; and where you were staying. The Tranquillity Resort will confirm that you left with us three days ago. The Philippine police will take our pictures with them so the staff can confirm whom they saw you leaving with.” Asif shrugged, threw out his arms and said. “We know from past experience it will take the Embassy some time, as dealing with different departments usually does. We know the routine and we will call them again later. They will want to speak with you and we understand the difficulties posed with communicating with the UK due to the time difference,” Asif sighed. “They will want proof you are still alive and being well treated.

Cosmo raised his eyebrows, looking hopeful and Asif smirked. “We will tell you what to say and, after the initial contact, they will record our conversations and try to trace the satellite phone signal, so you will only be on the phone for a short predetermined time.”

“Oh,” said Cosmo looking disappointed.

Asif then told him. “This will all take time, but once everything has been confirmed, and after our initial contact, they will inform your Embassy in London. They will have a task force set up here and working around the clock to secure your release.”

Asif looked at Cosmo who looked concerned and said. “Don’t worry my friend, once we have our money, I will escort you back to the mainland and release you. In the meantime, you will be our guest here. I will go get your bedding and a light,” he smiled and stood.

Cosmo felt more at ease until Asif threw him a menacing glare and snarled. “But if they don’t pay... I will behead you.”

“Well?” Asked Tarik as Asif went into the brightly lit, warm hut, where he and Abdul were making plans for the following day.

Asif smirked. “It looks like we found our Golden Goose,” he picked up Cosmo’s sleeping bag and took the solar light they weren’t using to light their hut, and walked out.

Cosmo trembled but not with the cold, as the warmth from the solar light/heater bathed the open shack and he felt warm within his sleeping bag hammock. Although he felt claustrophobic with having nowhere to hang the hammock, the attached mosquito net covered him. He trembled with fear thinking about Asif’s warning, and what he’d told him about the American. Cosmo had a sleepless night and lay awake listening to the sounds from the restless jungle and thought about what it must have been like for the American, wondering what his final thoughts before his execution were.

The following morning, Cosmo watched the camp come to life, as the Abu Sayyaf got ready. They gathered at Tarik's hut where he chanted and sang a jihadist Nasheed and they prayed on their mats before walking behind the hut to get their food.

The girl had brought Cosmo a glass of water and gone behind the hut thirty minutes earlier, joined by the other girls. Cosmo smelt charcoal fires as he rolled up his hammock, zipped it up in its quilted camouflage coloured carrying case, and used it as a cushion.

Asif fetched Cosmo a Charcoal grilled egg and rice and said he would see him later.

The morning air in the jungle camp felt cool as Cosmo took the shell off the egg and ate it. Throughout the morning, he watched armed teams going into the jungle to patrol, while others in the camp did chores.

Cosmo also spent the morning gazing into the jungle and trees around the camp hoping to see the Writhed Hornbill and looking for other birds in the branches. However, although he could hear birds calling to each other in the jungle, it was too far away for him to see them.

Unaware of the time, he assumed it was around noon as it was getting hot and the patrols returned. Tarik performed the Nasheed and Cosmo realised that they must only fire their guns in the evening ceremony, 'don't want to waste bullets,' he thought.

Asif brought him a bowl of vegetable stew and rice and then went to the hut and joined Tariq and Abdul sitting outside.

Cosmo recognised none of the vegetables in the watery stew and it tasted bitter. He ate it with the bland rice and felt happy to have something in his stomach.

Apart from the young girl and Asif, others in the camp still ignored him or just snarled at him with contempt. He saw men taking shovels into the nearby foliage and return, so knew that's where the bogs were. 'I don't feel like squatting in there, it's a good job I don't need a dump,' he thought, knowing with the meagre portions of food he was getting, he wouldn't need a dump any time soon. However, he felt concerned when he went for a slash behind the girl's hut and noticed his urine was dark and smelt, so knew he was dehydrated.

Several hours later, Asif came to the transit shack carrying a cloth bag. He reached inside, took out a phone and stopwatch, and sat facing Cosmo.

'Glad to see someone making use of my new top of the range satellite phone,' thought Cosmo.

Asif dialled a number and with a stopwatch in one hand, pressed the call button with the other. Asif held the phone to his ear as it rang and, after several rings, a man answered, "Kamusta."

Asif started the stopwatch, spoke to the man in Filipino, and then hung up.

