

THE RHOMBUS

CHAPTER 1.

Walking through the hot and steamy rain forest of Punta Cana, in the Northern province of the Dominican Republic, a gang of three have just waded through a fast-flowing twenty-meter wide river. Now soaking-wet, and with an almost impenetrable steep slippery gravel slope in front of them, they're looking for a safe place to bury four bags of the worlds finest uncut diamonds.

Two hours earlier, they had executed a daring raid on an art exhibition at the Porta Plata Civic Centre. Using tear gas and smoke grenades they walked away with millions of dollars worth of diamonds. Three unassuming normal-looking tourists in their early thirties had just performed the biggest heist in Dominican history and the police were non too happy.

Using the thick jungle vegetation and vines to pull themselves up and out of the river. They climbed the steep slope for twenty minutes, it was hard work, with the heat and humidity taking its toll. They were sweating, out of breath and exhausted.

Billy was the one who normally called the shots and he'd had enough of the climbing and the heat, "I think this'll do, what do you two think?"

Shaughn was Irish, he used to be a world-class works rally car driver. Not long ago he survived a horrific high-speed crash and because of his injuries, he couldn't work as a driver anymore. Being out of work and with no money, he had turned to crime.

Bent over, his hands on his knees and exhausted, he was out of breath, with sweat from his forehead, dripping into his eyes and off the end of his nose, his T-shirt wet from sweat and the river, he was still trying to catch his breath. "Are you sure we'll be able to find 'em again?"

Billy pointed back down the hill. "If we stay in between the curve in the river down there, and the other curve over there and we put that fucking great white-faced mountain over there in between, I don't think we'll be far off."

Dave, the last member of the trio, was a thief and had been a thief all his life. He noticed they had been standing next to a very large ten-foot rock. "Has anyone noticed this big fuck-off rock? You know, when we come back here, it might just give us a little clue to where the fuck we are."

Billy is in agreement, "Great stuff, we could find our way back here in the dark with that big bastard thing sitting there." Turning to Shaughn, "What do you think?"

Shaughn is now feeling the heat. "Let's just get rid of these fucking stones, and get back to civilization."

Billy as usual makes the final decision. "OK, how about here behind the rock, looks like as good a place as any?"

Shaughn, has now caught his breath, but because of his injuries, he isn't ready to go anywhere, "Right if this is going to be the place why don't you two go down and have a swim? Leave it to me I'll bury the stuff."

Billy has an idea, "How about we scratch a heart on the rock?"

Dave's puzzled, "What?"

Billy said, "We can scratch a heart on the rock and we'll know it's the right rock."

Dave's had enough, and just wanted to bury the stuff and get out of there, he took one of the stones from one of the bags and scratched a big heart on the rock, inside the heart, he put the initials, DB L SD. He stood back and admired his handy work, "OK, are we finished?" He put the stone back in the bag and gave it to Shaughn. "Can we just bury the stuff and get the fuck outta here?"

Shaughn asked, "What the fuck's DB L SD?"

Dave replied, "Dave and Billy, Loves Shaughn's Diamonds."

Billy gave out a little laugh, "I like it, come on, let's go."

Shaughn, "Right if you two want to fuck off, I'll bury this lot, I'll be with you in a minute."

Billy and David started to leave, Billy stopped and called back, "Make sure you bury them good and deep."

"No probs, leave it to me." After burying the stones, and smoothing out the soil, he slid down the embankment and joined the others. They were a little upstream near a waterfall having a swim.

They swam, floated, and splashed around, and had finally cooled off under the cold water of the waterfall, after fifteen minutes they gravitated together for a talk.

Billy wanted to err on the side of caution, he said, "I was thinking we could leave them here for about five years."

Dave wanted nothing to do with the idea, "Five, five fucking years, are you having a laugh? That's a fucking lifetime."

Billy, "You gotta think they won't be looking for the stuff by then, well not so fiercely, not as fiercely as they are now. At the moment they ain't got a Scooby who knicked em. Why don't we have a few drinks, act like stupid tourists and leave here clean?"

Shaughn had given it some thought, "We could make a few trips, take a few out at a time."

Dave. "How about if we get someone else to bring 'em back? Let them take the risk, they could do the whole thing for us?"

CHAPTER 2.

Three years later. 1973, In the fashionable part of the West End of London. Inside Alfred-Dupont's large impressive five-story sandstone building, which had become a Mecca if not the holy grail for smokers from around the world.

Hidden away in a small workroom in the rear of the building there's a little service and repair department where Benjamin, the service manager could usually be found at his workshop bench repairing broken and part exchanged lighters.

Benjamin was thirty-years-old, single, born in West London at the tail end of WW11 where as a child, he used to play amongst the ruins and rubble of the many bombed houses. It was a time when trams and horse-drawn carts were still in use.

When he was young, he was slim and fit and daring. He would steal anything not nailed down. It was just how things were in those days. He would steal anything to help his family survive. Back then times were hard.

But now after working for twelve years in the service department of London's famous Alfred-DuPont's "Cigarette and Lighter Emporium" he had risen to the position of service manager. It was the perfect position for him. It was the position where he was able to manipulate and control the number of lighters sold, against those sold in part exchange.

Sitting at his workbench, he was admiring his handy work, he had just finished repairing and buffing up the gold on another one of his part exchanged lighters when Jennifer a twenty-five-year-old shop assistant, slim with a very pretty face and a pleasant disposition, poked her head around the corner of Benjamin's workshop door, "Mr Shaw, there's another customer who wants his lighter fixed."

"Thanks Jen, I'll be right out." Getting up from his workbench, he stretched, and took off his green apron, hanging it on the hook on the back of the workshop door, he put on his suit jacket, checked himself in the wall mirror, and after straightening his tie he followed Jennifer through a narrow corridor out into the crowded shop.

Arriving at the point where she had left the customer, she was pleased to see he was still waiting. "This is Mr Shaw our service manager."

The customer was well-dressed thirty-seven-years-old and spoke with a British public-school upper-class accent.

Benjamin greeted the customer with a firm handshake. "How may I be of assistance? I understand you're having a little problem with your lighter."

"Yes, the bloody things running out of gas quicker than the old Bentley."

He handed over the lighter to Benjamin for examination, "Unfortunately, it was a common fault with this model. I would say this particular lighter was somewhere between seven and ten-years-old, am I correct?"

"Yes, exactly seven-years. The big three-O, I thought I'd treat myself to a little pressy, one has to pamper one's self now and again."

"Yes sir precisely."

"But you say it was a common fault?"

"Unfortunately yes sir, it's unusual for DuPont lighters I know, but there you are sir, even the best of us have floors. I am however authorized to offer you a one-hundred-pound credit against one of our newer model lighters."

"I was rather hoping you could fix this one for me. Sentimental value and all that."

"I do understand sir, but to tell you the truth, it would cost you twice as much again to fix this lighter as it would to buy a new one. The hundred pounds would, of course, be offset as part of an exchange purchase against one of our latest DuPont gold lighters."

"Well, I wasn't thinking of buying a new one."

"Excuse me sir, but you don't look like the kind of gentlemen who's going to start using matches."

In a jollier tone. "No, no. Wouldn't do to be seen using the old firelighters to stoke up one's smokes now would it? Oh, why not? A hundred gin vouchers discount sounds like a jolly good deal to me."

"A good choice sir, if I may say so. Would you like Jenny here to show you to our latest range? I'm sure sir won't be disappointed, and they are guaranteed for a further five years."

Jennifer had been standing there, listening to Benjamin's patter. "Jenny love, would you mind showing this gentleman our latest range of gold lighters?"

"My pleasure." The customer held out his hand and eagerly shook Benjamin's hand. "Thank you, you've been very helpful, most kind."

"My pleasure sir, I hope you enjoy your new purchase as much as I have enjoyed my time serving you."

The customer and Jenny went off to look at the lighters. The customer in conversation with Jenny. "Splendid fellow."

Jennifer always had a soft spot for Benjamin and readily agreed. "Yes, he is rather splendid."

Benjamin pocketed the customer's lighter and made his way back to his workshop, talking to himself, "Another one bites the dust, yee ha."

Fifteen-minutes later whilst beavering away at his workbench Benjamin was fixing his latest acquisition, suddenly there was an urgent but light female knocking at his door.

It was Jennifer again, poking her head around the corner of the door. "There's another one. I don't know how you do it, you're better than all those salesmen out there put together."

"Needs must when the devil calls Jenny and I have many needs."

"But you don't get any commission on the sales."

"I will have my reward in heaven, helping my fellow man is all the reward I need."

Jenny, as usual, was trying to get Benjamin to reveal any thoughts or feelings he might have for her. "So what happens to all those needs you're talking about?"

Looking down at a dozen gold lighters sitting on his workbench, "The Lord will provide Jenny the Lord will provide, I'll be out in a minute."

After Benjamin's fifth "New for old conversion, of the day" his work had finally come to an end. He left work by the rear entrance in Jemyne Street and got into a waiting minicab to take him home.

Sitting in the back of a four-door 1969 Mercedes 250 being driven by Paul, a 5'10" twenty-six-year-old, wearing a blue suit, white shirt, black shoes and black tie. Born in an even poorer area than Benjamin, he came from South London and was bought up in the same vein as Benjamin but Paul's area had been bombed even worse than Benjamin's and to survive there, you had to be able to handle yourself. Coming home with a fat lip or two black eyes wasn't an uncommon occurrence.

For the past two years, Paul had been Benjamin's regular driver. He would pick Benjamin up every morning at 08.00 am and take him to work. He was always Paul's first job of the day, and as they didn't live too far from each other, this was quite often Paul's last job of the day.

During this time Paul had become Benjamin's confidant, telling each other their troubles and secrets. They played golf on Sunday's, but as Benjamin was the worst golfer in the history of the game he would lose £50 every week to Paul, and every week Benjamin would declare to Paul and the rest of the world one day he would win it all back.

On their many drives together they would talk and confide in each other. One of their conversations started innocently enough.

Paul recalling an incident way back when he was still in his primary school, "I asked the religious instruction teacher if Jesus was king of the Jews, then how come we're not all Jewish? I was sent out of the room, and do you know what? I never did get the answer to the question."

"And you probably never will, but I've got another problem."

"What's up?"

"Do you remember I told you about how many lighters I can get from work?"

"Yeah, I've got a couple of samples in the glove box."

"All legit, they're not stolen."

Sarcastically, "Yeah right, of course, they're not, they just give them to you out the goodness of their hearts."

"You're missing the point."

"Go on."

"Well, the problem is, I seem to have run out of customers."

"Yeah, I can see how it would be a bit of a problem."

"The thing is there are only so many people I know willing to keep buying lighters and I've got about a hundred sitting at home just waiting to be sold."

"What are they worth? How much do you want for them?"

"About two hundred each, some more some less."

"That's a lot of lighters and a lot of money."

"You're telling me, and I'm getting more every day I've got another five in my case now. I was wondering if you know anyone who'd be willing to buy them as a job lot?"

Paul thought for a moment, "I'm going for a drink over the water on Saturday night, maybe there's someone over there who can help."

"You going alone?"

"No, I'm going with my sister and her husband, I think he'll know some people who might be interested. They're not very nice people and they won't want to be paying the sort of money you're asking, but the good thing is you might be able to get rid of em all at once."

"I hope so. Do you remember I told you about Alice, the girl I'm living with?"

"Yeah, you told me about her, the expensive one."

"Yeah, now she's using taxis to get her shopping."

"What taking her to the shops?"

"No, she's sending taxi drivers out to do the shopping for her."

"That's not good."

"Yeah, she doesn't even cook anymore, it's restaurants every bloody night."

"No wonder you need the money. Leave it with me I'll see what I can do."

CHAPTER 3.

CHAPTER 4.

CHAPTER 5.

On Saturday, Paul was in the East End pub he'd told Benjamin about, he was with Martin his brother-in-law, thirty-eight-years of age, six-foot-tall well built with short black hair, wearing a handmade dark blue suit, powder blue shirt, black tie, and highly polished black leather shoes.

With him was his sister Jane, she was thirty-five-years-old, with short bob cut blonde hair, she was a very slim woman, wearing a black and white polka dot dress and white stiletto heel shoes.

They stood at the bar, enjoying a drink and listening to the songs being sung by local men and women on the pub's stage.

An unwritten law in all East End pubs is you never make derogatory remarks or heckle any of the singers, but this didn't seem to deter a Neanderthal standing a few feet from where they were standing.

He made the grave mistake of shouting, "Get off you're rubbish. Boo."

The lady singer on stage was wearing a shiny black Shirley Bassey style dress, waving a feather boa around and singing "Hey Big Spender" stopping in mid-flow, the three-piece band came to an ugly uncoordinated finish and stopped playing, and the whole pub went deadly silent, everyone turned around and looked straight at the Neanderthal. By then he had four heavysset guys in very close proximity to him.

Seeing how much danger he was in, he pulled out a gun. The four heavysset guys took a step backwards, but Martin instinctively picked up an empty beer bottle from the bar, swung it as hard as he could and cracked it around the back of the Neanderthal's head. He went down, lights out, end of problem.

From out of the crowd stepped Charlie, a smartly dressed slim 5'9" man in his late thirties, wearing a very expensive dark blue, shiny tonic mohair suit, white shirt and light blue silk tie. Holding out his hand he shook his old friends' hand warmly. "Martin me old mate, sorry mate I didn't see you, I didn't know you were in." Charlie alluded to the unconscious Neanderthal, he gave him a gentle kick to see if there is any response, "I see you haven't lost your touch. And here's the beautiful Jane. Hello my darling, looking as gorgeous as ever. You got a drink?"

Jane held up her drink, "Yes thanks Charlie."

"Is he still making you drink the cheap stuff?" Charlie turns to the barmaid, "Champagne for these people and keep it coming, they don't pay for nothing. Well not in here anyway." He gave a slight laugh and slapped Martin on the back. He turned to the four heavy set guys, "Get rid of that rubbish, and I don't want to see it back in here again, do I make myself clear?"

By now the four heavy set guys are manhandling the unconscious Neanderthal out of the pub.

One of the heavy set guy's answered, "Yes boss, don't worry he ain't never coming back."

Charlie, "Cunt, ruining a perfectly good night."

Martin, "I don't know mate, it livened the place up a bit."

"Yeah, it'll give 'em something to talk about."

In the background, the band started up again, and to rapturous applause, the singer started singing again.

Charlie turned back to Martin, "So, how've things been with you? You doing alright? Need anything?"

"No, all's good, just thought we'd pop over and see you, we thought we'd bring young Paul out for the night."

Charlie turned and shook Paul's hand, "Young Paul, Jane's brother, right?"

"Yeah, we met at the wedding. I remember you saying you were in the Navy together."

"Yeah, me and Martin were in the boxing team."

Turning back to Martin, "Do you remember when we, went to someplace in Wales called Murtha, Murtha Titville or some such shit hole. We had to fight the Army boxing team?"

"Yeah, I remember it well."

"Do you remember I got the crap kicked out of me? They stopped the fight in the first round. Mind you, me old sparring partner here made up for it. He knocked seven bells out the next bloke."

"It was a miss-match, I swear the bloke you fought was a heavyweight."

"I don't know what he was, but I know one thing, it fucking well hurt. Excuse the language."

Jane, "It's alright Charlie, I get worse at home."

"I'm sure you do."

Putting a friendly hand on Charlie's shoulder, "Don't listen to her mate, she's worse than me."

"I don't believe it, not a lovely little thing like Jane. Look, we'll have a chat later, I've got a shit load of things to do, I'll be back see you later." Charlie left them.

Jane had been given Champagne and they were all watching the stage, listening to a very good male singer singing Matt Monroe's version of "Born Free."

They had a great night and Paul was introduced to some contacts he thought might be able to help him with Benjamin's problem.

The next day, Benjamin and Paul were playing their usual Sunday round of golf. Paul told Benjamin he had made him an appointment to meet some people after work on Monday.

"Where's the meeting?"

"It's at The Blind Beggar pub in Whitechapel."

Not too happy with the location, "We're going to the pub where George Cornell was shot and killed by the Kray's?"

"You got it, it's a nice pub, they said six-thirty, I'll pick you up at six, then we'll have plenty of time to get there. I'll remind you in the morning, are you OK?"

"A bit scary, but I'll be OK, I'll bring some samples. How many should I bring?"

"As many as you don't mind losing."

"I'll bring five."

The next day after he had dropped Benjamin off turned out to be an average day for Paul, a couple of airport runs, but in between, with no one else available Paul had to do the one job every other driver dreaded doing.

He had to take the Duchess and her dog from Grosvenor square, a few hundred yards to Hyde Park and wait for her will she took her dog for a walk. It wasn't the little dog everyone disliked, it was her, she was the most obnoxious person you would wish to meet. There was never a smile or a thank you, she was just horrible, she acted like she had hired a servant for an hour, but as Paul loved dogs he made a great fuss of the little chap. The small fluffy Pekingese dog was always pleased to see Paul. It seemed to Paul this was the only fun fluffy would be getting all day. Carrying a red rubber ball in the glove compartment for just these occasions, he would throw it as far as he could and watch those little fury legs go at a hundred miles an hour chasing it. Bringing it back, so Paul could do it all over again.

The day passed and eventually, it was time for Paul to pick Benjamin up. Looking somewhat apprehensive and nervous, clutching his briefcase, he got into the back of Paul's car.

Paul could see Benjamin was nervous and tried to put him at ease. He told him not to worry, the worst thing that could happen is he'd lose five lighters. By the time they arrived at the Blind Beggar Pub, it was 6.40 pm.

Waiting for them inside were two heavy-set gangster types, they looked menacing, they were both in their forties, sitting with pints of beer in front of them. Both wearing dark suits, white shirts and plain black ties.

Benjamin entered carrying his briefcase and took a seat opposite the two heavies.

Paul was still standing, "Sorry we're a bit late, came by the embankment the traffic was murder. I thought it would be a bit easier this time of night. This is Ben the bloke I told you about."

They didn't get up, they didn't speak. They just held out their big muscular hands, and shake Benjamin's hand.

Making his way to the bar Paul asked Benjamin, "I'll get the drinks, what do you want?"

"I'll have a large whisky."

One of the guys finally spoke to Benjamin, "So, what you got for us?"

"I bought five samples."

Indignant, "Only five, he said you had a load. What don't you trust us?"

The other heavy joined in, "I don't think he trusts us."

"No, he doesn't trust us, and you know what. I don't blame him coz we're a couple of thieving bastards. Now let's have a look at these super-duper lighters."

Benjamin flipped the clips, and opened the briefcase, he slid the case over to them. "There you go good as new."

"What do you mean as good as new? What are they, secondhand?"

"No, not really, they've just been through the shop."

"What's do you mean?"

"If someone has a problem with a lighter, we give them a new one in exchange for these."

"So, they're secondhand."

"No, they might only be a day or a week old and they come to the service department. They're as good as new."

"Where I come from, secondhand is secondhand. How much do you want for 'em? And how many you got?"

"I've got two hundred, at a hundred pounds each."

"We'll take the lot at twenty-five."

"I can do seventy-five."

Paul returned with the drinks and sat down.

One of the heavy's said, "He's trying to sell us secondhand lighters."

Paul turns to Benjamin, "They're just trying to wind you up. Don't take any notice of them."

"We offered him twenty-five quid each."

"That's bollocks and you know it, they're worth four hundred."

"They're secondhand."

"They ain't secondhand you gotta give him at least hundred. You can sell em for two easy."

"He already went down to seventy-five."

Paul turned to Benjamin, "What's wrong with you? Anyone would think you're desperate to sell them. You've been getting two hundred yourself."

"You weren't here, I didn't know what to do."

The same heavy butted in again, "We'll give you fifty, and we'll keep these five."

Paul wasn't having any of it, "Don't you normally use a gun when you're robbing someone?"

Benjamin was almost apologetic to Paul, "I said seventy-five for the others, but I want fifty each for these five, I'm not just letting them go for nothing."

"Did you hear what he said? Seventy-five next time, and two fifty upfront for these." There was a pause in the proceedings, "Come on don't fuck him about, give him his money."

"Here you go." Two hundred and fifty pounds was dropped into the briefcase and the five lighters are scooped out.

Paul remarks, "Talk about sale of the fucking century."

"When can we pick up the rest?"

Benjamin, being keen to get rid of his stash of lighters, "You can have them tomorrow. I could meet you during my lunch break."

"Alright, what time and where?"

"Just after 1.00 pm inside the north gate of Green Park in Piccadilly. "OK?"

They got up to leave, "Yeah fine, any time's good for us, we don't get a lunch break, we'll see you tomorrow just after 1.00 pm."

One of the heavies put the five lighters in his pocket, they both swilled down the remains of their beers and left.

Paul, "You do know you've just dropped yourself right in the shit don't you?"

"How?"

"Well apart from just telling them where you work and giving them those lighters for fifty quid, which by the way will never go up in price. You've left yourself open to blackmail by way of you having to supply them with lighters for the rest of your fucking life."

"I'm not very good at this am I?"

"You're fucked is what you are."

"What can I do?"

"If I were you, I'd get rid of your bird, work as hard as I could, get as much money as I could, and fuck off to Spain."

"I don't like Spain."

"Well, wherever the fuck it is you do like. I'd fuck off there as soon as possible."

"I've fucked up haven't I?"

"No shit Sherlock, unless you want them two coming into your shop every five minutes and robbing you of your lighters."

"Are you sure?"

Paul gave him a look, "What do you think?"

Benjamin had a restless night thinking about what might happen at his meeting the next day. Paul picked him up and spent most of the journey trying to persuade him everything will be alright.

Four hours later, Benjamin left his shop and walked anxiously towards Green Park. Carrying the lighters in a briefcase he walked down Jermyn Street towards St James's Street, turning right and walking up a slight incline towards Piccadilly, turning left, crossing the road passing the Ritz hotel he was now on a direct course for Green Park. Relieved to see Paul parked by the entrance, he relaxed a little. Paul got out of his car and they shook hands.

Wondering how Benjamin was holding up, "How you doing?"

"I'm OK, I'm just wondering what strokes they're going to be pulling today."

"Just be on your toes, they're slippery bastards. You got the stuff?"

"Yeah, but I only bought half of what I said I would."

"That's good thinking, let's just see how it goes, you're learning fast."

They entered the park through the large highly polished green and gold painted wrought-iron gates.

Looking like two fish out of water, the two heavys were dressed in their usual black suits, white shirts and black ties. Against the other colourfully dressed people in the park, they were sticking out like two sour thumbs.

"Where've you been? We've been waiting for you."

Paul's wasn't standing for any shit from them, "It's only five past, he told you just after 1.00 pm. If you don't like it we can always fuck off."

Seeing their strong-arm tactics weren't going to work. "Alright, what you got?"

Benjamin said, "You got the money?"

"Have you got the gear?"

"I could only bring one hundred."

"You told us two."

"I can get the rest later."

Paul in support of Benjamin. "still, hundred's better than nothing. You got the £7,500?"

"We've got £5,000."

"So how were you going to pay £15,000 for two hundred? Fuck this." Paul took Benjamin by the arm and started to drag him away. "Let us know when you've got the money. Come on Ben, they're fucking us about."

"Hang on, calm yourself down. It's alright we've got it."