He stopped and reset the stopwatch to zero and said to Cosmo. "I gave them the password and they will now contact the task force they will have assembled. I said I would call back in fifteen minutes. That will give them time to get things organised and speak with you."

Asif glared at him and said. "They will want proof of life, so will ask for your name, date of birth, and which town in England you are from. They will also ask if you are being treated well, so I suggest you answer, yes. They will ask nothing else and you will say nothing else... You will have 1 minute. Do you understand?"

Cosmo nodded. "Yes, I understand."

Asif looked at his watch fifteen minutes later, dialled the number, and, when a man answered, he started the stopwatch.

Asif spoke to a man briefly in Filipino and the phone went silent for a few seconds. He then spoke in English to someone and handed the phone to Cosmo.

"Hello Mr Corrigan, My name is John Smallpecker. I am the UK government liaison here in the Philippines," said a polite well-spoken Englishman and Cosmo felt a wave of relief as John continued.

“I need to ask you a few questions. I understand time was of the essence, so I will be brief. Can you give me your full name, date of birth, and the town in England where you live?”

“Yes, my name is David Joseph Corrigan, born 16 October 1968 and I live in Cleethorpes.”

“Thank you, Mr Corrigan, and on your passport details we obtained, you put down Mr Kevin Gascoigne Nutley as your next of Kin, is that correct?”

“Yes sir, that’s correct,” said Cosmo.

“Thank you, Mr Corrigan, and can you tell me if you are being harmed or mistreated by the Abu Sayyaf?”

“No, Mr Smallpecker, I am being treated well.”

“Okay, thank you, Mr Corrigan, I know this is a very frightening experience and understand the fear and strain you must be under. However, I can assure you, her Majesty’s government along with the Philippine government will do everything possible to secure your safe release and bring you home.”

Cosmo pleaded. “Please, just pay them the money they are asking for and get me the fuck out... uh... oh.”

Asif snatched the phone away from Cosmo and spoke to Smallpecker.

“You have your proof of life, get the voice recording verified and we will call you in two days... Allahu Akbar.”

Asif turned off the phone and stopped the stopwatch.

“Time’s up,” he said and looked at Cosmo. “They will send the recording to England so your next of kin can confirm it is you, and get our money.”

Cosmo felt relieved, he knew Kipper would pay the \$1million immediately, so felt confident that he would be going home soon. No longer feeling afraid, he smiled.

Asif put the phone and stopwatch into his bag.

“Here, there’s no signal, but you can still use it,” said Asif handing Cosmo his iPad.

“Thanks Asif,” said Cosmo, taking the iPad.

Asif went back into the bag, took out Cosmo’s binoculars and Lifestraw, and handed them to him.

Cosmo thanked him and then Asif smirked. “Now we wait and let Allah decide your fate... Pay or die... Allahu Akbar.”

END OF SAMPLE

Novels by Robert A Webster

SIAM STORM:

A stolen holy relic from a secluded Thai Buddhist Monastery sends a combatant monk on a quest to retrieve the sacred item. Three English lads who are having the holiday experience of a lifetime in Thailand, become inadvertently embroiled in the deadly pursuit.

Enjoy the first adventure of Nick, Spock and Stu as they assist in the recovery of the relic and the subsequent voyage of discovery.

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The discovery of a mysterious corpse leaves law enforcement agencies baffled. This adventure sees the lads join forces with their new friend, the mad monk, Pon, as they once again attempt to recover a holy relic, which has this time stolen for a completely new and sinister reason. The chase takes them into Cambodia, as they thwart plans that could affect the planet and change them into fruit based drinkers.

BIMAT - Siam Storm 3

A kidnap and ransom demand lead our hapless heroes into a pursuit through Vietnam. They encounter an old foe, driven by obsession in his revenge driven quest. This time, they face many challenges in both their adventure and their personal circumstance and although they almost lose everything, they never lose hope.

SIAM STORM -Trilogy:

The three Southeast Asia adventures.

PROTECTOR– Siam Storm 4

The adventure continues in, Protector, the fourth book of the Siam Storm Series...

When descendants of Siddhartha Gautama arrive at the Royal Palace in Bangkok; Prime Master Pon assembles a team to discover who is responsible for the murder of the other descendants, along with their age-old protectors.

The fun begins when Spock and Stu join the team, and as usual, they find trouble. Even with Spock and Stu underfoot, the team uncovers evidence of a plot with worldwide implications.

Protector follows the hazardous journey through unfamiliar terrain as the team races the clock to stop further killings of their brethren, only to discover that things are not always as they seem.