Paul was showing them he's not happy. "At these prices, and you're still trying to fuck him over."

"It wouldn't be right if we didn't try. We couldn't live with ourselves, could we?"

"Right seven and a half grand, and he'd better not get mugged on his way back from work. Come on hand it over so we can all fuck off."

Sarcastically, "Would it be alright if we take a quick look at the merchandise?"

Paul can't believe what he's hearing. "Are you having a tin bath? We're in the middle of a fucking park, you two look like tits on a bull, and with all these people about and you want to start rummaging around in his briefcase?"

"You really don't trust us, do you? We're businessmen, not criminals."

"Are you forgetting who introduced us?"

"Fair enough."

After they handed over £7,500 to Paul, he handed it straight to Benjamin and gave him a nod telling him to let them have the case. Benjamin let the case go and handed it over.

"When can we expect the other hundred? Or do you want us to come around to the shop and pick em up?"

Benjamin almost had a heart attack. "You can't come around the shop, you can never come to the shop."

Sarcastically, one heavy to the other, "I don't think he wants us to go to the shop."

Paul steps in again. "We'll be in touch, and remember never go to the shop. Charlie wouldn't like it. Come on Ben, let's go."

They were leaving the park when Paul asked Benjamin, "Do you need a lift back to the shop?"

He was still feeling a bit shaky, "No, I think I could do with a walk. But perhaps it would be an idea if you took care of the money."

"Good idea." Paul took the money, "See you at 6.00 pm."

That evening Paul picked Benjamin up and gave him the £7,500. After counting out Paul's share, Benjamin passed him £750. With both of them happy with the day's work, Paul dropped Benjamin off and went for a drink with his friends.

CHAPTER 4.

The next day after Paul had dropped Benjamin off at work, he drove to Grodzinskies bakery to buy the cab's controller Ernie his favourite custard-filled doughnuts. On arrival at the smoke-filled cab office, all he could hear was Ernie shouting into a microphone. Ernie must be in one of his usual bad moods and one of the drivers was getting a bollocking. But Paul knew he'd calm down after he'd had a cup of tea and a couple of doughnuts.

Ernie was thirty-five-years-old, overweight, coming in at about twenty-two-stone. He was the cab office manager and radio controller. Sitting in a separate section of the office giving out jobs and directions to his drivers. Whatever Ernie said was law and a driver was trying to get out of doing the job none of the drivers liked doing.

"Yes seven-seven, I did say the Duchess wants you to take her dog for a walk. I know she's a bitch, it's your turn, everyone else has had their turn, now it's your turn again, get on with it."

Billy the boss was on one of his monthly visits from Ireland. Seeing Paul enter the office with the box of doughnuts. "One of them for me?"

"If you're making the tea you can have one."

Ernie raises his voice away from the air-wave radio chatter. "Who's making the fucking tea."

Paul shouted back, "The boss is doing it."

"Don't forget three sugars. You'd better not have forgotten my doughnuts."

Billy made the tea and took one over to Ernie. He spoke to Ernie in a low voice so Paul could not hear, "How come Paul's the only one allowed in the office?"

Telling Billy. "Apart from being our best driver, it was him who saved my life when I had my accident."

The accident he was talking about was when Ernie fell through the false ceiling and broke his leg and punctured his lung. He was unconscious, and it was Paul who looked after him and got him breathing whilst waiting for the ambulance to arrive.

Billy was impressed and had an idea he thought might solve his problem with the Dominican diamonds, "Oh, OK." He turned to Paul, "Have you ever been in the army or done anything dangerous?"

"Yeah to both. Why'd you ask?"

"I was just thinking, I might have a job for you."

"A dangerous job?"

"No, not a dangerous job, but a job's going to need someone with a brain and someone who can think on their feet."

Thinking, if Billy wanted him to do a job for him, he might be able to sell him some of Benjamin's lighters. "How do you fancy a job lot of refurbished Alfred DuPont gold lighters? They're like new."

"How much, how many, and have you got any with you?"

"They're £100 each, they're worth £400. I got a couple in the car, and my man's got about a hundred and fifty."

"Bring 'em in, I'll take a look. By the way, have you ever been to the Dominican Republic?"

"No, I don't even know where the fuck it is."

"Well it's got a lot of jungle, and it's hot, I'll show you."

Ushering Paul over to an old yellowing dog eared map of the world pinned to the wall. Billy pointed to the Dominican Republic. "There it is. It was hotter than hell when I was there."

Paul recognizes Haiti. "Ah, yeah, Haiti the top halves full of voodoo ain't it? It's where they made the James Bond movie "Live and let die."

"Yeah, that's the place?"

"Yeah, looks nice, wouldn't mind going there one day."

"Go and get the lighters, and we'll talk about it."

Paul went outside to his car and grabbed two gold lighters from the glove compartment. Taking them back inside the cab office, he found Billy back in his office. "There you go." He handed Billy the lighters.

Billy examined them. "Oh yeah, they're beautiful lighters, no mistake. Tell you what, you do me a favour and I'll take the lot."

"You'll take all hundred and fifty, at a £100 apiece?"

"Yeah. Well, it's kind of a big favour."

"They're not mine, I'm not making a penny out of it. I'm just doing it as a favour for a mate."

"That's OK, I'll make it worth your while."

"Must be some favour, who'd you want me to kill?"

"You remember five minutes ago you said you'd like to go to The Dominican Republic?"

"Yeah, I wouldn't mind."

"The thing is, I've got something over there I need picking up."

Paul is very interested, but he doesn't want to show it. "Go on. But I ain't doing drugs."

"No, no, no, it ain't drugs. But I need to be able to trust you. I don't know what you're like."

"Put it this way, those lighters ain't exactly one hundred per cent kosher, and the people I'm dealing with carry guns."

"Well, the thing is, this is a very serious situation, there are people who could go to jail for a very long time if this gets fucked up."

"And you're coming to me. Why?"

"We need an outsider, someone who has never been to The Dominican before, someone they'd never suspect."

"They? Who are they?"

"The police, the local Gendarmerie."

"Oh, never suspect me of what?"

"Carrying diamonds. A fricking shit load of uncut diamonds."

"What they worth?"

"Millions, fucking millions, just sitting there, just waiting to be picked up."

"Sitting where? In the Dominican?"

"Ah, well the thing is, I was going to tell you, we've got a bit of a problem there."

"Go on."

"They're in the jungle."

"And you want me to go over there. On my own. Go into some steaming hot jungle, dig up your diamonds, and waltz through customs with a shit load of diamonds and bring 'em back to you?"

"I know it sounds a little tricky."

Paul was somewhat exasperated. "Tricky. Are you sure? Tricky is bringing back more duty-free than you're supposed to, tricky is travelling on a false passport. This is so far beyond tricky it's cata-fucking-clysmically beyond tricky."

"Well, when you put it like that."

"You want someone who can think quickly on their feet right? Well here's one for you. Have they got any golf courses on the island?"

"Yeah, they got loads, they got some lovely ones right on top of the cliffs right by the sea. Why? What you got in mind?"

"You're gonna need three more men. Three golfers willing to do the job."

"Golfers? Why golfers?"

"A few reasons. One we can split the gear up. Two we can show a reason for being there. Three, Well I'm not going to tell you three."

"Why not?"

"Co's if I told you three, you'd know as much as me, and I'm not so fucking stupid as to tell you everything or you might cut me out."

"Alright then, when can you go? Ernie said you were a cunning fucker, looks like he was right."

"I might be a cunning fucker, but before I go offering a job like this out, you gotta give me some figures, like what's it worth? And what's gonna happen to our families if we get captured? And by the way, they'll want fifty per cent upfront."

"Leave it with me I'll sort things out."

"No, I need to know now, give me the figures and I'll be on my way. I gotta find three more golfers, and I've gotta have all the answers. The thing is, I think I know just the right people for the job."

It was now 9.30 pm. and with the information he needed, Paul pulled up at a North London pub. Seeing Mike fighting with three men he lent against his car with his arms folded and watched the fight.

Mike was thirty-years-old, ex-army, well built, a hard man.

He saw Paul and took a two-second break from the fight. "Hello, mate unusual to see you in this neck of the woods." He went back to the fight, and after a few kicks and punches, he returned to Paul.

"I've got a job for you."

He was dragged back into the fight, he threw a few more punches and return for another two-second chat with Paul. "Sounds interesting, how much are we talking about?" Once again, he's dragged back into the fight before he returned.

"£50.000 and a free golfing holiday in the Dominican."

"Fucking hell, hang on a minute." He goes back to the fight with renewed vigour and ended it by knocking all three of the men out.

"I take it you're interested then?"

"Let's have a pint of apple juice and talk a bit more about this golfing holiday."

One of the men he had been fighting with was getting up. Mike turned around and knocked him out again. They went into the pub where it didn't take more than a few mouthfuls of cider before Mike was in on the job.

The next friend on Paul's list was Trevor, a maniac of epic proportion with a private pilot's license, an ex-Eaton schoolboy, twenty-seven- years-old from a wealthy family who had pampered to his every need. But there's a problem. Whilst Paul was sitting watching his TV he saw a light aircraft going through the gap in Tower Bridge, it circled around and buzzed the Houses of Parliament, Nelson's Column and flew straight down The Mall and over Buckingham Palace.

The plane landed in Hyde Park and was instantly surrounded by blue flashing lights from about thirty police cars. The door to the plane opened and the slim figure of Trevor appeared. He was standing facing the police with his arms raised as if in crucifixion. It was impossible to hear what he said, but Paul swore he saw Trevor mouth the word, "What?"

It looked like he might have to scratch Trevor off the list, Trevor might be going away for a while.

The next morning with Benjamin in the back seat of Paul's car. "I've got some good news for you."

"Good, I could do with some."

"I just sold those hundred and fifty lighters you were trying to get rid of. I only got £75 for 'em, but I've sold the lot."

"Great, £11,250."

"Wow, you worked that out quick enough."

"Because it's the figures I'd already worked out if I'd have sold them to those two pricks in the park."

"You were never going to get any more from them. But I do have another kind of a deal for you I think you're going to like."

"What you need more lighters?"

"No, it's got nothing to do with lighters, but the thing is, it's worth £50,000. I'll admit it's a bit naughty, and there's gonna be a little stress involved."

"How much stress? There's no violence involved, I don't do violence."

"No, we haven't got to kill anyone, we gotta go to the Dominican Republic, play a little golf and pick up some uncut diamonds. There'll be four of us."

"Christ, how many diamonds are there?"

"Lots, we'll have about sixty each, we can ship 'em through in our golf bags. Sling em in amongst our old golf balls. If we get stopped, we can always say we picked em up while we were playing golf. We can say we thought they were just pretty stones. Plus we'll throw in some real stones, just so it doesn't look like we've only got diamonds."

"I've still got three weeks holidays owing to me I've got to take before August, a golf holiday and £50,000 sounds like the sort of holiday I'd be interested in."

CHAPTER 5.

ALL FOR ONE – ONE FOR ALL.

The next day at the cab office.

Billy asked Paul, "I've a job taking a van load of furniture to Dublin, do you want to do it?"

Not wanting to jeopardise the sale of the lighters, "Sounds like an earner, yeah love to."

Billy told him, "Two things, Ernie's going to go with you and at the same time I want you to bring the lighters over."

"No problem, when?"

"Next week."

A week later Paul and Ernie arrived at the Irish Ferry line docks in Holyhead, unfortunately, they arrived almost too late to board the ferry, with the bulkhead doors closing, Ernie had to slip one of the workers £20 to re-open the doors for him. The crossing was one of the worst known in the history of maritime crossings. Even before leaving the docks, the ferry was being slammed up against the dockside walls. So after a few pints of Guinness and a mighty T-Bone steak with all the trimmings, Paul and Ernie took to their cabins and tried unsuccessfully to get some well-needed sleep. At 07.00 am the next morning the ferry was still being tossed around, they were approaching the port of Dublin. Two hours behind schedule, and still hour out, they had a go at eating some breakfast but not feeling too good afterwards Paul went out on the deck for some fresh air. The wind was so strong when he walked around the corner it pinned him to the bulkhead window. It took a further two-hours before they entered the port and a further hour before they eventually cleared customs. On leaving and without the lighters being uncovered Paul sighed a long and loud sigh of relief.

It was then they made their way out to Bray and met up with Billy and after unloading the furniture from the van and giving Billy the lighters, he said, "He would give Paul the money for the lighters later at his night club". In essence, he had already sold the lighters and all he wanted to do was to meet his buyers, do the exchange and pick up his money and pay Paul later.

It was now 7.00 p.m., and after a peaceful afternoon relaxing watching TV and snoozing in their hotel rooms, Ernie and Paul made their way from the Anchor Hotel in Parnell Square, to O'Connell Street and into a large granite-faced building, they were now in the world-famous

Mooney's Bar, but with all the troubles the Irish were having in the North they felt a little out of place and a little apprehensive being the only two British guys in an Irish pub in the middle of Dublin. They moved slowly but deliberately over to the bar and in a low voice ordered two pints of Guinness. The friendly barman had already poured out around thirty pints and was leaving them behind the bar to settle. Neither Ernie nor Paul had ever seen this kind of thing being done before and watched in admiration. The barman entertained them even further by making a shape of a shamrock on the top of each pint, performing a further gesture of friendship, he made the shape of a harp on the top their two drinks. A few pints later and after having some of the bars delicious wholesome freshly cooked food they were feeling more at ease, by then the bar was a heaving mass of Irish Guinness drinkers and as it was now 9.30 pm they thought it about time they made their way over to Billy's club. It was called the Revolution Club.

It wasn't more than ten minutes after the pair had entered the club when they both heard a loud bang from the front of the building, a hand grenade had been thrown at the front door. But with reinforced steel doors there were no casualties, things just seemed to continue as if this was a normal part of life in Ireland.

Not wanting the guys to get the wrong impression, or have a bad experience of their stay, Billy introduced them to a pair of stunningly good-looking girls and telling them all drinks would be on the house.

Paul and his black-haired green-eyed beauty were instantly attracted to each other which helped kick start the drinking and the good night ahead. They both took full advantage of the free bar and had a marvellous time.

Ernie being married and a loyal husband wasn't interested in anything beyond having a good drink and a good time. He was an amusing companion and they all had a great night. Their new female companions had plenty to drink and both girls went home happy.

A week later, after Trevor's parents had paid the hefty fine and had their hyperactive son released from prison, Paul was able to contact him with the diamond deal. Knowing he'd jump at it, the crazy bastard couldn't wait to get started.

True to his word, Billy came up with £25.000 for each of the guys, paying them in cash.

So nothing was traceable and there were no bank account details and so it didn't look like a pattern, they were told not to put the money in their banks but to go to their respective banks and take out enough money to pay for their Airplane tickets and hotels. He paid them an extra £2.000 apiece.

Ten days before they were due to leave for the Dominican Republic, Paul arranged for the four guys to meet up. He thought it would be a good idea if they got to know each other before their trip. He booked a tee time for them to play a round of golf at Richmond Park Public golf course. No one knew them there and no one would take any notice of four golfers of varying skills.

As soon as Mike and Trevor were introduced they were like kindred spirits, they hit it off immediately and were looking forward to the trip.

As usual, Benjamin hit his ball all over the place but as he was such a character the other guys couldn't help but like him.

During the game, Paul outlined his plan for their survival. Outlining what he thought would be the best strategy in the unlikely event of them being caught. What they would say to the police and if it came to it what they would say in court. The first thing they would all have to agree on was where they found the "pretty little stones," on one of the golf holes, they would have to decide on what hole when they got there. The second thing was the division of the stones, he had thought it would look suspicious if they all had the same number of stones in their golf bags, so when they get them he would dish them out in uneven numbers maybe only fifteen for Benjamin, sixty for Trevor seventy-five for Mike and the rest in his bag.

Another thing he thought would be a good idea was if his stones went in with his golf balls, the same thing for Mike, Trevor's sixty should go in his big pocket as if he had just thrown them in there and forgotten about them, and Benjamin's lot should be in one of the smaller pockets, maybe where he keeps his small change coins tees and keys. Reminding Benjamin, "Make sure you've got plenty of coins and make sure you take plenty of golf balls".

The only excuse they would have if captured would be they thought they looked nice and they thought they might be worth something, they looked like crystals.

With no connections with Billy, Dave and Shaughn, and no money trail they should be in the clear. Another thing Paul had thought most prudent was to keep the identity of their backers from the other three. He thought what they don't know won't hurt them.

After the game, they went to one of the parks cafeteria's, ordered drinks and sat outside in the sun, and watched the passing herds of deer. Paul put it to them if any of them had any other ideas or could think of anything he might have missed to let him know.

Benjamin had thought of a question they might be asked. How did they all know each other? It was agreed it was a great question. The best answer they could come up with was golf. They would say they met about eleven months ago at Richmond golf course and they met every Thursday afternoon to play golf together.

Another good idea came from Trevor saying they must all have each other's contact phone numbers. It was also agreed before they leave for the Dominican Republic they should all go out for a drink together, maybe they would think of other questions they might be asked.

CHAPTER 6.

THE FIRST LOOK.

Twelve days later they were once again playing golf, but this time they knew each other a lot better and they were in the Dominican Republic.

They had been there for two days, and we're in the north of the island, standing on one of the pristine putting greens on the beautiful Playa Grande golf course. Overlooking the clear blue ocean. Paul asked them if they thought this hole would be a good place to find the stones?

Agreeing, Trevor wanted to know when they were going to collect the real stones.

Back in London Billy had given Paul instructions and directions to a stable where they could hire horses. He had decided the time was right, and as the next day fitted into their itinerary perfectly. "I was given the name and directions to a stable near to where the diamonds are buried, we can take out some horses and find them tomorrow."

Benjamin wasn't too keen on getting on a horse and riding off into the unknown. "Anyone ever been on a horse?"

Trevor had, so he was looking forward to it. But Mike and Paul had never been on one.

As they were leaving the green, Benjamin could be heard mumbling to himself. "This should be fun."

The next morning the guys jumped into their hire car and as per Billy's instructions, they drove to a horse-riding stable ten kilometre's inland from their hotel.

With many excited horses running around inside the coral, four ranch hands walking about doing various jobs of manual labour and then there was the boss, Angelica, a twenty-six-year-old female, she is slim and very attractive, long black hair, green eyes, wearing a dusty beige cowboy-style hat, a beige waistcoat over a yellow shirt, loosely fitting beige trousers and dusty old suede boots. She looked good, Paul thought she looked very good, he couldn't keep his eyes off of her.

The ranch hands helped the guys mount up. All this time Angelica had been watching the fun. She spoke English with a Spanish accent and asked them if they wanted anyone to go with them?

Paul, now wearing a small haversack. "No, it's OK, we can handle it, we've heard there's a waterfall where we can have a swim, just point us in the direction and we'll be alright."

Angelica helped them by giving them directions, pointing out the route. "Keep the river on your right, keep going for about thirty or forty minutes until you come to a right-hand bend in the river and a mountain on your left. Don't worry, you'll be OK the horses know where they're going."

Paul wanted to be the one who spoke to Angelica, "Thanks, we'll see you later." turning to his friends, "Are you lot ready?"

Trevor has been sitting on his horse waiting patiently for the rest of them to sort themselves out. "We're waiting for you."

Benjamin is not at all happy with what's going on. "Will they know when to stop?"

Mike can't believe what he's just heard, "You really have no idea what the fuck you are doing, do you?"

Benjamin is very nervous. "No, not a clue."

The four horses slowly clip-clopped out of the ranch. It didn't take long before everyone settled down and they all started to enjoy their ride.

As they were told, it was just over forty minutes when they arrived at the right-hand bend in the river and saw the mountain on their left.

Paul, "This is it."

Trevor, "So you know where the stuff is? Do you think you can find it?"

Paul, "I fucking-well hope so or we've come a fucking long way for nothing."

They dismounted and tethered their horses to nearby trees and bushes. Stepping into the cold water they were soon up to their waists, the river was fast-flowing, they waded across reaching the far bank. Clambered up the same steep slope Billy, Dave, and Shaughn had climbed some three years earlier.

Grabbing hold of some vines to pull themselves up out of the water they made their way up the steep slippery slope into the jungle.

Paul, was sweating, "We gotta keep the bend and the top of the mountain in line with us, and then we've gotta find a big fuck-off rock with a heart scratched on it, and BD L SD scratched inside of it.

They had been climbing and looking around for more than an hour.

Mike, now out of breath and sweating like his three exhausted companions, points to a large rock. "How about this one?"

They all looked at what Mike was pointing at. They all saw the large rock with BD L SD scratched into it.

Paul turned and saw the rock, exited, "Ah, what a result, we could have been here for weeks looking for this thing" Paul slapped Mike on the back, "You're a fucking marvel Mike a fucking marvel."

Paul produced a small garden spade from his haversack and gave it to Trevor.

Trevor is also becoming confused. "So where do we dig?"

"Right here, around the back of the rock."

Mike, "For fuck sake." He takes the spade from Trevor and starts digging.

It doesn't take him long before he exposes a black bin liner containing four small cloth bags of uncut diamonds. He pulls them out and gives them to Paul who notices one bag is lighter than the others and has less in it. "This isn't right."

He laid the bin liner out and emptied the bags onto it. Counting the stones. "Fuck it, there should be 240."

Trevor looked over Paul's shoulder, "How many are there?"

"200." He thinks for a few seconds. "We're in the shit big time."

Benjamin is finding it hard to follow Paul's reasoning. "How do you figure that?"

"Well, look at it this way. If we take these back, they're going to think we've nicked forty diamonds. Right?"

Benjamin. "Not necessarily."

Paul said, "OK, so what do you reckon we should do?" Thinking again. "Hang on let me think."

Mike said, "How about if we put 'em all back and say we couldn't find 'em?"

"No it ain't gonna work. One thing's for sure, we can't call 'em. I'd say we're slightly fucked."

Trevor has been quiet, but he's been giving it some thought. "Do you think we're being set up?"

Paul puts the diamonds back in the bags, "How do you figure?"

"What if, whoever took 'em, wants us to get caught?"

"How do you mean?"

"At the airport when we leave."

"Why the fuck would they want us to get caught?"

"Confusion, if we get captured carrying a load of diamonds through customs, no one is going to ask how many diamonds we had on us."

"Well, I know it wasn't Billy, I know he wants us to bring em back. He wants the money, he wouldn't have told us there were 240 if he knew there were only 200."

"Or laid out all his money for nothing."

Benjamin who just wants an easy life, "Perhaps we should leave 'em where they are."

Mike, "Who the fuck's Billy, and how do we find out who it was who nicked the forty?"

"Best you don't know who Billy is. Let's just put this shit back in the ground and we'll work this lot out later. Mike can you put the diamonds back in the hole and cover them up."

Mike did what he was asked and buried the diamonds. "Right, can we fuck off out of this sweatbox and have a swim?"

They make their way down the hill to the river and then up to the waterfall. After splashing about for a while, just like Billy, Dave and Shaughn did three-years-ago, they came together for a talk.

Benjamin, asked Paul, "Do you think we'll get the rest of our money?"

"What do you think? Your guess is as good as mine."

Mike, realizing the situation, "I doubt it. Still, £25.000 and a golfing holiday can't be all bad."