SIAM STORM– The series

The complete four-part series

SPICE

Ben Bakewell is a master baker with a unique gift, making him the grand master of his culinary craft. More commonly known as ‘Cake’ he meets up with Ravuth, a Cambodian man residing in England and who has spent the majority of his life trying to trace his long lost family.

Jed Culver is a disgraced D.E.A agent whose bitterness for his old employer and lust for revenge lead him along a deadly path, as he also pursues the plant, although for a far more sinister gain.

This thrilling, but yet sometimes hilarious quest, takes you from the glitz and glamour of the fashionable London restaurant scene to the wild, untamed tropical forests surrounding the Cardamom mountains region of Southeast Asia, as the participant's race to discover the whereabouts of a remarkable plant and locate a misplaced family.

FOSSILS

Enjoy the hilarious antics of an elderly four-piece band as they embark on a whirlwind tour of several countries in Southeast Asia, unaware of their amazing worldwide success. The four musicians are inadvertently united and form a band named Fossils, whose unique sound filled an auditory hiatus lacking for decades in the modern day music industry. Pursued and hounded by ruthless record producers, this unassuming rock band discovers a new, exciting and carefree way of life, which they enjoy to the fullest, or at least what remains of it. Viagra, snuff, and Rock ‘n’ Roll.

THE GOB’S - Fossils 2

The Wrinkled Rockers return for their second hilarious action-packed adventure.

With a sensational new album in production; a bird watching tour that goes horribly wrong; a devious duo returns seeking revenge; a flatulent Spook and a perilous rescue attempt in a foreign, but familiar, country.

What is there not to love? A fantastic adventure you need to read before they get too old for this shit.

PATH – Return of The Reich

A team of three psychics use their unique talents to provide a link between the mortal world and the celestial. Commissioned by lost souls; they find lost treasures for the troubled spirits, which they give to the mortal beneficiaries. One particular case finds the team caught up in a plot conceived during world war two, which is instigated in the present day. The team has to solve a mystery that threatens to split the delicate fabric joining the two worlds.

Return of the Reich.

NEXT - PATH 2 – Covenant of the Gods

With the fate of humankind resting on their shoulders, the PATH team, along with the mortal Keepers and Guides around the world, are sent on various quests. Each individual test will push them all to their limits as time slowly ticks down towards Armageddon and their destiny.

RATCHET AND STENCH – Animal Sleuths -Dog Gone Mystery

When Cruft's Best of Breeds Champion mysteriously disappears; the finger of suspicion points at the owner of a rival kennel.

Somerset police find the missing Scottish terrier's dermal tracker but cannot find further evidence of a crime. Having no proof they are unable to do anything and drop any investigations.

The other dogs call in Ratchet and Stench, and even though they uncover clues that suggest a brutal murder, the animal sleuths aren't convinced.

NON-FICTION

Diabetes Type 2 – Help safely lower your blood sugar with the Tree of Life

This book is not written by Physicians or anyone with PhD's, but by medically trained diabetics who stumbled across pills capsules and powders made from the leaves and seeds of the Moringa tree. Dubbed The Miracle Tree or The Tree of Life. They found it reduced their blood sugar levels. This prompted research into this remarkable tree and its health benefits, which you will find outstanding. The tree grows in many parts of the world and indigenous people have been using its health-giving properties for generations.

Moringa pills, capsules, and powders are now readily available worldwide, This publication will tell you about the research gained and the benefits to diabetics, along with Moringa's other health benefits. It will let you know the current suppliers, and where you can research for yourself this amazing tree. It will also tell you how to grow organically for yourself and a few simple recipes you can use to enjoy the health benefits of Moringa.

Something to Read While Travelling-THAILAND

Is an informative and entertaining companion to accompany you on your travels, which contains useful information about Thailand, some of which you won't find in travel guidebooks. While comprehensive travel guides will go into more detail on specific areas of Thailand; this publication will only briefly explain about popular tourist hotspots, giving you plenty of time to read and enjoy the Useful Tips. The Thai Language Made Simple: Popular Thai Recipes: Fun Quizzes and Brainteasers: Hilarious Jokes: Short Stories: and the full comedy adventure novel, SIAM STORM – A Thailand Adventure.

Leave your cares and woes at the arrivals section of the airport. Make sure you pack a big smile and this travelling companion in your suitcase. Open your heart and mind, and enjoy your wonderful time in the Land of Smiles.