Trevor. "We ain't back through customs yet. We'd better be prepared for a long stay in customs on the way out."

Mike agrees. "Better than a long stay in one of their filthy nicks."

They all agree.

Paul broke in. "I've just had another thought. The only bloke we can trust has gotta be Billy."

Benjamin. "How's that?"

Paul told them. "Because as I told you before, he's the one who told me there would be 240 diamonds. And if he'd been the one who nicked 'em, he'd have told me there were 200, and we'd think everything was OK."

Trevor, looking on the bright side of things. "Well, we've got another five days, we might as well play some golf and see what we can find."

Mike's not so sure, "I ain't seen any decent birds since we've been here."

Trevor. "How about the one at the stables, she's a bit tidy?"

Mike, "She was covered in dust, how could you tell?"

Benjamin has noticed Paul isn't saying a lot. "How about you Paul?"

"I think she's a bit tidy. Come on let's get these horses back."

The ride back to the stables took them almost an hour. They rode into the corral and started to dismount, Paul made a complete hash of it. He caught one of his feet in a stirrup causing him to fall ungraciously onto the hard-dusty ground. Luckily, he wasn't hurt. He looked up from his embarrassing position to see Angelica looking down at him. Holding out her hand she pulled him up. "I know, it can be a little tricky at first, I've done it myself. Are you alright?"

Paul, now standing dusted himself off and for the first-time noticed underneath all the dust just how beautiful she was. "Yes thanks, a bit embarrassing but I'm OK."

"Did you have a nice ride? Did you find your waterfall OK?"

"Yes, thanks, we had a great time." His mind was racing, he wanted to see her again, and he wanted to see her sooner rather than later. "We'll have to come back sometime."

"How long are you here for?"

"Oh, only another five days."

Angelica was also upset at the prospect of not seeing Paul again, she started flirting with him. "It doesn't look like we'll be seeing much of each other then."

He knew he had to do something, this was a green light if ever he'd seen one. "Not unless you come to my hotel for a drink tonight."

"Well, are you normally this quick with the ladies?"

Mike butts in, "Yes, he's always very quick."

Paul said to Mike Sarcastically, "Really?"

Then he turned back to Angelica. "I've actually been thinking about how I can ask you out all day."

"Well if you've been thinking about me all day, how can I refuse."

"I meant dinner, not just a drink."

"Oh, very nice. What's the name of your hotel?"

"It's the Playa Grande, it's right on the beach."

"I know it."

"Would 7.30 pm be OK?"

"Perfect, I look forward to it. I'll see you there."

Paul has been waiting in the reception area since 7.20 pm. Wearing a pair of long white trousers, a black long sleeve shirt. He is holding a large bunch of flowers.

When Angelica arrived she was wearing a long flowing gypsy style cotton dress, her long jet-black hair was flowing wildly in the early evening breeze.

Handing over the flowers. "My God, you look stunning."

"Gracious, they are beautiful and so many."

"I didn't know which ones you'd like so I bought them all. Are you hungry?"

"I'm sure I could eat something."

"Maybe you'd like some wine or champagne to start?"

"I will let you choose."

Walking into the dining room. Benjamin, Mike and Trevor were sitting on a separate table on the other side of the room.

"We are not having dinner with your friends?"

"Oh no, they're animals, you don't want to have dinner with them, you don't want to have anything to do with them."

Paul, to the maître d'. "We have a table booked, room 316."

The Maître D', "Certainly sir, and madam, please follow me." He picked up two large menus and two smaller ones, tucking them under his arm and guided them into the main body of the dining room.

They follow him to a table on an outside balcony overlooking the sea, it had a reserved sign on it. Picking up the reserved sign, they sat down, the Maître D' then placed the four menus on the table in front of them. Leaving he was instantly replaced by a uniformed waiter.

"May I offer you a drink? or would you rather order your food first?" Paul picks up the wine list menu, takes a quick look through it.

To Angelica. "How about champagne?"

"Em, sounds nice."

Paul pointed at something on the wine list menu.

"Certainly sir."

Then Paul back to Angelica. "How long have you been the boss at the stables?"

"Oh, I've been there almost all my life. My family has owned it for many years."

"Not too many, you're not old enough."

"I'm twenty-six."

"You look more like eighteen."

"I think your eyes need help."

"I know a beautiful woman when I see one."

"There are many beautiful women here."

"Not like you."

The waiter arrives with the champagne and poured out two glasses.

"Is this the first time you have been to the Dominican?"

"Yes, but it's not going to be my last."

"When are you coming back?"

"It could depend on you."

She gave him a suggestive look. "I have a feeling you might be back here sooner than you think."

After a glorious night in which Paul was a perfect gentleman, and a further five days in the sun with Angelica, it was time for him to leave. He was in love and there was nothing he could do about it. He made promises to Angelica about when he would return. He knew this was the woman for him, he knew he was going to marry her.

In the airport customs area, all four of their suitcases were opened and along with their golf clubs, they were all searched.

Paul, knowing they were all clean and had nothing to hide wanted to know the answers to some questions. Asking one of the customs officers, "What is it you're looking for?"

"Never you mind, you know what we look for."

"I have no idea what you're talking about."

Benjamin joins in. "What could we possibly have you want?"

Mike. "I got a shrunken head from Haiti."

Trevor. "The only shrunken head you've got is on your shoulders."

Mike. "You could be right there."

Customs Officer #2. "You play games with us?"

Paul, trying to pacify the customs men. "The only games we've been playing is golf."

Customs Officer #1 is now becoming agitated. "Then, where are they?"

Trevor is becoming more vocal. "What's he on about?"

Mike. "Are you looking for drugs?"

Customs Officer #1. "We have information you are carrying contraband."

Paul takes charge again. "I reckon someone's been having a laugh with you. We came here to play golf and get a little sun, we got nothing to do with any contraband. Who told you this?"

The customs officers excused themselves and go off into a nearby office. It was ten minutes before they returned.

Customs Officer #2. "We can see you are telling the truth, and you are honest people, we find nothing, you are free to go."

Paul wasn't going to let it go, any information he might be able to gather would help, "No, hang on a minute, you've stopped us, searched us, delayed us, and accused us saying you had information we were carrying contraband. Surely, with all due respect, can't you at least give us a clue as to who it was who's told you we were carrying contraband and wasting your time? If not, maybe we'll have to take this further?"

"Do you wish to make a formal complaint?"

"If it's going to take a formal complaint to get a name yeah."

The customs officers went off into their office again.

Mike, "It'll be a miracle if we get a name."

Paul, "He'd have given a false name unless he's a fucking idiot. It's the contact number we need."

Benjamin, "Then what?"

Paul, "Remember we're only looking for one out of two, and don't forget, we've got Billy on our side."

The two customs men were only gone for a few minutes. "We don't like people trying making fools of us. But we are sorry, we are unable to assist you any further."

Paul, "Can't you tell us anything?"

"I'm afraid not, but if you have any Irish friends who play this kind of stupid games on you then I would have a serious word with them."

"Oh, don't worry we will."

CHAPTER 7.

THE REAL THIEF.

Benjamin was back at work, and with Paul, Trevor and Mike all well and truly pissed off, they wanted to let Billy know just how they felt.

Paul was in Craven Terrace, the London cab office, he had been shopping for Ernie's custard doughnuts, in-fact, he had bought a dozen just in case anyone else turned up.

Billy told Paul, "You did the right thing leaving the stuff where it was."

Paul, "At least we know the bastard who done it's Irish."

Billy, "I know exactly who it is, there's only one person it could be. It's got to be Shaughn. It has to be him, we left him to bury the stuff, he's Irish and Dave is as Cockney as they come. What a fucking idiot, we could have had the diamonds by now. I'll have his fucking bollocks for breakfast."

Paul was rightfully pissed off. "The bastard could have had us all banged up in a stinking jail by now. And not only that, you've got three very unhappy people wanting to know what the fuck is happening."

"The thing is we've got to figure out what to do next."

"These guys are still owed twenty-five grand apiece. What do you suggest?"

"I'm thinking the guys you have are serious people, right?"

"Yeah, you wouldn't want to fuck about with them, ex-army the pair of em."

"What about your third one?"

"He's a shopkeeper."

Billy is surprised. "A shopkeeper?"

"Yeah, well, it wasn't an invasion we were taking part in was it? It was supposed to be a golf trip and a simple pick up. Remember?"

"Yeah, and if silly bollocks hadn't fucked it all up it's exactly what it would have been."

"Well, it looks like we've got a bit of a problem."

"Well with your three men, you, me and David there's six of us."

"What you gonna do?"

"Well for starters we're going to have to confront the fucking idiot, and I think the best thing we could do would be to get everyone together."

"The sooner the better. I'll call my guys, see where they are. How about this afternoon?"

"Right let me call him."

Billy picked up the phone and dialled. It didn't take long before the phone is answered. It's Shaughn on the other end. "Hello Billy, what's up?"

"The guys are back, I gotta bit of bad news. They say there's forty stones missing."

"So they bought back two hundred?"

"No, they left 'em where they were. Why don't you come up here and have a word with them?"

"What now?"

"Yeah, now. We'll be waiting for you."

Giving up the thought of Billy's anonymity, Mike, Trevor, and Dave are now in Billy's office. They'd been waiting for Shaughn for far too long, and they were now becoming restless.

Mike, like the rest of them, was becoming impatient. "Well, it's been an hour and a half, what'd you want to do?"

Billy picked up his phone. "I'll give him another call."

The phone rang for an inordinately long time, then suddenly it was answered by Shaughn's wife, "Hi, yes, it's Billy, is Shaughn there? He's supposed to be coming up to the office." There was a pause, "Airport, what do you mean he's gone to the airport?" Another pause, "OK, thanks, I'm sure we'll catch up with him later."

Hangs up. "Well, you heard what she said, he's fucked off to the airport."

Paul. "Maybe it's a job, maybe he's got to pick someone up."

Billy's puzzled, "He's not a fucking driver, he's a full-time criminal."

Mike, "No prizes for guessing where he's going then."

Paul, "So, what we gonna do now? Are we going to just wait here until he comes back?"

Dave, "We need to get out there before the dumb shit gets himself and us nicked."

Billy seems distracted, "I've been thinking, I don't think we all need to go. David and me haven't been there in three and a half years, but for you three to be going back so soon might raise some questions."

Paul gets in quick, "Well I'm going, I can say I'm there to see Angelica. I'll give Benjamin a bell and let him know what's happening."

Billy, "You know we still won't be able to bring any of the stuff back."

Dave, "Yeah, I know, after he bought it to their attention, they're gonna be all over us."

Paul, "What's the alternative?"

Billy, "Let's just get out there and make sure the fucking idiot doesn't do anything stupid, doesn't he know he's fucking with my retirement fund."

Paul, "Imagine if he moves them. We'll be well and truly fucked."

Billy, "We're gonna need a new plan to get the stuff outta there."

Paul, "I know someone, who, for the right price might just be able to help us."

"Who?"

"Leave it with me, I'll sort it out. Can I use the phone?"

Billy nodded his consent, "You can have the fucking thing if you get someone who can bring 'em over."

Paul picked up the phone, dialled a number and waited. "Hello, Ken me-old-mate I got something you might be interested in. There's gonna be a big drink in it for you." Laughing into the phone at Ken's answer. "Your gonna have to shift your arse, yeah you're gonna have to move a few things around. I need you there like yesterday, yeah, well it's The Dominican Republic. We hope to be staying at the Playa Grande, in Punta Plata and don't forget to bring your diplomatic bag or whatever the fuck it is you lot smuggle your shit around in." There was a pause in Paul's conversation as he listened to Ken. "No mate, it's not drugs. Get yourself a first-class ticket, you'll get it all back plus some." Another pause, "Have you forgotten the shit I've got you out of? There was another pause. "Yes mate, tomorrow-night, right I'll see you there." He put the phone down.

Everyone in the room had a: What the fuck look on their face. They were all staring at Paul.

Billy asked the question everyone wanted to know the answer too, "Who the fuck was that?"

"Oh, a mate of mine, we went to the same primary school in Streatham and then we ended up in the same comprehensive at Tulse Hill."

"It sounds like he owes you one. It must be some big fucking favour you done him."

"He was such an annoying little cunt at school, I saved him from getting his head punched in at least a dozen times, but one night he called me from a hotel room in London, he'd got himself trapped in a room with a bird. Not his wife of course. He thought there was paperartsy outside so I had to drive all the way uptown, bribe the hotel porter to let me in the underground car park to rescue him."

Billy was intrigued. "Who is he then?"

"You'll see. I was best man at his wedding."

Dave told Billy. "Right, you sort out the tickets? I'm going home to pack a bag, I'll give you a call in about half an hour."

They were in luck, Billy was able to buy the last three first-class airline tickets out of Gatwick, and as Paul's house was in Croydon and on the way to the airport. He drove home, parked his car and packed a suitcase. He made himself a cup of tea and waited to be picked up.

He didn't have to wait long, Dave was driving, they were thirty minutes into the journey to the airport.

Paul needed to sort some things out. Turning to Billy, "I need a word."

"What about?"

"I was thinking, I should be getting a bit more out of this deal?"

"Why's that?"

"Well, if it wasn't for me telling my blokes to leave the stuff where it was, you wouldn't have any diamonds to go and collect, and it's me who's getting the bloke to get them out for you."

"Yeah, you got a point."

"Plus, as there's only two of you now, you've got a shit load more money to play with."

Bringing Dave into the conversation. "He's right there, we do have a lot more diamonds between us."

Dave half looks back from his driving position. "We're the ones who took all the risks. What, do you want equal shares for just getting the stuff out?"

"Why not, I got nearer than you in the going to jail department."

"Leave it with us, me and Billy will have to have a little talk about it. Alright?"

"Alright, great, thanks." Now, knowing he was going to get more than his fifty thousand, he sat back and enjoyed the last twenty minutes of the journey.

Arriving at the airport, Billy and Paul unloaded the three pieces of luggage from the boot of the car and went inside. They made their way to the first-class check-in.

Dave drove off and parked the car. Hurrying back he caught up with them. They booked in and were given their tickets and passes to the complimentary 1st Class lounge. They had another two and a half hours to waste before take-off, so while Billy and Dave made the most of their time at the free bar Paul went and bought Angelica a few things from the duty-free shops. It was a nine-and-a-half-hour flight, they drank champagne the best wine and were eating the type of food they don't ordinarily eat. A few hours' sleep and after a breakfast of scrambled eggs and smoked salmon and more champagne they landed.

It was 07.30 am when they arrived at Punta Cana airport. The sun was rising on another hot and sunny day in the Dominican. It was a further forty minutes before they cleared customs and went through into the arrivals lounge. By the time they hired a car and drove to their hotel, it was almost 10.00 am.

After booking in, they declined being shown to their rooms, they were eager to find Shaughn. They went into the restaurant and found him having a late breakfast.

He looked up from the table. But for some strange reason, they couldn't explain, he didn't seem too bothered or surprised at their arrival, "Hello, chaps."

Billy, Paul and David stood at the table staring at him in silence.

Shaughn was confused. "What's the problem?"

Billy, "Are you fucking kidding me? Let me introduce you to Paul, he's one of the blokes you tried to fuck up at customs, well, him and his three mates."

"What the fuck are you on about?"

Paul isn't very happy. "Bollocks, who else was it with an Irish accent who called customs and tried to get us nicked?"

Billy butts in, "So it's just a coincidence we found you here stuffing your face with Spanish food instead of meeting us in the cab office eating custard doughnuts yesterday afternoon?"

"After what you said on the phone I thought, fuck it, I'd surprise you and bring em back on my own, all in one go. I didn't know you were going to follow me out here."

"A big risk for just twenty diamonds."

"What'd you mean twenty?"

"Well, the last time I looked, three into 240 is eighty. Right?"

"Yeah."

"Well, seeing as you've already had forty, and forty from eighty leaves forty and thanks to you fucking things up, I've had to spend a fucking fortune putting things right."

"What the fuck are you on about?"

"It means you're going to be lucky to get ten."

Panicking. "Ten?"

"If the guys you tried to fuck over, had come, you'd be lucky to have left here alive. So, yes ten, and you can think yourself fucking lucky you're getting away with all your limbs."

"This is bollocks, I'm just here trying to help."

Just then a waiter comes into the restaurant. "Mr Paul, there is someone in reception to see you."

Paul hurried to the reception area wondering if his friend Ken had arrived. But to his pleasant surprise, it was Angelica. She was wearing a white flowing cotton dress. She looks stunning. "Hola Paul."

Paul drank in Angelica's beauty. "You're here." He took her in his arms and they kissed passionately.

Angelica, "I'm so happy to see you again."

"I told you I'd be back."

"I don't think you come so soon."

"I have some friends who needed to be here."

"What for?"

"You'll see, let's go and meet them."

As they enter the restaurant all the men have eyes for Angelica.

Paul introduces Angelica. "This is Angelica."

Angelica. "We've met before."

Billy. "I don't think so, I would have remembered."

Angelica gave a slight laugh. "I was probably under two or three inches of dust and horse manure last time we met."

Shaughn to Billy. "You don't remember her, she's the girl who runs the horse stables where we hired those horses."

Billy took a closer look at Angelica. "Oh yeah. No work today?"

"Maybe later, I come to see my Paulo first."

Slightly sarcastic. "Lucky Paulo."

Paul turned to Angelica. "You'll be seeing them all again tomorrow morning."

"Are you going to your waterfall again?"

"Yes, we're going to need five horses about nine-thirty. How do you fancy a walk on the beach?"

Angelica took Paul's hand and they left the restaurant and made their way to the beach. They walked hand in hand on the warm sand.

Angelica told Paul, "I'm enjoying having you here with me again, I'm so happy to see you, this is so lovely."

"I was thinking it's much better than the last time I was here."

"I thought you enjoyed yourself last time."

"No, I did, what I mean is last time we were at the airport we were stopped for over three hours, being searched and questioned."

"Were they looking for the diamonds?"

Shocked, "Diamonds, what do you know about diamonds?"

"Well to start with, your friends were here three years ago when the diamonds were stolen from the Civic Centre. They also came to me and hired horses the same as you did, and they also wanted to know where the waterfall was, just like you and your friends did. Now you turn up with these men. What happened, did you not find the diamonds last time you were here? Is it why you are back with these friends?"

"Oh, we found them alright, but there were forty missing. If we'd gone back with forty missing, they would have thought we'd stolen them. Plus it was a good job we did leave them, the customs people were tipped off, someone told them we were carrying diamonds. If we hadn't left them we'd be in prison by now."

"Do you know who took them?"

"Yeah, they say it must have been Shaughn he was the last one with them when they buried them."

"What about the man you call David?"

"No, they said it was a man with an Irish accent who called the customs people."

"Then why did he take a horse out on his own?"

"When was this?"

"The day after they had already been out. He came alone and went off in the same direction as he did the day before."

On hearing this, Paul was now very interested, and slightly preoccupied, "I'll have to tell Billy about this."

Thinking he was going to run off and leave her, "What now?"

Coming back from his thoughts, and in a more mellow tone, "No, I think we've got more important things to do right now."

As their eyes met, all thoughts of the mayhem and carnage her information was going to create were instantly removed from Paul's thoughts. Taking her in his arms, he gently stroked her face, they kissed again as if it were their first kiss. It was slow and gentle, building up to a passion, they slowly lowered themselves onto the soft white powdery sand. Staying like this for almost half an hour and then suddenly abandoning any thoughts of swimwear they stripped off to their underwear and plunged headlong into the warm blue ocean. It welcomed them and instantly caressed their half-naked bodies, they swam and played until Angelica told Paul it was time she had to leave, it was time for her to go and do some work back at the stables.

Agreeing and coming back to his senses Paul realized the enormity of what Angelica had told him earlier, and the nightmare lying ahead for all involved. The first thing he had to do was contact Billy and give him the news. Of course, this would have to be done in private he was hoping he would still be in his room when he returned. After reluctantly putting their clothes back on they took a slow walk hand in hand back to the hotel.

After making plans to meet later, Angelica needed to once again change her clothes, turning up for work at the stables dressed like she was, would cause a few eyebrows to be raised not to mention a few unwelcome Latin American suggestive comments.

With a final kiss from Paul, she drove back to her parent's villa by the sea. A ten-bedroom property set in fifteen acres of land on a promontory commanding a prime beachfront location and a magnificent view of the Caribbean ocean.

A magnificent pinkish two-storey mansion with terracotta tiled roofs set at different angles to accommodate the sauna, billiard room, library, two kitchens and a garage capable of holding a fleet of luxury vehicles, it housed an inside swimming pool, and at the back of the villa, ocean-side, there was another swimming pool, this time a turquoise blue-tiled Olympic size pool, complete with water fountains and cabanas.

Set to one side of the estate lying amongst the coconut trees there were the security and servant's quarters.

At the entrance stood two large ornate heavy electrically operated iron gates. A few yards inside these gates, a small discretely set building housed two full-time, fully armed security guards. The drive was lined with palm trees with a slight curve in it which hid the villa from direct public view.

After a drive up to a large covered entrance, a maid was waiting to help Angelica out of her car or take any parcels she might be carrying. She could think of nothing else but Paul, her thoughts were confused, tormented by a mixture of how much she was falling in love with him and the thoughts of all the trouble he was getting himself into with his friends and those bloody diamonds.

She hurried upstairs and changed into her working clothes. To start with, her half leather and half suede working outfit, a clean yellow cotton shirt, then her all-important comfortable heavy-duty cowboy boots.

Getting back into her white Range Rover, she double-checked to see if her dusty old American style cowboy hat was still on the back seat, a double check just to make sure her Walther PPK pistol was in the centre consul glove box and she was off. She was in no hurry and drove the ten-minute drive to her stables. How was she ever going to tell Paul she was the daughter of the biggest and richest gangster on the island? It seemed to her like a gangster's daughter would, of course, have to fall in love with another gangster.

With a million thoughts whirling around in his head, Paul made his way to the hotel reception area and finished booking himself in. After obtaining the number of Billy's room his first reaction was rush over and tell him what Angelica had told him.

Instead, he made his way to his own room, stowing his things away, and laid on his bed thinking.

By telling Billy about Dave's horse ride back to the diamonds, would it help the situation? For one, it would put Shaughn in the clear. After all, the poor bastard had been protesting his innocence all along. It's just by flying out here as he did was a very strange thing to do. But maybe his reasoning wasn't so crazy after all? Maybe he did intend to throw caution to the wind and say fuck it and try to bring the whole lot through customs in one foul swoop? Fucking idiot he could have lost the lot.

Laying there he was more inclined towards Shaughn's version of events, and yet no one had heard what Dave has to say yet. "No, fuck it." he got off the bed and went to Billy's room to sort it out.

Knocking on the door, he had to wait longer than expected so he knocked again, finally, Billy slowly opened the door. "What is it, I had been trying to get a bit of shut-eye."

"Are you alone?" He half pushed his way into the room. "I've got something you need to hear."

Closing the door behind him and following Paul back into the room. "What the fuck's so important it couldn't wait?"

"It's Dave, Dave's the one."

"What are you on about?"

"Angelica just told me he took a horse out the next day and went out in the same direction as you did the day before."

"He might have just wanted to go out to the waterfall again."

"Did he tell you he was going to the waterfall?"

"No, but he was acting a bit strange."

"You need to have a word."

Billy gave it some thought. "No, let's just see what happens. If it's him we can get the bastard later, let's play it out, for now, we'll still blame Shaughn."

"Are you gonna tell Shaughn?"

"No, fuck him, he shouldn't have bolted out here like he did, fucking nutter. This is costing me a fortune and I haven't made anything out of it yet."

"Alright, my mates arriving tonight, we'll go around and see him in the morning."

"Till then, can you sort out the horses for tomorrow? and stay shtoom about the other thing."

The benefit of having Angelica come around and pick him up where he didn't have to spend an uncomfortable night in the company of Dave.

CHAPTER 8.

A DIFFERENT WORLD.

Angelica picked Paul up and drove him to the most beautiful cliff-top restaurant he had ever seen, the fairy lights strategically placed in the surrounding trees added a touch of tranquillity and romance, the main part of the restaurant overlooked the black calm sea, and with the lemon trees and the surrounding flowers adding a heady aroma to the evening, this was the nearest thing Paul had ever come to being awake, and in a dream at the same time.

The moon was full, it was as if the heavens had conspired with the wind to make this night a perfect night.

The owner greeted them as if they were royalty, personally showing them to a prominent table reserved for only the most important of his VIP's. Unbeknown to Paul, that is exactly what he had become.

They had the most wonderful almost magical candlelit diner, with eyes only for each other the night was perfect, the wine was perfect, the champagne was perfect, and Angelica was perfect. On leaving, and attempting to pay the bill, Paul was assured it was their pleasure to serve such prominent and noble people. Thinking this was very strange, he looked to Angelica for support.

She assured him, "It will be alright my father will be taking care of the bill."

"But it was me who's taking you out, not your father."

"OK, let's say this meal is my treat, you can pay tomorrow."

"I like it, I can live with that."

After their meal, they were in a melancholy mood and taking a slow moonlit drive through the narrow lanes of the beautiful Dominican Republic countryside, Angelica was caught off guard.

A car had been following them, pulling over Angelica let them pass. It then came to an abrupt halt and two armed men got out and approached their car.

Angelica had already reached into the centre console for her Walther PPK, within seconds it was in her hand. Jumping out from her Range Rover, she crouched down, took aim, and remembering everything she had been taught, took a deep breath squeezed the trigger twice. To her, it felt like everything was happening in slow motion. She hit her first target with both rounds hitting him centre mass, dead centre of his chest. Using the hollow point ammunition her father had insisted on, two small red holes appeared, but at the rear of his body, a fountain of blood and a hole you could put your fist in had thrown out bone fragments and parts of his vital organs needed to sustain life.

Seeing what had just happened to his friend, the second assailant almost froze, he was watching Angelica when from out of nowhere, and to his left Paul made a full-out body tackle, throwing him and Paul both to the ground, his pistol flew from his hand and as Angelica was about to put a bullet in his head Paul stopped her, "No, let's get some information out of him first."

It turned out to be a half-arsed attempt at a car hi-jacking and a robbery. They had seen Angelica with a gringo eating at a fancy restaurant, driving a fancy car, and thought they would be an easy target. They didn't know who she was and what a stupid thing it was to try and rob El águila's daughter.

Still somewhat mystified Paul had no idea who the hell El águila was, but it wouldn't be long before he had the question answered.

It also didn't take long before the police arrived, and seeing who they were dealing with they cleared the road, dragged the body out of the way.

Angelica was having a long but hurried conversation "in Spanish" with the police. When they had finished, they came to attention and saluted her as if she were their boss.

The other poor slob was already in handcuffs in the back of the police car, he had blood all over his face, sporting a broken nose, and from what Paul could see he was no longer in possession of his two front teeth. Thinking this guy's night wasn't quite over yet, he felt a little sorry for him. He also couldn't help thinking why, wherever we go, Angelica gets the royal treatment, after all, isn't she just the manager of a "Horses for hire" riding stable?

Just then two big men in a white Rolls-Royce Corniche convertible arrived. It was a warm night and the convertible top was down. It stopped just short of the dead body the police had dragged off the road so Angelica could pass.

An imposing six-foot figure of a man looking younger than his fifty years, wearing an expensive white long sleeve cotton shirt, with the sleeves rolled up just below his suntanned elbows, unbuttoned at the neck showing off a substantial gold chain. Paul could only imagine what that must have cost him, that is if this man had actually bought it, and looking at him Paul had his doubts.

Wearing an equally expensive pair of black trousers, an expensive belt and highly polished black leather shoes, he climbed out of the driver's side of the car.

Taking off his Panama hat and tossing it back into the now-vacant seat of his car he revealed his handsome suntanned face and a massive shock of thick silvery-white hair.

With his piercing blue eyes, he looked almost aristocratic, taking a look around, he noticed his daughter Angelica. Paul was standing next to her. She hurried over to her father and hugged him. He asked her if she had been hurt, and was she alright She said she was OK, just a little shaken up, but alright. This freed him from the hug and allowed him to spin around and give his attention to the police.

The other man from the Corniche was dressed in all black, he had muscles on top of muscles, Paul thought he even saw muscles on his ears, he had muscles bulging from every part of his body. He looked for all to see at any moment he might just explode. He was holding a shiny pistol down by his side. El águila was talking to the police.

Speaking to Angelica out of the side of his mouth in a low voice, Paul said, "Who the fuck is that?"

In a proud but somewhat apologetic voice, "That's my father. I hope he doesn't do anything crazy."

El águila had been speaking with the police, then after only a short conversation he turned, and with slow precision took the shiny pistol from the man in black, turning again he was now facing the poor guy sitting in the back of the police car who could see what was about to happen to him. He was screaming for mercy. Two loud bangs rang out, Paul couldn't see exactly what had happened, but he knew this night hadn't ended too well for the blood-soaked quivering lump of jelly in the back of the police car, he also knew, this wasn't a man he wanted to piss off.

The two rounds had been strategically shot into the lower part of the man's legs.

Shouting over the noise of the man now screaming in agony, "Let it be known. No one touches a hair on the head of any member of El águila's family."

Two bullets, ah thought Paul, it must be a family thing.

Handing the pistol back to the man in black, he approached Angelica and Paul. They had been standing there and had witnessed everything, "My darling, are you sure you are alright? The police told me you had to shoot someone tonight."

"Yes papa, I'm alright I shot the man you almost ran over."

He was pleased this whole episode had ended well, and it was a good thing for his daughter not only to have come out of it unhurt but to have blooded her hands was a bonus. "You'll have to tell me all about it later."

"Now who is this? As if I have to ask. You must be Paulo."

"Yes Papa, this is my friend Paul."

"Ah yes, I have heard a great deal about you Paulo." Holding out his hand to shake Paul's hand, Paul tried to respond but grimaced as he found it painful to raise his arm.

Apologizing, "I must have bruised a rib during rugby tackle."

Angelica was first to respond, worried for Paul's health. With both hands, she clasped onto his left hand. In front of her father, she was showing genuine compassion and love for this man. Her father could see it in her eyes.

El águila stepped in. "Rugby tackle? What rugby tackle? I had no idea you were involved in this cowardly attack on my daughter."

Trying to play down his part. "It was nothing."

He raised his voice, "Nothing, you say nothing, you might have saved my beautiful daughter's life, or been killed yourself, and you say it was nothing?"

Then back to Angelica, "This man is either in love with you or he has no regard for his own life, my darling daughter, we have so much to talk about."

Back to Paul, "I will call a doctor. You will stay at my villa tonight. You and I, we two have much to talk about."

Not sure if he had just taken part in a scene from a gangster movie, or if he was dreaming. The pain in his ribs bought him back to reality and told him this was for real. Paul was willing to go along with anything this man had to say. After all, he had just witnessed him shoot a man. in front of the police, "Great, yes, a doctor would be most welcome, thank you."

El águila left them and strolled over to the police.

Taking a large wad of money from his trouser pocket he handed it to one of the Police officers, the one with the two stripes on his white short-sleeved shirt.

Retrieving his Panama hat from the seat of his car, he slowly and meticulously placed it back atop his silver crowned head. They drove off leaving the police to clean up the mess. The white Corniche led the way with Angelica and Paul following close behind in the white Range Rover.

Still concerned for Paul's well-being Angelica kept asking Paul how he was. And telling him, he should have let her shoot the man and he wouldn't be in such pain.

This was a different Angelica to the one he had fallen in love with, this was a cold-hearted killer who he didn't know and for some reason, it excited him and he felt he was even more in love with her than before. Turning to her with all the passion he could muster and ignoring the pain, he leant across the car and kissed her on the cheek.

Taking her eyes off the road for longer than she should have, she looked deep into Paul's eyes, "I hope you don't feel bad about me. For what I did."

"Bad, no, just the opposite. I think you were marvellous. What you did back there was fantastic. Where did you learn how to shoot like that?"

"My father taught me."

"Could you teach me to shoot.?"

"I don't know, it could take some time."

"I'm in no rush, I'm not going anywhere. Will I need a gun permit?"

She was now flirting with him. "You'll need a permanent address to get one of those."

Paul understood the undertone of her reply. "I guess I will."

They both knew what each other had in mind, and they both knew what they were talking about, but this was neither the time nor the place to make any long term proposals. He thought maybe he would have to wait until he got the money for the diamonds and they went back to the fairytale restaurant again.

After driving for fifteen minutes the two cars arrived at the villa. From El águila's car, he clicked the automatic gate opener, the imposing iron gates parted allowing both cars through into the villas lush garden, as they passed through the gates with the small guardhouse on their left, the two-armed guards gave a wave, El águila waved back, clicking his remote again the gates closed behind them. The short drive up the curved and tree-lined driveway took them to the front door of the villa. Paul was able to get out of the car unaided. He told Angelica it was just a twinge and he felt a lot better.

El águila was now by Paul's side. The man in black had changed seats and drove the car away to be cleaned and parked up in the garage for the night.

Putting his arm around Paul's shoulder El águila guided him in through the impressive double doors, they were now standing on the imported pink and white marble floor, "Come inside, a doctor has been sent for, I'm sure you could do with a drink. What would you like?"

"A beer would be fine." Then trying to show he has picked up some of the language. "Cerveza por favour."

"Oh I see you are learning our language, you should if you are intending to stay here for a long while."

Paul was now looking Angelica straight in the eyes, but talking to her father. "As we speak, I am making plans to stay, and by the way, I'm feeling much better, I don't think I need a doctor."

Just then, Catalina, Angelica's mother appeared. Standing before him was a Latin American beauty. She was in fact, a one time Miss Latin America in the Miss World contest. Six feet tall, wearing a white and red, flowing silk trouser suit with white stiletto shoes, her make-up was perfect, and her long shiny black hair reminded him of Angelica's hair. She looked like she had gotten ready to go out when her husband received the call to go to Angelica's aid. Which during their conversation turned out to be exactly what had happened.

Paul could see how much this woman looked like an older version of Angelica. There was no getting away from it, this woman was a beauty, he thought if Angelica is going to look like her mother when she gets older, his life was going to be perfect.

All four moved through to the back of the house, going out through the giant sliding glass doors to the tastefully lit turquoise swimming pool. On one side of the pool, there was an artificially built waterfall making soothing splashing and gurgling noises, on the other side there was a clear view out to the ocean.

El águila was interested in what Paul did for a living, but what could he tell him without saying, he was just a minicab driver and a part-time diamond smuggler. So he told him he was an exporter of Alfred-Dupont's gold lighters. Which after his trip to Ireland was sort of true?

Seizing on the word gold El águila was very interested and wanted to know more about how he could get hold of them. Paul said when he gets back to the UK he would send him a few to look at, and if he likes what he sees, they can make a deal. Paul said he would walk them through customs, saving on import duties. El águila liked the idea of evading paying any kind of tax and he liked Paul or Paulo as he called him.

The doctor finally arrived, but by then, Paul was feeling much better, he knew there's not much you can do for ribs, but he still let the doctor take a quick look at him.

Knowing how inconvenient it must have been for the doctor to travel so far out to his villa, El águila offered the doctor a drink and some food, but as he had another call to make, he graciously turned down the offer leaving Paul some pain killers.

After an hour of being seated on the sumptuous sofas around the pool and being served drinks by two attentive servants, it was now 01.30 am. Paul was shown to a guest room. Reminding himself he was in El águila's house and his inbred facility for self-preservation, he had no thoughts of trying to find Angelica's bedroom.

At 08.30 am Paul had showered, dressed, he walked outside to the swimming pool but El águila was already there drinking the first of his three-morning coffees. Telling Paul Angelica had left for work an hour ago. From last night's conversation, El águila knew Paul was going to his friend's hotel this morning, El águila offered him an alternative of being driven to the hotel or taking one of his cars. The choice was easy, Paul went for the white Mercedes Benz 220SE convertible.

CHAPTER 9.

THE EAGLE AND KEN.

Paul knew his friends would be wondering where he was, and as he was running late, he drove faster than he should, pushing the big car through the narrow tropical tree-lined lanes.

He arrived at the hotel, and after the initial surprise of Paul turning up in a convertible Mercedes. Billy jumped in the front passenger seat, Shaughn, and Dave got in the back. Wanting to know what happened and where he got the car from. He told them about the attempted robbery and how Angelica shot the guy. He told them about her father El águila "The Eagle" and the way the police just stood by and let him shoot a guy in their custody. Amazed at who Paul had got himself mixed up with, he told them about the house and how El águila's wife was a Miss Latin America.

Billy said, "Let's hope this eagle guy doesn't find out it was us who nicked those diamonds."

When they arrived at Ken's hotel, Paul left his friends in the car and went inside the hotel's reception area. Spotting his old school friend Ken sitting in a comfortable chair drinking a nice hot cup of coffee. They were both genuinely pleased to see each other and remembering their childhood school days, Ken jumped up and they hugged.

Releasing each other from the hug, Paul asked, "Ken me old son, how you doing?"

Ken is still a little confused. "I'm doing OK, but I'm at a bit of a loss as to what I'm doing here. What is it you want?"

Paul put his arm around Ken's shoulder and guided him to the pool area. "You know I wouldn't have asked you out here if it wasn't deadly serious?"

"Yeah, I know it's what I thought, I could tell you were in trouble."

"Well, we've been through a lot, but this is the biggest thing I've ever asked you to do."

Now Ken, with a frown on his forehead and a worried inquisitive stare. "What is it?"

"I need you to carry some uncut diamonds back home for me."

Stifling a scream, half shouting. "Are you out of your tiny fucking mind? I knew you were mental, but this is fucking insane, I thought you had a pirates treasure map or something equally transportable"

Trying his best not to draw too much attention, Paul tried to calm his friend down. "I wouldn't have called you if I had any other option. Believe me, this really is a matter of life or death. There's gonna be a shit load of money in it for you."

"A lot of fucking good it's going to do me if I get caught."

Paul needed Ken on his side and it looked like he was going to have a hard time convincing him he should take the diamonds through for him.

"You're not gonna get caught, how the fuck are you going to get caught? You got diplomatic immunity. You carry stuff through all the time. You could carry an atomic bomb through if you wanted."

"But this is criminal."

"How do you know it's criminal? What if I told you we've bought them, and we're just asking you to save us some time at customs?"

Knowing Paul was talking aloud of old ball shit. "Yeah, right. Please don't tell me any more, I don't want to know. But he couldn't resist one final question. "Where are they now?"

"Well, we're just going for a little horse ride, we're going to dig 'em up."

Putting his fingers in his ears, "No I don't want to know, don't tell me."

"You just asked me where they were. Do you want to come?"

Ken was now more interested in three cute looking girls by the pool. Ken and Paul both knew he was going to help. Ken told Paul, "fuck off" as only a friend could, "I'm going for a swim."

Paul took the hint and left his friend to get on with his very short holiday. "So we're OK, right?"

"Come and see me later."

"I'll bring the girlfriend. We'll have dinner. See you about seven-thirty."

Paul left the hotel and went straight to the Mercedes. Climbing into the driver's seat he could see the other three were not happy. Whilst Paul was with Ken, they had been talking and they were anxious as to whether Paul's friend would be able to deliver the goods. And as he was going to be entrusted with about fifteen million pounds worth of diamonds. They also wanted to know the identity of Paul's mysterious friend.

Ken hadn't told Paul not to tell them, but Paul thought for the time being it best if they didn't know who their saviour was. He told them. "He thinks it's best you don't know who he is. For his own safety sake."

Arriving at the stables, Paul parked the car in the shade under some trees. They all got out, and as expected, Paul was eager to see Angelica. He wasn't disappointed when Angelica ran up to him and greeted him with a quick kiss on the lips. Seeing the other three standing around watching, she told them the horses were ready for them. Noticing there were only four of them, she said, "I thought there were going to be five."

Paul told her "There was supposed to be five, but the other one, he's having a swim."

"Oh dear, Maria will be upset, she was so looking forward to going out with you today."

Thinking Angelica was putting someone else with them on their ride, he asked her who Maria was? Angelica pointed to a horse, "There's Maria." Not quite believing what he saw, because when the horse heard its name it looked around.

Angelica, who loved her horses asked no one in particular, "Isn't she beautiful?"

The paddock gate was opened and they all went in. Billy was the first to ask which one was his horse. The stable hands brought over the horses. He was told to take his pick.

When they were all mounted, they made their way out of the enclosure. Maria with no one on her back started to follow them.

Paul was puzzled and asked Angelica if it was OK for Maria to just plod along on her own. He was told everything was OK, she knows where she's going. She'll just follow you. He was also told he could ride her back if he wanted.

It took them the usual forty-five minutes before they reached the point just before the waterfall. After tethering the horses to some low hanging branches, they made their way across the river and up the steep slope.

On reaching the big rock. Billy told Shaughn, "As you knew where the stones are buried you might as well dig em up. Well, what's left of 'em."

After making the steep climb in the thirty-five-degree heat Shaughn was noticeably aggravated and in no mood for this. Once again, he told Billy, "I didn't take 'em. How many more fucking times do you need telling?"

The mistake Dave made was when he joined in and started shouting at Shaughn, saying, "Well it wasn't the fairies who nicked 'em, was it?"

It was then Shaughn threw down the spade and refused to do any more digging, "Fuck this and fuck you-you wanker. For all I know, you came back and nicked 'em."

Dave made a big show of standing up for himself. "When would that miracle have occurred?"

Billy gave Paul a look and a nod which said, OK it's time, let's do it.

Paul who hadn't said anything for a while, looking Dave straight in the eyes, "Maybe it took place the next day, when you came back on the horse you hired from Angelica."

Knowing he had been caught, but still trying to bluff it out. "What you on about?"

Billy and Paul knew it was time to let Shaughn off the hook. It was Paul who gave him the good news. "It's alright mate, Angelica told me this piece of shit hired a horse the day after you buried the diamonds. She also said he rode off in the same direction as you all did the day before."

Dave was just about to say something when Billy heaved off a massive right hook knocking Dave clean off his feet knocking him all the way down the hill and into the river below.

It was Billy who shouted after him, "Cunt, don't be at the hotel when we get back."

Everything happened in a flash, Shaughn was relieved he wasn't thought of as the thief any more. In an instant, he thought it funny as he had just stolen fifteen million pounds in diamonds.

Happy to be back in the fold again, he picked up the spade and finished digging. He was pleased to see the diamonds were still there.

They didn't count them but made sure the giant diamond the one they called the Rhombus was still there.

After they made their way down the slope into the river and across to the horses. There was one missing.

It was Shaughn who would later be ribbed for stating the bloody obvious, "It looks like Dave's fucked off."

They climbed up onto their horses. Paul got on Maria, and they slowly rode off.

Twenty minutes into their ride, there was a commotion to their right, it came from within the bushes, a group of eight armed bandits came riding out ambushing them. They were like characters from a bad spaghetti western. four of them were wearing Mexican sombreros. The other four including their leader were wearing old dusty worn-out western cowboy hats.

Their clothes were sweaty and tatty, and their horses weren't as well kept as Angelica's horses, this was a rough group who knew about the diamonds and were willing to do anything to get them.

The leader El Jefe, had a craggy sun-weathered face. He was waving around a large chrome-plated revolver. A very unfriendly man, "Don't fuck with me puto or you and your friends you don't be going nowhere. Do you understand?"

With the chrome pistol being pointed at Shaughn's head, Shaughn said, "I understood, now get that fucking cannon out of my face."

El Jefe took his pistol away from Shaughn's face and told them, "Get off your horses."

They did as they were told. Their horses were slapped on the hindquarters and sent off running down the path back towards their stables.

He then demanded, "Give us your dinero, watches, wallets and diamantes."

Billy questioned him, asking, "Who said we got diamonds?"

El Jefe, "I know you have diamantes, don't mess me around or you go home one missing."

Shaughn was carrying the diamonds, Billy said to him, "Go on give them the diamonds."

Shaughn questioned him, "What?"

Billy, "Yeah, give 'em all three bags."

Shaughn understood the message and went into his backpack and tossed over three bags of uncut-diamonds.

If they had taken a look in the backpack they would have seen another bag. But even after being given millions of dollars of diamonds they still wanted more. four of the bandits came down from their horses and after a lot of pushing a shoving. They collected the guy's cash and watches.

As the bandits disappeared into the jungle. The bandit leader shouted back. "Gratheos me amigo's, it's been a pleasure, and on such a beautiful day, now you must be very careful you have a long walk home and there are many snakes."

Paul was in no mood to have this bastard take the piss, or take his diamonds. He shouted after him. "Yeah, we just met some." He turned back to his friends, "How the fuck did those bastards know we had diamonds?"

Shaughn, "I'll give you one guess."

Just then Paul had an epiphany. Thinking about animals he remembered The Eagle, El águila. Shouting into the dense green jungle. "Those are El águila's diamonds. You want to get yourselves killed for stealing El águila's property?"

It wasn't long before there was a great disturbance from the green wall of the jungle. The bandits had returned. Their leader was sweating and visibly worried, as were the rest of his men.

"You say these are the property of El águila?"

Not being on a horse, Paul was now looking up at the bandits "Yes, and I suggest you hand everything back before he finds out."

The bandits were now fidgeting in their saddles, "How do we know you tell us the truth?" You might have heard the name and you lie to us."

Paul was growing in stature, "Do you want to take the chance."

"We could kill you and throw you in the river, no one would know."

"Well, as you've sent our horses back to El águila's daughter, I'd say that option was now closed. In fact, I'd say you're fucked."

From atop the back of his horse, their leader was now visibly scared, wiping the excess sweat from his face, he had adopted a dower beaten posture. "We had no idea who you were. We are simple farmers."

Knowing, he now had the upper hand over these bandits Paul started to push his luck. "You're not farmers. Who put you up to this? How did you know we were carrying diamonds?"

"The gringo told us you have diamonds, he tells us to stop you and take them, we share them."

Billy had been standing by, becoming more and more agitated. Finally, he couldn't contain himself any longer and screamed at them. "Where the fuck is the piece of shit?"

"He says we met him down the path in the jungle, but I kill him for you. And for El águila. I cut his throat."

Thinking it was the second-best thing he had heard all day, Shaughn said, "Killing him would be a great idea." But not wanting to be a party to murder, "It would be better if you just beat the crap out of him, but don't kill him."

"OK, we beat the crap out of him, maybe we brake a few bones."

"Before you go off into the jungle again, we want the diamonds and our watches back."

The diamonds, watches and money were returned, and as the bandits started to turn their horses to go back into the jungle. Paul stopped them, "Oh just a minute, we're going to need three of your horses."

The bandit leader knew he was beaten, the last thing he wanted, was having El águila hunting him down. Reluctantly, but with a smile, "Si señor mi Caballo es Tu Caballo." He gave further orders in Spanish, telling three of his men to give up their horses.

Climbing onto their new mounts, Paul told them, "You can collect them at El águila's riding stables."

The bandit leader wasn't sure if it would be such a good idea, going to El águila's riding stables would be like putting his head in a noose. "Please tell El águila, we didn't know what we were doing we beg his forgiveness."

Fifteen minutes into their ride back to the stables, Angelica arrived with four fresh horses.

Puzzled as to why they were now riding strange dirty old horses, but mostly concerned for Paul's safety, "Paulo, how are you? Are you alright?"

"Everything's OK, we were robbed by some bandits but I told them the diamonds belonged to El águila, and they gave them back."

As the word diamonds came out of his mouth the other two jumped in, "He didn't mean diamonds."

Angelica said, "It's OK, I already know about the diamonds, I told Paul I'd worked it out a long time ago.

I remember when you two came over with your other friend and the day the diamonds were stolen, you took horses to the waterfall and then when Paul arrived with his friends they wanted horses to go to the same place, and now you're all back here together."

Billy agreed, "Yeah, I guess it didn't take a lot of working out."

"There's only three of you, where's your other friend?"

Paul, "Do you remember Dave, the one you said came back on his own? He was the one who told the bandits we had the diamonds, he's the one who had us robbed."

"Bastardo. I tell my father."

"No, no it's alright, the bandits are going to deal with him in their own way."

"How many of them were there?"

"There were eight, all on horseback. Well, five on horseback now."

Handing them all water, Angelica was more interested in how Paul was. "Never mind are you alright? Did they hurt you?"

"No, I'm fine."

Billy cut in and said, "Was it the horses coming back on their own that bought you out here?"

"Yes, I knew something was wrong. I thought you hadn't tied them up properly and they'd run away."

Shaughn, "How the fuck did he think he was going to get away with this shit?"

Billy added, "He's not."

Angelica turned her horses around, "What do you mean?"

"The bandits said they were going to slap him around a bit for us, but we told them not to kill him."

Angelica, "These bandits can be vicious, but you've made them look like idiotas and they're not going to be too happy especially with no money to take home."

Making their way back to the stables. Paul and Angelica rode side by side, talking about their plans for the future. Billy and Shaughn riding behind them could see how much in love they were.

On arrival back at the stables when everyone had dismounted, Angelica said, "I'm going to make some telephone calls to see if I can find out where the bandits might have left their friend."

Shaughn asked Paul, "Who's she going to call?"

Paul had no idea, but sarcastically replied, "Maybe she'll call the police, and ask them for help."

Shaughn, "Are you having a laugh?"

Paul, "Course I am, how the fuck do I know who she's going to call? Mind you from what I saw last night the police are as bent as nine-bob notes, it wouldn't make any difference."

Paul and Angelica had already made arrangements to meet later. Paul, Billy and Shaughn climbed in the Mercedes, Paul kissed Angelica goodbye and with a wave and a cloud of dust, they drove away from the stables.

Billy was keen to know where they were going, Paul thought after everything they had gone through today, it might be a good idea if they went straight to Ken's hotel and got rid of the stones.

Shaughn agreed with Paul. He thought it would be the best thing to do.

Billy agreed and told Paul, "Drive on my man."

Driving through the beautiful tropical countryside, with the roof down, the warm air blowing their hair in all directions and with the clear blue sky, it was a pleasant change from the slow clop, clop on the back of smelly old horses in the middle of a humid bandit infested jungle. It would take them twenty minutes to drive to Ken's hotel.

As they were nearing the hotel Paul said, "The next problem we've got is giving Ken four bags of diamonds covered in dirt without it looking like we are giving him four bags of diamonds covered in dirt.

Billy stopped him and said, "We could always just fuck off into town and buy a nice new hold all and hand it to him with the diamond already in it, it'd look better."

Paul didn't answer Billy, he just did a U-turn and drove into town to look for a shop selling bags. In a town catering to tourists, it wasn't hard to find a shop selling bags. Getting out of the car Paul noticed a police car. Was he being watched? Do the police now know about the diamonds? Or was it because he was driving around in El águila's car? After going in and buying a holdall he was shocked to see two young police officers standing by the car. Dressed in crisp white uniform shirts and wearing their highly polished peaked caps, shiny leather belts with pistols hanging in their leather holsters at their sides. Seeing Paul, they both stood to attention and saluted him.

Ah, he thought to himself it must be the El águila' connection, and as I'm sort of, part of the family, this could be fun. Asking them, "Is everything alright?" They couldn't have been more helpful.

"Sí señor, we were wondering why you were driving el auto de las águilas. But your amigos tell us que estás con Angélica."

"You're right there me old mate, I was with her last night. Did you hear what happened?"

"Si señor, we hear she fight like un tigre."

"Well almost, I think you mean tigress."

"Si, now we take care of you, we told we make sure nothing happen to you or your boyfriends, we are your security."

No, No, No, we're OK we're alright, we're just going to take a look around, you know, go and have a few drinks, we'll be alright."

It took them a while to convince their new friends they would be alright and they didn't need any security. It was another fifteen minutes before they were able to get away from them.

They made their way to Ken's hotel, parked well away from any prying eyes. Paul was able to take the four dirty bags of diamonds from the boot and put them in the new holdall. Carrying the load into the hotel reception area he asked the receptionist for his friends' room number. He was told his friend was in the garden suite, but she thought he would find him next to the swimming pool.

He made his way out to the pool, but he was horrified when he saw his friend Ken wearing very small yellow Speedo swimming trunks. He's lying on a sunbed drinking a cocktail, decorated with umbrellas and fruit.

Walking over to him. Paul looked down at Ken, "You look like Del Boy on a bad day."

Pleased to see his friend, "Hello mate, do you want a drink? Had a good day?"

"You gotta be joking, wait till I tell you about it."

Ken signalled to the gay poolside waiter, but Ken hadn't realized. He came over and took Paul's order for a beer and after he left Ken asked Paul, "Well, what happened?"

"Well, I've got a girlfriend who's the daughter of the biggest crook, robber, gangster on the island who just happened to shoot someone dead last night."

"He did?"

"No, she did. Then today we got robbed."

"What they nicked the diamonds?"

"Yeah, some bandits robbed us on the way back, but I mentioned the father's name and they gave 'em back to us."

"But how the fuck did they know you were carrying diamonds?"

"One of our lot. Dave, he was the one who's caused all the trouble. He's the reason you're here. It all came out in the jungle, there was a fight and he fucked off."

"So, you got the stuff with you?"

"Yeah, here you go." He handed the bag to Ken.

Holding the bag in one hand and feeling the weight, "Fuck me they're heavy. How many you got in here?"

"200, there would have been 240, remember they're uncut, they should be worth about £15.000.000."

Almost in disbelief, "Fifteen million?"

"Yeah, there's one in there we call the Rhombus, or Rombulus something like that, it's massive, fuck knows what Rhumbulas means."

"It means diamond, but I think you've got more than £15.000.000 here."

The waiter arrived with the drinks. And asked Ken, "Would sir like anything else?"

"No, we're OK at the moment, thanks."

The waiter gave Ken a gay smile and left.

Paul immediately noticed the smile and inference. "What the fuck's all that about?"

"I don't know I think he fancies me."

Not wanting to be thought of as a gay friend of Ken's, Paul thought he would get a grip of his mate and sort him out. "Well, you've been here all day, you've got a gay-boy Freddie Mercury moustache, you're drinking poufy drinks, and them fucking budgie smugglers don't help."

He had noticed the three attractive Latin American long-haired-long-legged twenty-year-old girls sunbathing. They were all dressed in the same designer bikinis, but they were all different colours, Tiff had fluorescent green, Angel had fluorescent Yellow, and Goldie had fluorescent orange. They were looking over and seemed interested.

"Look at those birds over there. Get your gay boyfriend to go over and ask them if they want a drink, order yourself a beer, then fuck off into the gift shop, get yourself out of those budgie smugglers and get yourself into a pair of respectful swimming shorts."

He did what he was told and called the waiter over, but Paul changed the plan, he couldn't wait and beckoned the girls over. The girls picked up their towels and sunglasses and were over within a minute, Paul now spoke to the waiter, "I'd like to buy these three lovely ladies a drink."

Then asking the girls, "What would you like to drink girls?"

They all ordered Cuba Libre/Bacardi and Cokes.

"OK girls." Then he turned to the waiter, "And can you bring four beers? Danny leRowe here's had enough girly cocktail drinks for one day."

The waiter repeated the order, "So what you would like is three Bacardi and cokes four beers and no more girly cocktail drinks for Mr Danny LeRowe. I'll be right back."

Paul turned to Ken, "Right fuck off and get yourself some shorts and I'll get the guys from the car. Whilst you're at it you might like to put the bag of tricks in the hotel safe. Know what I mean?"

Ken, "Yeah, good idea."

"Yeah, but I'd get the shorts first. By the way, when are you thinking of leaving?"

"Might try for tomorrow."

Ken picked up the bag of diamonds and went into the hotel gift shop.

Paul went out into the car park and told Billy and Shaughn about the girls. He also thought it was time he told them Ken was a member of parliament and added he's also one horny bastard.

It was the day the gift shop sold another three pairs of swimming shorts, allowing the seven of them to spend the rest of the day by the pool. At one-point Ken ordered Champaign. Individual arrangement's, all but Paul, were made with the girls.

They returned to their hotel at 5.30 pm and saw two police cars. There was also a police officer walking about in the car park. They thought they'd got rid of the police back in town.

Seeing the police they were preparing themselves for the worst, but they still had to go in. On arrival at the reception area, there were two more police who told them David's horse had ridden itself into Angelica's stables on its own, it had blood on its saddle.

Paul, spoke quietly to Billy and Shaughn so the police couldn't hear, "Fucking hell, do you reckon those bandits done him in?"

Billy wasn't sure but said, "They might have. Especially if they were pissed off enough at him for all the trouble he caused and getting fuck all out of it."

The police officer in charge asked all three, "Do you have any idea why your friend's horse came in on its own?"

Shaughn told him, "He didn't feel well so he left us at the waterfall."

Police asked again, "And why didn't you to go back with him?"

Shaughn, "He didn't want us to go back with him."

The police kept pushing it, "I mean to make sure he was alright, he was your friend?"

Billy joined in, "No, he's very independent he didn't want anyone tagging along with him."

The police were being very persistent, "We come to check to see if he OK, we thought if he OK he'd come back to the hotel. If he comes back, tell the reception and they will call us."

After thanking the police they said they would call. The police then left and they went to the bar.

Billy, "It looks like he might have bitten off more than he could chew."

Shaughn, "Do you reckon they've topped him?"

Paul, "Well, it don't look too good. Anyway, I'm knackered, I'm gonna have a bit of a kip before Angelica gets here."

Billy, "I forgot to ask Ken when he's going back?"

"He said he's going to try for tomorrow, but tell you what, if he gets webbed up with those girls there's no telling when he'll go back."

Billy, "On the other hand, let's hope Dave turns up or we could be staying here longer than we'd planned."

Shaughn, "Why's that?"

Billy, "The old bill might think we had something to do with his disappearance, they might think we topped him."

"Why would they think we topped him? They don't know we've had a bust-up with him. Let's just pray they didn't kill him."

CHAPTER 10.

WAITING FOR A RING.

At 7.30 pm Angelica drove into Paul's hotel with a message her father wanted to see him. Neither of them wanted to spend the night at El águila's place, so they left the Mercedes and took Angelica's, Range Rover.

On arrival at the villa, Angelica took Paul's hand and guided him in through to the pool area.

El águila was sitting with his beautiful wife. On seeing Paul they both stood and greeted Paul warmly.

After they had something to eat and drink El águila took Paul aside.

"It seems you're not what you appear to be. Does my daughter know what you are?"

"How do you mean?"

"You are a diamond thief. You told people I know, you had diamonds belonging to me. The diamonds you stole whilst on exhibition in Punta Cana."

"Yes, she knows about the diamonds, but I didn't steal them, I'm just here to help my friends get them out of the country."

"You do know the police are on to you? They told me about the airport and the search for the diamonds, and now your friends have returned they have put everything together."

"The diamonds have gone. What can they do?"

"The diamonds have not gone, they are with your friend Ken back at his hotel and if you want to get them out of the country, it's going to cost you and your friends a lot of money. I want half the diamonds."

Remembering, back in the jungle they only handed over three bags to the bandits, "You want one and a half bags? How about one bag?"

El águila half-laugh, "My daughter has chosen well. We must have another drink."

Still thinking how he could pay El águila even less, "How are you going to turn your diamonds into cash?"

"Are you offering?"

Paul is still thinking, "For a percentage of your bag."

El águila, "How much?"

"Twenty-five per cent."

"Five."

"Ten."

"Ten."

"Looks like it's ten. So you'll let the stones go through?"

"I'll even make a phone call and send a bottle of Champagne to your friend Ken's table."

They shook hands, El águila called Catalina and Angelica. They both returned holding drinks with broad smiles on their faces. Everyone was happy and the men were pleased with their evening's work, El águila was happy with his deal with Paulo, "My darling girls, I wish to invite Paulo to be a member of our family. Does anyone object?"

Catalina and Angelica opened their arms, Paul stood up and they both give him a hug Catalina kissed him on both cheeks, Angelica gave him a hard kiss on the lips.

El águila was in such a good mood he ordered Champagne, "Champagne, on such a night we should have Champagne, who would like Champagne?"

After the celebrations they had more food with smoked salmon and lobster, it was time for Angelica to drive Paul back to his hotel. Turning down yet another invitation to stay they were both happy to leave and be able to spend some time alone together.

Driving her car, Angelica was pleased her father liked Paul enough to invite him into the family. "I'm so pleased my father inviting you into the family."

Without thinking he blurted out, "It's going to make it easier for me when I ask him for your hand in marriage."

Angelica applied the brakes, it was like an emergency stop bringing the car to an abrupt halt. Paul braced his hands against the dashboard to stop himself from going through the windscreen. "Marriage? You're going to ask my father if you can marry me?"

Thinking Angelica was upset or annoyed, "Well, I wasn't. Not until I asked you."

As usual, Angelica was very sweet and loving, "And when were you going to ask me?"

"I was hoping we could go back to the restaurant we went to the other night. I was going to ask you tomorrow."

"You have it all planned."

"All except the diamond ring, but I'm sure diamonds aren't going to be a problem." They laughed.

"Well as you're going to ask me to marry you, I might think about it."

CHAPTER 11.

A NIGHT IN THE JUNGLE

Deep in the jungle, Dave had been unconscious for hours. Coming too at 06.30 am he found himself lying in thick foliage blood from the beating he took had dried on his face and head, his ribs had been broken and he found it hard getting to his feet, he had stumbled around during the night and had no idea where he was. After his wanderings and drifting in and out of consciousness he stumbled out of the bush straight into the path of an early morning search party. Rushing to help him, they gave him some water and took him to the hospital's casualty department.

With two police officers, a doctor and two nurses by his bed, and the doctor needing room to examine his patient, the police backed off, the doctor told the nurses, "He has a bad concussion, it looks like he has some broken ribs, I need full-body x-rays and he needs complete bed rest under constant supervision."

The police asked if they could talk to him. The doctor said they could try, but he's had a serious bang to the head, he might not be as responsive as they would like.

Dave rolled over onto his side and was sick all over the police officer's shoes.

The doctor was pleased seeing Dave vomit all over the police, he told them it was always a good sign. But the police didn't think too much of it. They didn't think it was such a good sign.

The police went in and were immediately asking questions, "What happened? Who was it who attacked you? Would you recognise them again?"

"There were half a dozen of them in the middle of the jungle, I don't know if I would recognize them again, but maybe."

"Did they take anything?"

"They stole my wallet and watch." He was violently sick again.

The next morning at Ken's hotel, Ken and Paul were having breakfast. Paul told Ken, "The bad news about Dave going missing is the police were at the hotel last night."

Ken thought for a second, "Have they found a body?"

"No, but Dave's horse came back to the stables on its own, it had blood on its saddle. They assumed something was wrong."

Ken was now concerned, "Do the police think you or the others had anything to do with it?"

"I hope not. The thing is I've made a deal with El águila and there's going to be no trouble for you getting through customs. I would, however, suggest it might be a good idea for you to leave as soon as possible."

"I've already booked myself out tonight, I'll have plenty of time to see the girls. What about the guys, they've got another week to go, what are they going to do?"

"They're going to hang around town like proper tourists and make like they're all concerned about their long-lost friend."

"What about you?"

"I'm going to play a bit of golf, go down the beach, but tonight I've a very important dinner date with Angelica."

It was morning, Angelica was grooming a horse when two police officers approached her. After the previous night and with the knowledge she now possessed regarding the diamonds, she was wondering what they wanted, she asked them what she could do to help.

They were on a fishing expedition wanting to know if she or any of her men saw anything unusual yesterday. Did she see a group of say five or six men she hadn't seen before, Bandidos maybe?

She told them, the only thing strange was the horse coming in on her own.

Asking if the gringos said anything she thought was strange or out of the ordinary?

She only told them they seemed in good spirits and they said they went to the waterfall for a swim.

Asking to have a word with your workers? The two police officers went off and spoke to the stable hands.

At the same time, back at the hospital, a nurse was trying to stop Dave from getting out of bed. Telling him he had a bad concussion and he must stay in bed for another twenty-four hours.

He was having none of it, "I've got things to do." With the nurse still trying to stop him, he threw back his bed covers and got out of bed. Gently brushing her aside he picked up his clothes from a bedside chair, he got dressed. Now ready to leave he asked the nurse if they have taxis outside, but the nurse still trying to stop him needed him to sign a form saying he was leaving on his own recognizance.

Hurrying down a corridor he pushed through some swing doors and found himself outside next to a taxi rank, jumping into the nearest taxi he told the driver to take him to the Hotel Playa Grande.

On arrival, he went straight up to the receptionist, "Can you do me a favour and pay for my taxi and give me my room key? I'll go and get some money from the room safe to pay you back."

"Ah, Senyor you are back, we were so worried about you, we had the police looking for you, I am so pleased you are alright. Is there anything else I can do for you?"

"I need to get changed and have some breakfast. Leaving the reception area he made his way to his room and then on to the restaurant where Billy and Shaughn were seated having breakfast.

Billy spoke quietly so none of the other guests on the other tables could hear, "What the fuck do you want?"

"I've been beaten up by a bunch of bandits, and been in hospital."

Billy was not at all sympathetic, "What a shame they didn't make a better job of it, now if you don't fuck off I'll finish the job for them."

Shaughn thought it wouldn't be such a good idea to ostracize one of their own. Telling Billy, "Hang on, let's not be too hasty. What would the old bill think? We're all supposed to be good friends, what would it look like if we weren't talking to him straight after he'd been beaten up and hospitalized?"

Billy was still annoyed, "Friends can have a row."

Shaughn said, "If we fuck this up we'll all have a lot to lose. We gotta keep our heads down act like everything's normal.

Then to Dave, "Get yourself some breakfast and sit the fuck down."

Dave went off and bought some breakfast back and sat down.

Shaughn couldn't help himself, "You look like shit."

"Getting beaten to a pulp and spending the night in the jungle will do that to you."

Billy wasn't letting it go, "I suppose you think us getting robbed is our idea of fun?"

"That had nothing to do with me."

Billy, "What your Bandido mates had nothing to do with us getting robbed?"

Dave, "What the fuck you on about?"

Billy, "Tell me then, how the fuck did they know we had diamonds on us?"

Dave, "You saying I told 'em?"

Shaughn, "You got another explanation?"

Dave, "Are you forgetting they left me for dead? I was on the way back to the stables when they captured me. They just came out of the blue."

Shaughn leant forward so as not to be overheard, "Maybe you told 'em about the diamonds to save your own skin."

Dave hung his head in submission, "I thought they were going to kill me."

Billy, "You lying cunt, you made a deal with them to fuck us over, but the one good thing is, we now got no diamonds on us, and another good thing is, you're going to be paying all our expenses."

Dave was un-expectedly surprised, the shock caused him to blurted out across the table spitting out a mouthful of scrambled egg, "What the fuck are you talking about?"

Billy, "You're having a laugh, right? You nicked forty diamonds, which means, so far, you're the only one who's made anything out of this monumental fuck up. I tell you if I didn't need you I'd put you back in the fucking jungle myself."

CHAPTER 12.

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.

At the airport, Ken checked in using his diplomatic passport. Carrying his briefcase and boarding pass he was escorted through customs without hindrance.

After an hour in the 1st class lounge, he boarded the plane. When seated, he was offered a glass of champagne.

Noticing he had a beautiful thirty year-old-woman sitting next to him, he made a toast, "Lovely day." She smiled back at him and toasted him with her glass.

Back in London at the Alfred-Dupont shop, Benjamin had been experiencing grief from the two gangsters he'd been selling lighters to.

Being held up against a wall by the two big guys in black suits, Benjamin was once again trying to convince them he would get the rest of their order as soon as he could get them.

Reminding him, "You told us you had two hundred, and you told us we could have 'em."

"I had money problems, I had to sell them for a better price."

"You'll have more than money problems if you don't come up with 'em a bit sharpish. How many do you have?"

"Seventy."

"Right we'll take 'em."

"They're at home, I don't keep them at work, I'll have a hundred tomorrow."

Giving Benjamin a tiny slap in the face and poking a finger in his face to show him how annoyed they were, "Don't fuck us about we'll be back tomorrow."

Setting off alarm bells, "You can't come to the shop, I'll meet you in Green Park at 1.05 pm same as before."

Agreeing, "Don't be late."

Mustering up as much courage as he could, "Make sure you bring the right money this time."

Benjamin took another slap on the cheek, "We'll see you tomorrow."

Even before they'd left, Benjamin had already made up his mind as to how the following day was going to unfold. After a restless night and a morning he thought was never going to come to an end, he was finally free to make his way to Green Park. He was carrying a briefcase and walking with a purpose looking very focused he strode into the park. The two gangsters were already waiting for him.

Wanting to get their greedy hands on the lighters, "How many lighters you got?"

Benjamin was in no mood for any more of their antics or faffing around with the wrong money. If they show up with less money than they had agreed, it was not going to be a good day for them.

The first question Benjamin asked, "How much money did you bring? I bet it's not what we agreed."

The reply he got back was one he was expecting, "We got £4,500."

Benjamin's mood had not been made any better by the reply, "£4,500 ain't £5,250 is it?"

The gangsters could see Benjamin was becoming a little too mouthy for their liking and being stood up too wasn't what they were used to.

Answering Benjamin more menacingly, "You're not getting no more, now hand over the lighters."

Knowing what he was going to do Benjamin was no longer intimidated by these two bully boys, "I've just about had enough of you two, coming to my work and threatening me, shortchanging me at every turn."

Brushing off benjamins protestations, "Do you want the money or not?"

What he wanted was for the two of them to get out of his life and stay out. He had just about had enough. His aggression was at its peak, "Just give me the money."

As they handed over the money not suspecting what was to come.

One of them said, "Be grateful you're getting anything."

Taking the money, Benjamin opened the briefcase, pulled out a revolver and shoot both gangsters dead. Hitting one in the head, one in the face and just for luck two more in each of their chests. The noise caused panic, people were fleeing the scene, this gave Benjamin ample cover to slowly walk out of the park. With his head tucked low he left the park with the others fleeing. Walking in amongst the crowd he turned right out of the park and mingled in with the crowds heading towards Piccadilly Circus.

CHAPTER 13.

THE BIG QUESTION.

It was 11.00 AM, Recognizing the white Mercedes, the guards at, El águila's villa buzzed Paul in through the electrically operated gates.

He was there to fulfil his promise and ask El águila for Angelica's hand in marriage.

Whilst Paul was driving up to the main house, El águila received a message from the gatehouse telling him Paul was on his way. When he pulled up El águila was outside waiting to meet him, he opened the car door for Paul. Greeting him warmly, they went through the house out to the pool area.

El águila had preempted Paul's arrival by ordering coffee cakes, and sandwiches. Knowing Paul's intentions in advance through a phone call from Angelica made things much easier for Paul. El águila gave his blessing with pleasure.

The one thing Paul needed was Angelica's finger size. He wanted to go into town and buy a ring, so El águila called Catalina his beautiful wife to help Paul with his quest. After going to Angelica's bedroom Catalina came back with one of Angelica's old rings.

Both El águila and Catalina were pleased with the prospect of having Paul as their son-in-law, and as he sat in the open-top Mercedes to leave on his shopping trip, El águila threw Paul a remote to the front gates and told him, "The car, she is now yours."

He drove off, with his arm raised in acknowledgement and thanks. Clicking the remote he drove out through the open gates and into town.

After choosing a ring he drove to the same restaurant he had been to the previous night. He reserved the same table as they had the night before. He pre-ordered a bottle of their finest champagne and booked a mariachi band.

Telling them, when they finish, one of the band had to hand him the ring, which he will then present to Angelica. He thought it would be rather romantic.

He then went back to the hotel and met the guys for lunch after which they took a walk along the beach. Billy and Shaughn reluctantly allowed Dave to tag along. They all agreed, with the diamonds gone, they were now safe, and from now on the police should leave them alone.

How wrong they were. Two plainclothes police officers approached them. One of them showed his warrant card and introduced himself as a detective sergeant, "I apologize for interrupting your walk, how are you enjoying your holiday?"

Billy told them, "Apart from our friend being accosted by bandits and having his head bashed in and almost killed, we're having a wonderful time. Why do you ask?"

They turned to Paul, "We were also wondering how you are getting along with the girl at the stables?"

Paul wondered if this was some kind of intimidation or a threat, "You do know who's daughter she is don't you?"

They didn't seem to react to Paul's reference to El águila, "You were here only two weeks ago. It is very unusual for someone to come all this way so soon after only two weeks. Could it be you are only here for the diamonds?"

Paul and the rest of the guys froze. It was as if they were all rabbits frozen in a car's headlights, they all spoke at once, "Diamonds?"

Paul carried on, "What diamonds, what are you talking about? The only reason I'm here is to see my girlfriend."

The police now became aggressive, "Please don't think we are so stupid. Your friends were here when the diamonds were stolen and you were here when we had a tip-off about your other friends were carrying stolen diamonds. And now you're all here together. What do you take us for? Do you think we are estúpido?"

Still denying any knowledge of the diamonds, Billy and Shaughn told them, "We've no idea what you're talking about."

Dismissive of their denials, "We will still be searching your hotel rooms."

The police overheard Paul who said, "Sounded like a stitch-up to me."

Which didn't help ease the tension, "Are you suggesting we're going to plant evidence in your hotel room?"

"Well, I'd say there's an even chance you're going to find a diamond or two in one of our rooms."

"So you're saying you do have diamonds in your rooms?"

"No. What I'm saying is, it sounds like we're just about to be stitched up."

A tense hour passed before the police finished their search. The guys weren't allowed in the rooms during the search, and to everyone's surprise, the police came up empty-handed.

"Well gentlemen, we have found no diamonds, it looks like you were not stitched up. But you and I both know you are guilty, but without proof, I can do nothing. I see you are here for another five days. I would be pleased if you would leave before then."

Paul wasn't about to leave, telling them, "The others can leave whenever they want, but I'm here to see Angelica, and I'm not going nowhere."

Knowing this was a get out of jail free card, Billy was all for leaving. Jumping on the idea he told them, "If you sort out a plane tonight I'll be on it."

The police were happy at the news, "If I can get you on a plane tonight I will. Leave me to make the arrangements, and please don't leave the hotel we may need to move you in a hurry."

The police left the hotel.

Paul was astonished, "What the fuck just happened? I thought we'd all be in nick by now."

Billy, "What I don't understand is why have they got such a hard-on to get rid of us so quick?"

Dave said, "I reckon the eagle bloke's got something to do with it. He's probably told 'em to get rid of us. I reckon he just wants us outta the way."

Paul wasn't happy with Dave talking about El águila like that, "You know fuck all about anything, you've been nothing but trouble from the start, why don't you just shut the fuck up."

Shaughn, "The room search, must have been to frighten us off?"

Paul, "No, El águila's in it with us and he knows Ken's got the stuff. I reckon these two old bill don't know where they are and they're trying to flush them out for themselves."

Billy's parting comment was, "I don't give a fuck about those bent coppers, all I know is they've got nothing on us and we're getting out of this place scot-free."

Paul told Billy and Shaughn, "I can't hang around to see if you're going to be getting out of here tonight."

Shaughn asked, "Why don't you just come with us?"

"I'm meeting Angelica tonight, it's a date I just can't break. It's a very special date."

Billy asked, "Is it going to be one of those get down on one knee type of dates?"

Paul left them and went to his hotel room. He had a shower and made sure he had a smooth close shave, he splashed expensive aftershave on, blow-dried his hair, he didn't like his hair, so he wet it again, he did this three times before he was satisfied. He then put on his favourite light blue shirt and white trousers with white shoes. It was now time for him to make his way to the restaurant. Whilst driving his white Mercedes to the restaurant he went through what he was going to say to Angelica, and how he was going to say it.

He arrived thirty minutes before he was due to meet Angelica, and by the time she arrived he had drunk two imported Belgium beers.

Knowing it was going to be a special night, Angelica also made a special effort to look radiant, in a long white cotton dress, white high heel shoes and her hair and makeup were done perfectly.

Paul was waiting at the bar situated just inside the entrance of the restaurant, as Angelica arrived, he climbed out of his chair and rushed outside to meet her. Holding a bouquet of red roses he handed them to her and they kissed, they kissed as if they had been apart for months. They were truly in love.

The owner of the restaurant was standing at the entrance and ushered them inside, guiding them to their table. With the Champagne already in an ice bucket waiting for them and with the extra flowers adorning their surroundings, the interior of the restaurant looked spectacular.

They toasted each other, and Paul told Angelica about the meeting he had earlier with her father. He told her about what had happened during the afternoon. Letting her know, "The police were convinced the other three were the ones who stole the diamonds."

She jokingly said, "And you had nothing to do with it?"

"Slightly impossible. How could I? I wasn't even here when the diamonds were stolen."

"Tell me more about those two plain cloth police at the hotel."

"They seemed to be looking for the diamonds for themselves."

"I'll have a word with my father."

As they were finishing their romantic candlelit dinner the mariachi band Paul had ordered arrived. They started singing and to Paul's surprise a pair of Flamenco dancers appeared, the man and woman started dancing. The music and dancing went on for almost ten minutes, and when they finished, the band's leader pulled out a ring from his waistcoat pocket and handed it to Paul, who offered it to Angelica, at the same time Paul asked, "Will you marry me?" They kissed and all the people in the restaurant clapped and cheered.

CHAPTER 14.

A QUICK EXIT.

Whilst Paul's life was changing for the better, back at the hotel, his friend's had a call came from the police telling them to get to the airport and to hurry up. On arrival, the police fast-tracked them through passport control enabling them to take their time and do a thorough search of their luggage and perform a full strip and cavity search.

Frustrated by their best efforts, but still unable to find any diamonds the police swore they wouldn't stop until they found them.

Being advised if they ever set foot on the island again, they would personally see to it their next visit wouldn't be as pleasant or as comfortable and promised it would last a lot longer than this one.

Billy gave them his assurance, "As much as I like this place, I wouldn't be back."

The police escorted them to the plane and told them to fuck off before they changed their minds.

Billy, Shaughn, and Dave were never so pleased to see the doors marked SALIDA (Exit).

Earlier, with half an hour, before he was due to leave and meet Angelica Paul had been laying on his hotel bed watching the news on TV. The faces of two London criminals shot dead in a London park came up on the screen. He immediately thought, "What the fuck have you done Benjamin." His hand instinctively reached out for the phone, after dialling Benjamin's number, it was answered after only three rings.

On the other end of the phone was Benjamin, "Hello."

Paul replied in frustration and anger, "Hello, fucking hello. What the fuck have you done?"

"Nothing."

"I've just seen the news. Let's hope Charlie didn't know who the fuck they were meeting."

"I doubt it, not the way they've been performing."

"Right don't say anything on the phone, I'll see you when I get back."

"When are you coming?"

"Not sure, but it looks like I'm going to be coming back sooner than I planned. Fuck knows how I'm gonna get you outta this one." He put the phone down and pondered on the problem.

BENJAMIN GETS HIS.

The London underworld had lost two of their own, and Charlie was at the bar of his East-End pub with three of his henchmen.

Annoyed and shouting, "Green Park, Green Fucking Park, what the fuck were those two fucking idiots doing down in Green Fucking Park?"

One of the guys in the pub told Charlie, "I was talking to them the other day and they said they were going down to Green Park to pick up some lighters, I wonder if it could have been the lighter guy who killed them?"

One of the others said, "It couldn't have been him, they said he was just some scared little four-eyed office bloke."

Charlie was still annoyed and told them, "You don't have to be big to pull a fucking trigger. Now get down there and pick him up. I want to have a word."

Not knowing where down there was, "Down where Charlie, where's down there?"

Exasperated at having to think of almost everything himself, Charlie growled at them, "Well you brains of fucking Britain. The lighters come from the Alfred-Dupont shop in Piccadilly, and as the bloke's name's Ben, I'd think the name should give you some sort of a fucking clue. So how about you two get your arses down there and bring the little cunt back here."

It was now too late for them to go down to Piccadilly. But the next day they made their way to Benjamin's shop. On their way they talked to each other saying, they thought if Charlie thinks this bloke's the one who killed Ted and Pit-Ball, they'd better watch out for him. They weren't wrong. Benjamin was now a killer and to protect his way of life he was prepared to kill again.

On entering Alfred-Dupont's shop the first person they saw was Jenny. Asking her, "Does anyone named Ben work here?"

She knew exactly who they were talking about, but just by looking at them, she knew they were trouble. Her mind flashed back to last week when she had seen two other thugs hassling Benjamin in the corridor at the back of the shop. The fact the other two were the ones who had been shot in the park, couldn't stop her from thinking it was Benjamin who had shot them, "No, no one named Ben works here."

One of them said, "We'll ask around and maybe someone else might know if there's a Ben who works here."

With them out of the way, it gave Jennifer a chance to rush down to warn Benjamin, but still on edge from the shooting in the park, the noise of someone bursting into his workshop made him swing around and point his pistol straight at her head.

His eye's red and wild, a look she had never seen before. But right behind her were the two thugs.

Back in the shop, they had the feeling she had been lying to them and followed her. Standing behind Jenny, facing Benjamin, she had two barrels from their pistols pointing over each of her shoulders aiming straight at Benjamin. He had no option but to lower his pistol and put it down onto his workbench.

They told Benjamin to slide his gun over to them so they could pick it up, he wasn't going to risk firing and hitting Jennifer, so he did what he was told and slid the gun down the workbench where one of the thugs hurriedly scooped it up.

Just then Jenny back elbowed one of the thugs in the stomach and spinning around kicked out at the other one's shin. Yelling at Benjamin, "Get out."

He tried to get past the thugs but in such a tight space there was no room for him to pass, it was no good, they pushed Jenny aside and grabbed him. With the barrel of a 9mm pistol being pushed into his spine, they marched him out the back door, walked him around the corner and bundled him into the back of a black Humber. It was forty minutes before they arrived at an old empty disused factory building in Wapping. Benjamin was hauled out of the car, given a wack in the side of his head by one of the thug's pistols. He was then tied to a chair and beaten again. Blood was now streaming down his face, into his mouth.

Charlie arrived, grabbed Benjamin roughly by the hair and looked deeply into his eyes, "Now you must be the cunt who killed those two fuckwits down in Green Park."

Right there and then, Benjamin knew he was fighting for his life, "I didn't shoot anyone."

Charlie, "Forgive me if I don't believe you but it sounds like a load of old bollocks to me. The two people you shot were good friends of mine and even though you came recommended, I think you're a wrong'en."

Charlie paused maybe for dramatic effect or just to give himself enough time to make up his mind what he was going to do with Benjamin. waving his finger at the two villains who picked him up at his shop.

"These two came to your shop, whereupon you pointed a gun at them. Now what I want to know is, if you're so fucking innocent. What the fuck were you doing with a gun? and what the fuck were you doing pointing it at my friend's heads? Well, let's just say for argument's sake you didn't shoot the other two. The two guys who were shot were there to meet you, right?"

Benjamin "Right, but."

"Shut the fuck up. No buts, I don't want to hear it, I don't want to hear any of that old bollocks. It must have been you. Be a man, don't be a mensh own up to it, it'll go a lot easier on you if you do. You shot them right?"

"I wasn't even there when they were shot. What reason would I have to shoot them? I dealt with them regularly, I was going to get money from them."

"So you're saying someone else knew they had money on them and got in first?"

Trying to flick the blood from going into his eyes. "Must have."

Charlie, "Do you know how stupid that sounds?"

"No, but it wasn't me."

"Are you taking the piss? If I was going to nick money from anyone I'd have waited till you got the money and taken it from you. Now wouldn't it make more sense than trying to take it from those two heavily armed gorillas?"

"Maybe it was someone who had a grudge against them."

Charlie, "In the middle of the day in the middle of Green fucking Park in the middle of London. Are you taking the piss?"

"But what reason would I have to kill them?"

Charlie, "I don't have the answer to every question in the fucking universe, but one thing I do know my little blood-spattered friend is, you done it and you were bang out of order."

The other two villains, willing and eager to administer untold physical violence upon poor old Benjamin chirped in again, "Bang out of order."

Now crying for mercy, "I got nothing to do with it."

"Now, do us all a favour and shut the fuck up, we know it and you know it, you've been extremely naughty and you've been caught, and now you gotta be punished."

Charlie ushered the other two over and spoke quietly into their ears, "Administer the punishment and make a good job of it, this nasty little scrote needs to be shown he can't go around shooting people willy nilly. Right get on with it."

Charlie stood back as the other two moved in to administer the punishment.

One of them spoke to Benjamin, "This might hurt a little, but you'll get used to it there's a lot more to come."

They started with his legs. A baseball bat was their favourite tool of destruction. They were a quarter of a mile from the nearest building or main road, meaning Benjamin's screams couldn't be heard. After his legs ribs and arms were systematically broken. Working up to his head was the next inevitable part of his body that was going to be battered, after the first blow, a welcome unconsciousness dulled his pain.

Thinking they'd done their job and as Benjamin was no longer moving they were about to pour petrol over him. When Charlie stopped them, "Hold it, the police might notice the smoke before we have time to get out of here."

So thinking Benjamin was dead, they left what they thought was a dead body and went back to the pub.

Two days later a group of children playing close by stumbled upon Benjamin's blood-spattered broken bones. And if it wasn't for one of the braver ones marching up to the bloody bundle and giving it a good hard kick, they would never have known he was still alive. Another kick in the bollocks was just what he needed, it caused him to groan. The ambulance crew had to cut him loose from the chair before they could move him.

It was another week before the police were able to talk to him. Sporting a broken jaw, and drinking through a straw was his only option for sustenance. He wasn't able to talk too well and he knew it was a miracle he was still alive. He had no intention of telling the police anything. Imagine if Charlie found out, he didn't want to repeat the process that got him here. The police came every day for three weeks but he told them he had no idea what had happened and he had no idea why it happened to him.

The police were not stupid, and as Benjamin's place of work was so close to Green Park where the two villains were gunned down, and after interviewing people at his work they thought the only chink in his armour was Jennifer who seemed to know more than she was letting on.

She could have told them about the two villains she saw harassing Benjamin in the shop, she could have told them about Benjamin pointing a gun at her and the other two villains in the workshop. But she told them nothing about any of it. Instead, she visited Benjamin every day after work. She told him it was like talking to one of those Egyptian Mummies in a museum. Plastered from head to toe he wasn't going anywhere for a long time.

By now Benjamin's expensive girlfriend had left him and was now bleeding some other poor sucker dry. He heard her new provider worked in a bank and as it hurt his ribs when he laughed he thought of the poor bastard dipping into the bank's money to keep her satisfied. He risked a small chuckle but even that hurt.

It was during one of Jenny's many visits to the hospital he finally realized how blind he had been. All this time he hadn't noticed he had a woman who truly loved him for who he was, and she had been standing right in front of him all this time.

CHAPTER 16.

DOUBLE TROUBLE.

Now his friends had gone and he was on his own, Paul decided to go for a walk in the old town and maybe find something to buy for Angelica.

He was walking along a narrow white-walled back street when a car pulled up beside him.

The same two plain-clothes police officers who searched his hotel room and had asked him about Angelica got out and grabbed him, manhandling him into the back of their car. As they drove off at high speed he was sandwiched in between the two of them, they gave him no room to move or try to escape.

He was wondering if these two idiots know who his girlfriend's father was? And as El águila was now in on the diamond deal, they really didn't know just how much trouble they were in.

The idiot on his left started, "Now, my young friend, we are going for a little drive and we are going to ask you a few simple questions."

Paul asked him, "Couldn't you have just come to the hotel?"

Then the loser on his right came back with, "No, no no, the fewer people who know we are with you the better. We need to keep this private, just between the three of us, Lo entiendes?" (Do you understand)

Now before he let the El águila hammer drop on them he thought he'd have a little fun with them first, "What do you want?"

The one on the left, "You know what we want."

As he knew the diamonds were long gone from the island, "You're on about those diamonds again?"

Still in the dark about the whereabouts of the diamonds, They made their fatal mistake, everything suddenly became serious, "Are you going to tell us what we want? Or do we have to resort to methods outside of normal police procedure?"

"Well seeing as how I don't know where the fuck they are, or what the fuck you're talking about, I don't think I'm going to be able to help you."

The one on his right pulled his arm back and punched Paul in the stomach. Leaving him doubled over and gasping for air. Saying, "How do you think your little girlfriend will like you with no teeth?"

The one on his left didn't know how short his future would be if he continued on the track he was going. Suddenly he made the mistake of his life, saying, "Maybe we should pay her a visit."

Still in control of himself, but starting to lose it, "You leave her outta this, she's got nothing to do with it."

They were digging their own graves, "Maybe we pay her a visit just for fun."

Paul went into a rage, "I'll tear your fucking heart out you lay one finger on her. You do know her father's El águila he'll cut your balls off and stuff 'em in your mouth."

"Oh so brave with El águila behind you. Let us worry about El águila. You tell us what we want to know and all this go away."

Paul continued, he was just playing them along, "What if, and I'm not saying I know, and I'm not saying I'm guilty, but what if I were to find out where the diamonds were?"

"Then you tell us where they are, we collect them, and everyone live happily ever after."

Feed up with being driven around and needing to get to Angelica as soon as he can, "Well, I can't do anything sitting in here can I? Are you ever gonna stop this fucking car so I can get out, or are we gonna drive around all day talking bollocks?"

The car stopped and they let Paul out. As he was walking away from the now moving car, one of the occupants called back after Paul, "We will talk again tomorrow, you make sure you don't let us down."

Before Paul turned he said to himself, "Don't hold your breath." Then turning to face the disappearing police car, he shouted back at them, "I told you I ain't promising nothing."

His thoughts were only to get to Angelica as fast as he could. It was another fifteen minutes before he reached the white Mercedes. Hot and sweaty he slid into the driving seat and hurriedly fired up the engine. It didn't take long before he was out of town. The car was kicking up dust at sixty mph. Heading for Angelica's stables his mind was in a whirl expecting to find the police there before him. But on arrival and to his relief there were no police cars. The car slid to a screeching halt with flying dust overtaking it and covering the inside of the car and Paul. He jumped out and headed for Angelica.

On hearing and Seeing Paul's frantic arrival Angelica hurried over to him and started to brush the dust from his hair and clothes, "My darling, what's the matter you look like you've seen a ghost?"

"We might be ghosts soon. The police took me for a ride, they want me to give them the diamonds."

Angelica was as usual very concerned, "Did they hurt you?"

"No, well all except a punch in the stomach, those two goons took me for a ride and said they were going to come here and have fun with you. I told them I would do my best to find the diamonds."

Calming Paul down, "Everything will be alright, I'll take care of everything. I'll make a phone call."

They both went into the stables office where Angelica picked up the phone and spoke to her father. She was ordered to leave everything and go straight to the house.

Driving in separate cars, a twenty-minute journey found them both at the front gates of El águila's house. They were stopped by a guard and told to hurry to the dock as El águila was waiting for them on his yacht.

Quickly driving the extra quarter of a mile through the estate to where they saw El águila waiting for them on his forty-metre motor cruiser. A luxury boat with a six-man crew who ushered them both onboard. Greetings over, they were anxious to tell El águila what the two police had said.

They would have to wait another three hours before they returned to dry land. El águila explained they were going out to sea to meet his friend Manuel who had access to a Spanish Gallion he thinks is the long lost Eric Selena from the Spanish fleet, the Tierra Firme. Full of gold, silver and thousands of precious gems. He was going out to help him bring in his monthly haul of booty. Meeting his friend Manuel out at sea every month was something El águila looked forward to. He enjoyed seeing his old friend, it always put him in a good mood.

Having Paul aboard gave him the idea of how he could get rid of the largest of the treasure stones. He had many outlets on the island who took his small gems. Thinking Paul had done it before, he would be the perfect person to organize it again.

Paul had no interest in the gems, he was there to tell El águila what the police had said about going to the stables and having fun with Angelica. He told El águila he had told them Angelica was his daughter, but they thought it was funny as if they weren't worried about him.

El águila thought maybe they had plans to take him out. Maybe an ambush or just a plain one man assassination. He wanted to know, "Would you recognize them again?"

Paul said, "Yes, no problem, and given the chance and a gun, it would be the last time."

El águila was pleased with Paul. He liked the anger and his passion he was showing in the protection of his daughter. This was just the type of man he wanted for his beloved Angelica. But he knew he must take care of him and keep him out of harm's way. He thought the best idea for Paul was for him to return to his hotel, he told him, "When we get back, go to the bar, buy a few drinks for people, make yourself visible and create an alibi. Angelica won't be joining you tonight, for her own safety, she'll be staying at the villa"

This would keep Angelica safe, it was also the time to do what he was told.

The shape of a large white and silver, sixty-foot, two-story-high luxury yacht appeared on the horizon. It was at anchor, and it didn't take long before the distance between them was down to a few hundred yards. Their boat slowed to a halt and dropped its anchor. A few moments later a tender from the other boat appeared and made its way towards them.

There were four men in it, one driving, two armed and one with a broad grin on his sun-brown face, standing and waving. This was El águila's friend Manuel, a cheerful type, but with an undertone of violence in his manner. He climbed aboard El águila's yacht. As they embraced you could see the genuine friendship between the two men.

With introductions out of the way, they had the boxes of gold coins, gems and pearls bought onboard. Manuel was so proud of the contents he opened the lids of all four boxes. The gold coins were in their hundreds glistening in the Caribbean sun and the reds, whites, blues, and greens of the gems sparkled like something out of a pirate movie, they were magnificent, and Paul guessed worth millions.

After many pats on the back and general euphoria, they sat down, drank wine and beer or whatever suited them. Food was produced and the rest of the afternoon was pleasant enough, drinking wine and talking about the sea and sunken treasure, after a few drinks, El águila told Paul, "One day I will take you diving on the wreck."

In good humour, Paul told him, "You'll have to teach me how to dive first, coming from South London you don't get too many chances to learn how to dive on sunken wrecks."

It was Angelica who jumped in, "I'll teach Paul how to dive, after all, I'm responsible for his safety, and the way you go about diving isn't what I want for my fiancee."

After stories were told and laughter abounded, a paella was presented as a centrepiece for their lunch, it was a wonderful afternoon. El águila took his friend aside and asked if he could have two small diamonds to give to Angelica for an engagement present, he was thinking of having a pair of earrings made out of them.

There was a great amount of joy from Manuel at the request, he was more than happy to let Angelica have whatever she wanted. "A present from her godfather." is how he put it.

With everything stowed away, Manuel took his leave and with arrangements made between them for next months rendezvous. They all hugged and shook hands. Jumping into his rubber tender with his security team, he gave a wave, and within seconds he was cutting through the clear blue water on his way back to his yacht.

On their way back to dry land on another subject, Angelica told her father she had given orders to the stable hands and her brothers to find out about the two idiot police officers and to find out what bar they would most likely be in tonight.

Remembering the police said they would contact him tomorrow Paul told El águila who said he would send one of his men back with him to his hotel and if they had to they would wait with him until tomorrow.

Another glass of wine and they were back home.

El águila had radioed ahead and when they docked, two guards were standing by. Getting off the boat, Paul and Angelica's cars had been washed, waxed and filled with petrol.

Driving up to the house with the two guards in his car, Paul noticed an empty police car.

Not knowing if this might be an attempt on El águila or not, Paul was taking no chances. Grabbing a pistol from one of the guards, he rushed into the house. The two police officers who had been in the car were now inside the house having drinks with Catalina. As he raised the pistol the police stood in front of Catalina and drew their pistols. Paul realized these were not the two police he was after. He lowered his gun as Angelica, El águila and the guards caught up with him.

Angelica gently took the gun from Paul's lowered arm, "These are my brothers."

Unable to instantly compute the bombshell, the look on his face was one of complete amazement, "What the fuck's going on? They're police. Sorry darling didn't mean to swear at you."

"It's alright, I understand you're just trying to protect me, but they're my brothers, they wouldn't have gotten in here if they weren't."

The tension eased Paul shook their hands and offered his apologies which they accepted and understood why he had done what he did. El águila was pleased and proud of the fact Angelica had chosen this man as her fiancé. He applauded Paul's passion, in the protection of his family, especially as he had no idea how to handle a pistola.

The brothers wanted to deal with the two rogue police, telling them they knew who they were and what bar they use. They had been transferred from the South of the island because of their involvement with drugs. It was reported they killed a drug dealer. Stole his money and drugs and he was never seen again.

El águila didn't want his sons to do this, they had spotless records as police officers, and one day he hoped they would rise to the top. Any rumours of their wrongdoing might jeopardise his longterm plans for them.

The brothers were insistent. It was their sister who had been threatened.

El águila took them into another room, and after a long discussion they were given consent but, they had to do everything he told them to do.

They had to wear civilian clothes, masks and use weapons he would supply which they would return for disposal. They were also to use a car supplied by him, which would also be returned to him for disposal.

Agreeing to the terms all three emerged from the room. It was now time for more pleasant conversation, Paul had been introduced as Angelica's fiancé, and drinks were served, the conversation Paul had with the brothers was friendly with topics such as the wedding, and where were they going to live, the matter of Paul's diving lessons came up and at one point the brothers offered to show him how to use a pistola, but Angelica had already promised she was going to teach him.

Vengeance is always swift and on many occasions violent on the island.

Inside a cantina in a small village just east of Ponta Cana the two rouge police officers were sitting at a table drinking. They had already had too much to drink.

Talking too loud for their own good, they were bragging about how rich they were going to be, saying, "This time tomorrow we'll be rich."

The other one was laughing "I'm looking forward to having some fun with the bitch at the stables."

"Once we've gotten rid of the boyfriend we can both have some fun with her." They both took another drink and laughed.

Angelica's two brothers had been outside the cantina. They had heard everything the two drunken police had been bragging about. They were preparing to go in and eliminate the two troublesome dangerous idiots.

The car their father had supplied was parked in a way they would be able to make a quick and easy getaway. They pulled down their hoods and made ready their twelve bore repeater pump-action shotguns.

Bursting into the cantina, there were only two other groups sitting on separate tables, these tables were spaced far enough away from their targets there was no danger of them being hit.

With their shotguns up ready for action and pointing at their targets. The laughter stopped. The two rotten apples saw the weapons and realised what was about to happen. They went for their pistols, but it was too late. They were both halfway to their feet. Their chairs a bottle of whisky and their drinks tipped over and smashed onto the floor, the noise of the shotguns startled the customers who ducked and turned away. Blasting their targets until their weapons were empty, the only thing untouched and left in one piece was their shoes.

When the noise subsided, the barman/owner came up from his hiding place behind the bar, he spat in the direction of the two dead bodies, he said, "La escoria, fucking pigs. I don't see nothing, I outback when it happens."

One of the brothers spoke to the barman, "Gracious, we see you soon we take care of you. Okay?"

The barman swigged down a drink, "I see nothing, my friend."

The brothers raised one of their hands in acceptance and their agreement with the barman/owner. Turning to leave the other customers were still cowering down on the floor, not looking up at them. This had taken less than thirty seconds and they were gone. Making their way to El águila's villa they took off their masks and high fived each other.

"Those bastardos won't ever be bothering Angelica."

"Or anyone else. Fucking idiotas."

On arrival at the villa, the car, guns and masks were taken from them and disposed of. El águila was there waiting for them, and after a quick rundown on what had happened, they turned on their police radios. The airwaves were buzzing with the shooting at the cantina. Answering the call, they quickly showered, changed into their police uniforms and getting in their police car they made their way back to the cantina.

Now in uniform and surrounded by other police colleagues the brothers walked into the cantina. It might have been their imagination, but it seemed to them the barman/owner was giving them a strange look.

Checking on the two dead bodies, they were pleased to see they had done their job well and there would be no more trouble with these two. To be honest, even their boss was pleased they were gone. He never wanted them in his station anyway. There wasn't going to be too much of an investigation into this crime.

Their interview with the barman/Owner was just as he had said earlier, in his statement he said he was out the back and he didn't see anything.

There were only four other customers in the bar at the time, all of the same minds, they said they weren't looking, they were on the floor, they said they hadn't seen anything.

Angelica was still at home in El águila's villa, and as the problem had been negated, she persuaded her father to let her go to Paul's hotel.

Angelica found Paul in the hotel bar and relieved him of his minder. He wanted to know what to do, he wanted to know what to tell them when they come tomorrow?

Angelica said, "My brothers have taken care of that problem, you won't be seeing them again. They were crooked cop's no one will miss them."

"Oh, so they're gone?"

"Yes, my darling. This is how things are done here."

CHAPTER 17.

DELIVERED IN TOWN.

Soon after his flight landed at London Heathrow, Ken took a taxi to Hatton Garden, a narrow street with sandstone buildings on either side.

Known as one of the worlds premier centres for doing business in the diamond trade, it had over fifty-five shops with thirty shops on one side and twenty--five to thirty on the other side, getting out of his taxi and clutching his briefcase tightly he looked at the names above the jewellery shops. It didn't take him long before he found the one he had been looking for, he rang the bell and a voice from the intercom told him to push the door. After hearing the pleasing click from the remote locking system he pushed the door and went in.

Morris was waiting in the plush jewellery and diamond section of his shop. Morris was a large six-foot-tall balding fifty-year-old Jewish guy, wearing an expensive navy-blue three-piece business suit a brilliant white shirt and a colourful silk tie topped off with gold-rimmed glasses. Eager to shake hands with such a well-known personality. Morris told him how pleased he was to meet him and ushered Ken up the stairs to the shop's workroom.

Ken told Morris, "I don't usually deal in diamonds, this was a one-off favour I'm doing for an old school friend."

Morris said, "Yeah Paul, I had a call from him, he'd do anything for anyone, he's helped me out of a few scrapes in the past. I understand you have some stones for me, a few gems in need of cutting and polishing?"

Ken, "Yes, there are quite a few." he opened his briefcase and handed Morris the diamonds.

Weighing up the number of diamonds in the bags with his hands, "You're right this is quite a haul."

Morris tipped the stones out onto his worktop he stopped and took a step backwards, "Oh my god, he quickly threw a piece of cloth over it so none of the diamond cutters in the room could see it. He was now speaking in quieter tones. Do you know what you have here?"

"All I know is, they're uncut diamonds."

"Not just any uncut diamonds, these are from the Dominican heist. Do you know what this means?"

"No, but I'm beginning to think it means they're something special."

"Do you see the big one under the cloth?"

Ken lifted the cloth slightly and looked at the stones more carefully, "Yes, is it special?"

"My god it's the jewel in the crown of all uncut diamonds, this is known in the trade as (The Rhombus Diamond), it's the one stone every cutter would love to cut but would be far too scared to."

Ken lifted the edge of the cloth again and examined it even closer, "Why, what's the problem?"

"One false move, one slip, and it could turn to dust in their hands. If it's to be cut, we might have to go to Antwerp."

"Antwerp, what's so special about Antwerp?"

"It's the diamond capital of the world, and has been for several centuries, it's the only place you'll find someone skilled or mad enough to attempt to cut it."

"If it's so special, what's it worth?"

"Uncut it's worth about thirty million, cut and polished, who knows."

Ken was astonished at the amount, "May I suggest you make sure nothing happens to it."

"This place is safer than the Bank of England. Nothing's going to happen to it, or any of the other stones."

"Now, how long before they're turned into real money?"

"Ah, the folding stuff, the root of all evil."

"Yes, that's the stuff. How long?"

"The smaller ones, maybe a few days, maybe a little longer, maybe a week or so."

"Well, the sooner the better, there are some very anxious and unpleasant people waiting to get paid."

Lighthearted, "Should I put you on the unpleasant person's list?"

"You can put me on the anxious list, it's the unpleasant ones I'd be worried about. There's already a body count against these if you know what I mean."

"Yes, unfortunately, an all too common occurrence in this trade.

Luckily, I had a call from Paul last night, he said he'd be over tomorrow, he'll get things moving. He'll be able to tell me what he wants to do with The Rhombus Stone."

"I think I know the answer to that question. A bird in the hand thirty million pounds or a pile of dust. What would you do?"

Morris, "Well it's been a pleasure to have met you." They shook hands. Whereupon Ken immediately made his way out of the shop onto the pavement looking for a taxi to take him home to his house in South London.

CHAPTER 18.

SECRETS FROM CHARLIE.

The day after the brothers had dealt with the problem in the cantina, Paul and Angelica left the stables and went riding along the beach.

As usual, Angelica was in a good mood, "We'll soon have the money from the diamonds, and with those two idiotas out of the way we can make plans for the big fuck-off house you said we're not going to have."

With Paul laughing, "Big Fuck-Off house. You remembered, do me a favour, and don't tell your father I said Big-Fuck-Off house."

"Why not?"

"I don't think he'd understand, it's kind of bad language. Anyway, I've got to go back to England tomorrow. Do you want to come with me?"

"Oh, no thank you, I couldn't think of anything worse."

"Oh, thank you, you don't want to come with me?"

"Darling, I didn't mean I don't want to come with you."

"What's wrong with going to England? We could buy you a bigger ring."

"I went there once with my parents, I hated it, it was too noisy, too crowded and so dirty. No thank you, darling, anyway, you'll have a lot to do, I think you'll be better off not having to drag me around everywhere you go. Besides I have much to do here, remember I have a wedding to organise. As for the ring, we don't need to go to London. The one I have is beautiful."

Thinking about the chest of diamonds emeralds rubies and all the other gems they saw the other day they laughed.

"OK, I think you're right, but I've got one last trip and then I'll be back for good."

With a few hours remaining before Paul had to go to the airport, they spent a wonderful day together, they went from the beach to the waterfall and swam together in the beautiful cool clear water.

It was now Paul's turn to land at London Heathrow airport he was supposed to go to Hatton Garden, but first, he got in one of the firms cabs. He asked the driver to take him to the East London Hospital.

After finding out which ward Benjamin was in and walking for what seemed forever he finally found Benjamin's ward. Benjamin's whole body was in traction. Both arms and legs were in plaster casts. His head was bandaged showing only his eyes and mouth. Plastic tubes were coming out of his arms. He was connected to a drip with monitors beeping and flashing in the background.

Paul sat on a chair by the bed, and asked him how he was doing? Then getting to the real reason he came he said, "Are you some sort of a fucking maniac? Have you lost your fucking marbles?"

With muffled, but agitated speech, "You weren't around, what else could I do?"

"You could have waited until I got back. That would have been a fucking good start. It's a mystery to me how the fuck did you get out of this alive, you must be the luckiest bastard ever born."

"Lucky, you call this lucky? They don't know if I'm going to be able to walk again."

"Be thankful you're still breathing. Do you know the shit coming my way because of this?"

"I wasn't thinking."

"Too right you weren't thinking. You went way beyond not thinking. You dived into a cataclysmic pile of fucking dog shit and spread it so far the fuck around, you've put me right in it."

"Why? They know it was me who did it. You weren't to know what I would do. You weren't even in the country. Remember, they left me for dead."

"I introduced you to Charlie through my brother-in-law. I vouched for you now I'm in the shit." Then an idea came to him, "Did you say they left you for dead?"

"Yeah, I was tied to a chair, tipped over and left on the floor unconscious and left for dead for two-days. Why?"

"This could be your lucky day. If they think you're dead, they're not gonna bother with you again."

"What, you gonna tell them I'm dead?"

"I'm gonna hint at it."

"What you gonna do?"

"Paul eased the tension, "I was thinking of smothering you with a fucking pillow, but first, you do know, a chunk of your share of the diamond money is gonna have to go to Charlie? I'm probably gonna have to kick in some of my own money too. I'm gonna tell him, it's from me, but it's really gonna be your money."

"Whatever you say, it's gonna be worth it."

"I'd say it is, and you're still gonna come outta this with a nice few bob."

"What can I say, you got any other good news for me?"

"D'you, remember Angelica?"

"Yeah, the tasty one at the stables, the one who came up to the hotel."

Paul was pleased he remembered, "Yeah, we're supposed to be getting married. But it all depends on me getting out of the East End alive and not ending up like you."

"Well congratulations, I'm sure you'll sort it."

"Right, I'm off, I'll send you an invite. Where's the expensive bird of yours? Has she been in?"

Benjamin's body starts to convulse slightly with laughter, "Oh, don't make me laugh. It hurts too much."

"Why? What's happened?"

"Do you remember I told you she used to get a minicab to go and do her shopping for her?"

"Yeah."

"Turns out she was paying for the trips without using money. Know what I mean? Now she's fucked off with a banker." Starts laughing again. "Oh, it hurts."

"Must have had a bigger dick than you."

"Bigger pockets more like, at least the bitch has gone."

The door to Benjamin's room opened and in walked Jennifer, "Oh sorry, I didn't know you had a visitor."

Paul, "It's alright I was just leaving."

Benjamin had told Jennifer he'd had a car accident, "Jennifer's been visiting me ever since my car crash."

Paul caught on quick to Benjamine's injuries being due to a car crash. He spoke to Jennifer, "Yeah, terrible crash it was, he's lucky to be alive." He gave him a look. "Well, must go, lovely to see you."

A parting comment to Benjamin, "You get yourself better, I gotta lot of work to do and you've gotta get yourself back to work."

CHAPTER 19.

A DEAL WITH DADDY.

Meanwhile, back at the Dominican Republic, Angelica was at the family villa, sitting with her father El águila by the swimming pool drinking expensive chilled white wine out of expensive chilled crystal wine glasses. El águila told his daughter he was waiting for fifteen million dollars to be delivered, "Do you think five million will be enough of a wedding present for you and your young man?"

Angelica slowly finished her drink, thought about it and looked lovingly into her father's eyes, "I think ten would be better."

Laughing, "Just like your mother."

"Paul wants to build a big fuck-off house."

"What's a big fuck-off house?"

"I'm sure we'll know it when we see it. I think it means muy Buena casa"

"Some very strange sayings those English."

"So it's ten then?"

"Only seven and a half's mine the other half's for Manuel, it's the money from the treasure ship. I think you'll be able to manage with five."

They toast. "Five it is."

"But Papa, You'll be getting more next month."

CHAPTER 20.

IT'S ALL DOWN TO ERNIE.

After visiting Benjamin, Paul went to see Charlie. The pub had just opened, so Paul sat at a table, Charlie came over and sat with him. Paul pulled a package from the inside pocket of his jacket and put it on the table.

Paul, "There's thirty grand there, £20.000 of its Benjamine's all the money he had stashed away from his lighters, and as he won't be needing it anymore. I thought a little compensation for losing two men wouldn't go amiss, so I thought you might like to have it, and there's another £10.000 outta my pocket as a token."

Charlie said, "I take it the token's so you don't end up like silly bollocks?"

"Well, I was hoping for an outcome where I would be able to walk, talk, breath, and have the use of all my limbs."

Charlie was in a good mood but what he didn't know was, Benjamin was less than a mile away from him recovering in Whitechapel Hospital.

"Have no worries me old son, your family, you're safe, and I'm sure if sometime in the future I had a problem you'd be there to help me. Now you wouldn't say no, would you?"

Paul was a little hesitant, and a little bit more than nervous, "No, no no no-no-no. No, I'd never say no, it'd never cross my mind to say no to you Charlie."

So far, Charlie was pleased with his day, he had the news of Benjamin and the fact he was no longer with the living and therefore no longer a threat. He had been thinking, if anyone who had the bottle to gun down two monsters the way he did, and in broad daylight would be someone to be very wary of. And as he was thirty grand to the good and he hadn't had to lift a finger for it, "Well, it's all alright then, we're all sorted. Another beer before you go?"

Paul was now anxious to leave and get over to Hatton Garden and see Morris, he wanted to find out if Ken had been able to go through customs unhindered and see if he had delivered the stones, "No thanks, Charlie, don't want to overstay my welcome."

"For thirty large me old son you can stay as long as you like."

"Just glad it's all sorted, and you're happy with everything."

Paul was glad he only had a small drop of beer left in his glass, he finished it in one gulp, stood up and shook Charlie by the hand.

Charlie in a stern but friendly voice told him not to be a stranger.

Paul just wanted to get out of there, "I'll do my best." Walking as fast as he could without running Paul left the pub and jumped in the cab next to the driver and drove off on his two-mile journey to Hatton Garden.

Happy with the windfall Paul had organized Morris gave Paul the most joyous welcome. Inviting him upstairs to his office, he ordered tea, salmon sandwiches and asked Paul if there was anything else he would like.

Only interested in finalizing this diamond deal and getting back to Angelica as soon as possible he just wanted to get to the bottom line.

Morris told him he would get £6.000.000 for the smaller diamonds.

The deal was, Morris would then have them cut and polished and after selling them for a profit he would take the difference. The only problem was the Rhombus Diamond. Worth £30.000.000 as it was, and maybe three times as much if it was cut.

The question Paul had to ask Billy and Shaughn was whether they wanted to take the £30.000.000, or take the chance and have it cut and maybe end up with £90.000.000 three times the amount or if it went wrong, end up with nothing. Even before he went to the cab office he knew what the answer was going to be.

After another two-mile cab ride, ending up at the cab office in Bayswater, Billy, Shaughn, Paul, and Ernie were seated drinking tea and eating the usual custard doughnuts.

Shaughn was already there when Billy received a phone call from Morris, he told Billy he could get £3.000.000 from the insurance for the Rhombus Stone, but there was a problem. Seeing as the Rhombus stone was the centrepiece of the Dominican Republic jewel exhibition the insurance company put up a reward of ten per cent for it. They would have to come up with a plausible explanation as to how they had come to be in possession of it.

Paul told them Morris had intimated they could get £30.000.000 for it, but it would have to be a bent collector with deep pockets or a dealer he knew in Antwerp willing to cut and polish it.

So the consensus was to find the bent collector with £30.000.000.

Billy was finding it strange, "Why was there no fucker wanting to cut the thing. They all know where it came from. It's one of the most famous bits of jewellery in the world."

Paul said, "Morris said if they get it wrong they could smash it into little pieces. It would be like telling the Pope, if ever they found the Holy Grail, to smash it up."

Shaughn said, "I don't give a shit what's going to happen to it. We just need Morris to find some mega-rich punter with cavernous fucking pockets. Fuck the £3.000.000 insurance bollocks."

Billy, "In the meantime, we'll have Morris's £6.000.000 to divey up between us. Not too dusty." Billy then spoke to Paul, "I had a word with Morris, I asked him to polish one up and hold it back as a wedding present for your bird's ring."

Paul laughed, "I hope I don't get caught trying to smuggle it back into the country."

Billy, "Haha, yeah, talk about be poetic justice."

Paul had been thinking with all the work he's been doing, he now had a legitimate claim to be an equal partner in the firm. He started, "I've been thinking, I recovered the diamonds after they'd been stolen, I had two bent coppers shot, I got El águila to let the diamonds go through, I talked Ken into risking his carrier and carrying them to Morris for you, and then it was me who put you on to Morris to fence them in the first place, and all this single-handed. I think I should be getting equal shares."

Billy looked at Ernie, who in turn looked at Shaughn. Without even speaking, they all seemed to agree with Paul's summation.

Ernie was the one to speak, "You're right, you got it."

Paul is now slightly confused, and asks Ernie, "Sorry but how come you're in on this?"

Ernie, "Because the whole thing was my idea. I came up with the whole plan after one of the drivers told me about the exhibition."

Billy, "I just financed it."

"Cheers, now if I'm an equal partner, we still got a lot of work to do."

Ernie, "So what do we do now, just sit back and wait for Morris to produce?"

Billy, "What else can we do?"

Paul, "It'll be a nice bonus when it arrives."

Billy, "You'll be out there sunning yourself with your dusky young maiden."

Paul, "You can always come out for a holiday."

Billy, "You weren't there when we left, or should I say when we were booted out, we were told we were now, Pasona Non-Grata within the confines of that particular landmass."

"No, I explained to you before, those old bill are no longer with us, you'll be OK now."

Billy, "I'd rather not take the chance."

Ernie, "When's the wedding? I've got to book a flight."

Paul, "Don't worry mate there's a first-class ticket coming your way, and I'm having the cake made out of custard doughnuts just for you."

Billy, "Right if we've finished, let's fuck off and see Morris, and pick up our first instalment."

Paul to Ernie, "See you later mate."

Billy, Paul and Shaughn left the office and got into one of the cabs waiting outside. When they arrived at Morris's they were instantly buzzed in. Morris was sitting behind his desk. Billy, Shaughn and Paul took a seat.

Morris started by telling them he'd had an idea about the Rhombus saying, "What if Paul handed it in for the reward?"

Shaughn, "Do you mean they might up it to £30.000.000?"

Morris said, "I don't think we could get as much as thirty, but maybe we could get them up to £6.000.000."

Paul said, "I think I'm speaking for all of us when I say, I think we'd rather wait for the £30.000.000."

Not wanting to disagree or argue with them, Morris agreed to their request and said, "I think I have someone in mind, let me give them a call." He picked up the phone and dialled a number and waited.

Before the phone was answered he said to the group, "Let's see if they're willing to cough up £30.000.000 for the stone."

When the phone was answered and introductions were made, Morris reminded the person on the other end about a chat they'd had about a certain unobtainable stone from a certain place in the Caribbean, and if ever it came on the market he was to give him a call. Was he still interested in buying it?

Still on the phone, Morris gave a thumbs up to everyone in the room. A meeting had been arranged for the next day. Morris would take the Rhombus to show the buyer.

Morris put the phone down and pulled out a large brown leather briefcase and placed it on top of his desk. He opened it with the contents facing everyone. Inside was £6.000.000 of banknotes. "Here you go gentleman, as promised six million vodka vouchers."

Billy said, "We've got a bit of sorting out to do before we can divey this lot out, as we all know, there's been a lot of expenses."

Shaughn had been wondering if Dave should be given something, he knew what he had done, but after all, he was there in the jungle, and he was in on the original robbery. Putting it to the others wasn't going to be easy, but he thought it would prevent any reprisals, and after all, it was in his nature, he was a thief and maybe he just couldn't help himself.

He thought he'd save this little gem until they got back to the office.

Clicking the briefcase closed, Billy took a tight grip of the handle and told Morris he looked forward to hearing from him tomorrow, and if there was good news, then maybe they'd meet up after he had done the deal.

They left Morris's place, and whilst the others were going to make their way back to the cab office in Bayswater, Paul said he'd been travelling forever and he had to get home and get some sleep.

He told Billy to take care of the briefcase and arranged to meet up with them again at 10.00 am the next morning.

He took a cab home and the first thing he did was to make a phone call to Angelica, after telling her how much he was missing her and how much he loved her, he said there had been a lot going on and he wasn't sure when he would be returning but he assured her he wouldn't be away a minute longer than he had to be.

After a good nights sleep, a bath a breakfast of tea and toast, it was now 09.00 am. His cab arrived and after making a quick stop at the bakers for the firm's custard doughnuts he arrived at the office dead at 10.00 am. Everyone was already there waiting to get their share of the money.

The previous night Shaughn had made his thoughts known about cutting Dave back into the deal. After a long and tense conversation, it had been agreed for safety sake and to avoid any reprisals or vendettas against them, it would be prudent to give him his share less the cost of the forty diamonds he stole and a penalty of one hundred thousand pounds to be divided between Paul, Benjamine, Mike and Crazy Trevor for the shit he put them through at customs. And another one hundred thousand pounds each to go to Billy and Shaughn for not being allowed back in the country and missing Paul's wedding. They had called Dave the previous night and told him to be at the office by 10.00 am. Where things would be sorted out. But they didn't tell him it was good news.

Dave didn't understand what was meant by 'going to be sorted out'.

It could have meant a number of things. Going through his head was the thought they were going to get rid of him. After the shit he went through in the Dominican, what else could it mean? His first thought was a one-way trip to the pig farm?

When Paul arrived he had no idea of what he was about to be confronted with. Walking into the office holding up his bag of custard doughnuts, he was about to ask, "Who wants one?" But what he saw was Dave holding a sawn-off shotgun pointing at Billy, Shaughn and Ernie. As he entered he was now one of the targets. All he could say was, "What the fuck's going on?"

Dave was panicking. Answering Paul, "They're gonna do me in. They got me around here to do me in."

Billy said, "We called you in to sort things out, we were going to give you a share."

Dave was beyond being reasoned with. The multiple hits of cocaine and whisky he had been taking throughout the night had made him paranoid.

He wasn't listening to anything they were trying to tell him. Seeing the big expensive briefcase on Billy's desk, he screamed at Billy, "Open it."

On seeing the contents, he went wild, "You cunts, you got millions and you were gonna top me, well it ain't gonna happen, shut the fucking case, and hand it over, you cunts are getting nothing and if anyone tries to stop me I'll blow your fucking heads off."

Ernie asked quietly and politely, "Going abroad are we?"

Turning and spitting back at Ernie, "What the fuck's it got to do with you?"

"Just wondering, have a nice trip."

Shaughn, still trying to sort things out, "This is a bad idea Dave you shouldn't do it, you're making a big mistake, we were going to give you your share, well less the forty diamonds you stole and a fine for fucking everything up, just put the gun down and we can still sort things out."

"Bollocks, why didn't you tell me what you were going to do last night? You're all full of shit, you just want to keep the money."

Billy, "OK Dave take the fucking case, go on get out, go on fuck off, you're a wrong 'en you had your chance, but what Shaughn said was true, just do us all a favour and fuck off."

"You bunch of wankers, I've got the lot now and you've got fuck all." He turned, slamming the door behind him and he was gone.

Billy gave it a moment to make sure Dave had gone before he clapped his hands and started laughing. "What a fucking idiot, he just threw away about £3.500.000, and gave us an extra £1.000.000 each."

Paul said, "But he's just fucked off with all the money."

Billy took out a large holdall from the safe and threw it on his desk, "He didn't get all of it, I'd already taken out El águila's take, my expenses, he's fine, the cost of the forty diamonds he stole and the £200.000 owed to Paul's crew."

Paul was impressed, "How much for the diamonds?"

"I thought as he nicked 'em, £10.000 per diamond sounded about right."

"So there's about £4.500.000 in there?"

"Yep, and if we get £30.000.000 for the Rhombus thing, it's gonna be all ours thanks to Dave."

Paul, "He's gonna be thinking we're going to be coming after him, he'll either be very dangerous or he'll be forever looking over his shoulder, he won't have a moments peace. I don't trust him."

Shaughn said, "Fuck him, I tried to help him and that's all the thanks I got. Thieving bastard."

They all laughed at the hypocrisy of Shaughn's comment.

Ernie said, "If he's a thief, what are we?"

Billy gave Shaughn a large envelope full of money.

Paul thought it was now time for a cup of tea and custard doughnuts. "Anyone for a cuppa?"

Ernie thought Paul was right. The threat of a drug-induced Dave coming back for revenge couldn't be ignored, the threat had to be eliminated.

He pulled Paul aside, "I've been thinking about what you just said about not trusting Dave."

Paul agreed, "Yes I know, it seems senseless to leave him out there. But how do we know he's not going to pay a nutter to throw a bomb in here or have us picked off one by one?"

"Exactly."

"What're you saying, he's gotta go?"

"What do you think?"

"Oh shit," Paul thought he had just broken free from Charlie, and now unless he could get Mike to do it, he would have to go back into the lion's den and ask Charlie for another favour. God knows how much it would cost. "I do know some people who might be able to help, but it's gonna cost a few bob."

Ernie said, "If we can get him in time, he might still have the money on him."

"Fuck me talk about a rush job. I'll see what I can do. Give me the phone. Where do you think he's going?"

"Home first then Heathrow or Gatwick."

"Fucking idiot, I'd go to Liverpool, Southampton or any dock and get a boat to America, then a plane to somewhere like Mexico. He's got no imagination, he deserves to be topped. He's probably gonna make for Spain."

During this conversation, Paul had dialled a number and Mike answered.

"First thing I've got £50.000 for you."

"£50.000? I'm owed £25.000, not £50.000."

"There's a bonus in it for you."

"Who've I got to kill?"

"Get your arse up here to the cab office quicker than you've ever done. There's some serious shit you've got to sort out. And when I mean serious I mean terminal. Bring your passport just in case."

The phone went dead, and Paul put down the receiver, "He'll be here within the next twenty minutes. You'd better give me his £50.000 so I can give it to him as soon as he arrives."

A tense twenty, then twenty-two minutes, then twenty-three, then finally after twenty-four minutes Mike arrived. Paul took him aside and stuffed the £50.000 into his hands. "We gotta hurry, we've gotta stop some cunt from leaving the country. I'll tell you more about it on the way."

Paul had been given Dave's address, he lived in Baron's Court, some fifteen minutes away, on a good day. It was now 11.30 pm and the traffic around Sheppards Bush was heavy. They needed a car, so they took Billy's. Paul told Mike what had to be done, he asked Mike, "Have you got a gun with you?"

"After your frantic phone call, I not only bought a gun but a hunting knife and a machete."

There was one more thing Paul needed to tell him, "There's a huge bonus in it for you if you can retrieve the money. It's in a brown leather briefcase."

Paul drove as fast as he could through the traffic, but they arrived at the address just as Dave was driving away. They followed him onto the M4 motorway, it was obvious he was heading for Heathrow Airport. There was no way they could stop him on the motorway in broad daylight. They continued through the approach tunnel into the airport's Terminal-One car park. Because there were no spaces near his car, they had to go up a level. With too many people and cameras around, they were still unable to do the job.

Paul said, "You're gonna have to follow him inside and just hope he goes for a piss."

"What if he doesn't?"

"Fuck knows, we'll just have to cross that bridge when we come to it."

"We? He knows me I can't be seen in there with you, he'd recognize me?"

"OK, fuck it, you stay here if I'm not out in an hour you'd better come in after me."

An hour past and there was no sign of Mike. Paul left the car unlocked in case he had to make a quick getaway. He went into the terminal building to find Mike. Finding him he seemed agitated.

"What's the problem?"

"I've had to buy a standby ticket to Malaga. He's gone through passport control. If I don't get on his plane we're fucked. You're gonna have to come to the bog with me, I can't be carrying these weapons on board."

They made their way to the toilet, when Paul had a thought, "Fuck me what if you lose him at the other end?" He gave it some more thought, "I know someone with a car, I'll have him meet you, he'll be holding a card up with your name on it. But if he's not there, do your best. Right, give me forty of the fifty grand I gave you, you can't carry that much abroad in cash, and when you get through passport control buy yourself a holdall and some shirts and toilet stuff, you'll look too conspicuous with no luggage. Oh, and give Steve, the bloke you're going to meet, give him three grand and if he helps you beyond the car and the gun give him a couple more you'll be paid back, now let's get these weapons sorted."

Mike gave Paul the knife and the machete. "What about the gun?"

"I think I might be needing it, what do you think?"

"No, it's too risky, I'll get my man in Malaga to get you a new one."

"OK, but it had better work, and tell him to get one with a suppressor, I don't want some ancient fucking cannon."

"Right now give me your gun and go get on the fucking plane."

They left the quiet of the toilet and stepped back into the constant noise of the main concourse. A sign was flashing telling standby passengers for Malaga to report to desk number nineteen.

Paul was relieved, "Thank fuck, see you when you get back. And don't forget the briefcase."

Mike, in pursuit of his quarry, wandered off into the crowd.

CHAPTER 21.

GOODBYE MIKE.

With two large knives and a gun secreted about his body, Paul took a slow walk to the telephone kiosks. Going through his telephone book, he found Steve's number. Speaking with his friend in Spain, everything was organized and in place.

Taking a slow walk, back to the car he unloaded his cumbersome stash of knives.

Thinking he might find something of use in Dave's car, something in it might be of use to Mike. He was pleasantly surprised to find it unlocked, jumping in the driver's seat he opened the glove box, there was nothing in there except the logbook and an old oily rag. On the passenger seat was a small piece of screwed up paper with the word agent and a phone number written on it. Brilliant, he thought, if Mike loses him the agent will be able to tell him where Dave is.

And as he had the logbook, he might be able to do something with the car. Not wanting to get stopped by the police on the way back he stayed well within the legal speed limit. On arriving at the cab office he explained to everyone what was happening.

Billy started, "So now we've gone up in the world, now we're not only transcontinental diamond thieves and smugglers, we've got an international assassin on our books?"

Paul, "Well if it works it won't hurt to have another one and a half-million in the kitty. By the way, Dave's car's in terminal one, sitting on the second floor with the logbook in the glove compartment."

Billy gave a raucous laugh, "We've got millions floating about, and you want to start fucking about with a two grand motor?"

"I thought Kim, (One of the drivers he likes) could do with an upgrade, he's a good bloke. Let's give it to him."

"How about the keys? What's he going to do about them? Did you see the entry ticket?"

"Yeah it was tucked up on the sun visor, and we can get Pete the key bloke to go down there with him to sort it out. If it costs Kim fifty or even a hundred quid to sort it out, I don't think he'll be too disappointed."

"OK Robin Hood, get him in and give him the good news."

It was gone 3.30 pm before Morris called, His buyer was interested but only wanted to pay £20.000.000 for the stone.

It was Billy who had taken the call, and he told Morris to tell his punter to stick his £20.000.000 up his crooked fat arse, and as they'd just been given £6.000.000, they were in no hurry to sell.

They could wait until he found a buyer willing to pay the right price. Of course, Morris didn't know about Dave nipping off with over a million pounds of their money. But now in a more serious and menacing tone, he told Morris, on the other hand, he had people in his group who wouldn't think twice about killing someone for not standing by their word. He finished by telling him he would be with him in Hatton Garden in about thirty minutes, he hoped by the time he got there, he would have some good news for him.

Paul had been thinking, and said to Billy, "How about you give me Benjamin's fifty grand and I can carry on up the hospital afterwards and give it to him?"

Opening the holdall he took out two large envelopes, "Here's Benjamin's, it's the one with the B on it, and here's yours, the one with the P."

Billy asked Ernie to get Kim to take them to Hatton Garden, it would be a good time to give him the good news about Dave's car. Ten minutes later Kim arrived and Paul, Shaughn and Billy went outside and got into the cab.

As planned they told Kim about the car. He was obviously over the moon.

Paul suggested Pete the key guy and gave him all the information he needed to go and pick it up. When they arrived at Morris's shop Paul rang the bell and they were again instantly admitted. Once inside Morris's office, Paul politely asked Morris, "Hello my friend, do you have any news for us?"

"I'm sorry Paul, he looked at it, he really wants it, but you know how things are, people always try to beat the price down."

Shaughn wasn't in any mood to be messed around, he jumped in, "You tell your fuckwit punter if he doesn't stop fucking us about there'll be consequences. We're thieves, criminals and we don't take kindly to being fucked about."

"I understand you're upset, but it's just the way these people are. I will call him and relay your concerns."

Shaughn was still in full-on mental mode, "Concerns, I'll give you fucking concerns I'm in the mood to smash this fucking place to pieces and you with it.

Now if the cunt don't get his arse here sharpish with thirty mil there's gonna be more than fucking concerns, do you understand?"

Paul stepped in to calm Shaughn down, "Shaughn, Morris is doing his best, he's already given us six million. It's his punter who's the problem, Morris is a stand-up guy you gotta calm down."

"It's alright Paul, I can understand how your friend's felling, let me make a call and explain the situation." Morris picked up the phone, dialled a number and waited. "Hello my friend, yes it's about the special diamond, not unexpectedly, your offer of £20.000.000 has been rejected, plus it has caused somewhat of an unpleasant atmosphere, not to mention a threat of violence. These aren't the type of people to doublecross, you told me if the stone came on the market you would pay thirty million for it. It's on the market, and now you're playing with them. I'm telling you you're playing a very dangerous game with my life."

Listing into the phone again, "Yes I know they don't know who you are, but it's not going to take much for them to get it out of me. I need to tell you, I'm no hero and at this very moment I have one of them waving a gun in my face threatening to deprive me of my kneecaps."

This was when Shaughn took the phone from Morris and spoke in the broadest Northern Irish accent he could muster, "Do you know who you're fucking with? You British cunt you." Whoever was on the other end of the phone went silent, "I want the money here by tomorrow or you'll be getting a visit, have I made myself clear?" Not waiting for a reply he slammed the phone down.

Paul was the one who introduced these people to Morris and he felt responsible for their behaviour. "Morris, I'm sorry about all this, this isn't what I expected." Then to Billy and Shaughn, "Can we go? I need to get to the hospital."

Leaving, Billy told Morris, "I'll be back tomorrow and if the money isn't here I'll be asking you for the name and address of the buyer."

Outside, Paul got in Kim's car and they made the one-mile journey through the busy early evening rush hour traffic to the hospital. Asking Kim to wait for him, Paul went up to Benjamin's ward and gave him £20.000. Not being able to physically take the money from Paul. Benjamin asked Paul to put it in his bedside draw. Paul had already taken the £30.000, he had given to Charlie, from Benjamin's £50.000.

It was now evening in Malaga, Mike walked through the exit doors of the airport, he had eyes on Dave, and as planned Steve was waiting with the sign with Dave written on it.

Dave was pleased to see his name, "Hi, Steve?"

Steve was a forty-year-old crook who had retired to Spain. He was from South London, and an old friend of Paul's "Yes mate, Paul said you needed some help."

Still keeping his eyes on Dave, he directed Steve towards him, "We need to make sure we don't lose sight of the prick in the green shirt, where's your car?"

"It's nearby, we'll be able to see if he picks up a hire car."

"Let's see if he goes to a car hire counter."

They watched Dave go to the Alamo Car Hire counter and start filling out the hire forms.

Steve said, "OK, let's go get the car and wait by the Alamo car hire compound."

Now outside, sitting in Steve's car they waited for Dave to come out and pick up his car. While they were waiting, Mike gave Steve three thousand pounds, and Steve gave Mike a very nice Walther PPK with a suppressor, and a clip holding ten rounds. They didn't have to wait long before Dave drove out. They followed him up into the hills for thirty minutes. Stopping at a small, but a well-appointed villa with a magnificent view of the coast. Waiting for him outside was a woman with a clipboard, she gave him some keys, it was obvious she was the rental agent.

Mike thought it would be best if they came back the next day. He thought it would be easier when Dave was on his own, settled in and relaxed.

Steve drove Mike to a four-star hotel in Marbella, After booking in and freshening up they meet again at 8.30 pm to go out and have something to eat.

They drove into Puerto Banus and after eating in the spaghetti house, they went into the nearby Piano Bar. With seven thousand to spend and being on an all-expenses-paid trip to the Costa Del Crime, Mike was in his element.

It was a plush dimly lit place with blue and pink neon strip lighting around the bar and walls. As the night wore on and with Mike spending a lot of money he attracted the attention of the bars world-famous high-class hookers. From there on in it was Champagne and anything else the girls wanted. He said goodbye to Steve about 03.00 am and with two girls in attendance he took a taxi back to his hotel.

The night was going great, back in his hotel room with more Champagne, room service, tiny salmon sandwiches and two, half-naked long-legged girls bouncing on his bed. Up until one of the girls found Mike's gun and started waving it around pretending to shoot at everything.

Mike saw the danger and said, "Put it down before someone gets hurt."

They were the last words he ever spoke. The gun went off blowing a hole straight through his heart killing him instantly.

It was 11.30 am when Steve pulled up outside Mike's hotel. He was confronted with half a dozen police cars, obviously, he had no idea what had happened.

After parking his car, he went into the hotel reception area and asked one of the girls what was going on. Being told there had been an accident and one of the guests had been killed, he asked who it was, and how it happened.

Being told it was Mike and the fact he had been accidentally shot by a girl he had in his room, Steve made a hasty exit and never looked back.

The next thing he did was to call Paul.

It was 12.45 am in the UK when Steve explained what had happened. Taking advantage of the situation, he told Paul he hadn't been paid. After all, Mike wasn't in any position to contradict him.

Paul told him not to worry, he would get the money over to him. Again, even whilst he was speaking to Steve, Paul was formulating a plan.

CHAPTER 22.

A SPANISH FLY.

Not wanting to ask for Charlie's help again, meant going over to Spain and doing the job himself, his mind was racing with thoughts of plane trips if taken on commercial airlines could easily be traced back to him.

"Are there any private airstrips near you?"

"Yeah, plenty, how do you think all the drugs get in?"

"I'm gonna be coming on a private plane, I'll let you know when and where."

"OK mate, talk to you later."

He put the phone down, picked it up again and dialled Billy, "We've got to meet, it's urgent and it's not something we can't talk about on the phone. An hour later Billy was at Paul's ringing the front doorbell.

During the hour waiting for Billy, Paul had been busy. He had called his friend Crazy Trevor if anyone had the skill and know-how to get them in and out of Spain without being detected it was him.

Trevor told him he knew a guy with a plane and he could do the job but it wouldn't be cheap. He'd have to put new decals on the plan, fuel alone would cost thousands, flight plans would be another problem but nothing he couldn't navigate around. Trevor thought it was all good fun. He said they might even have to land on-route. It was going to be a tricky and expensive trip.

Paul had already written off the brown briefcase with £1.500.000. in it. As far as he was concerned Dave was paying for his own funeral.

He'd already told Trevor money wasn't a problem.

Trevor said, "I should be able to sort things out and get you there by Thursday, would two days be OK?"

"Perfect, if you need some money today, come around my place tonight about eight, I'll give you some money, and some more good news, you can pick up the balance of your Dominican money."

"Wilco, squadron leader, twenty hundred hours it is TTFN." The phone went dead.

Paul boiled the kettle and made Billy a cup of tea.

After telling him his plan, Billy said, "I'm coming."

Paul wasn't prepared for Billy volunteering, he thought he just needed the go-ahead for spending all their money, "Really?"

"Two's gotta be better than one."

"Right then I'll weigh in with some cash for crazy bollocks tonight, and we'll be off some time Thursday. Oh, and we're going to need new ID's. And don't bring your car to the airport, get a cab."

"Right then, it's quarter past two, we've got our friend at Morris's to deal with today. He's had enough time to sort things out, let's get up there and see if he got the money?"

"I'll come up there with you, I'll get a cab back."

"Right, I told Shaughn to meet us up there at 3.00 pm."

They arrived at 2.55 pm. Shaughn was already there, and after ringing the bell they were shown into the shop by one of Morris's assistants. Normally Morris had impeccable manners, but this time, as they entered his office he didn't get up from his desk. They could see from his demeanour something had upset him.

As Paul was Morris's friend, he thought it best he was the first to speak, "Morris me old mate. You look terrible, what's the problem, or need I ask?"

Shaughn who went ape on poor old Morris yesterday started in on him again, "It looks to me like your buyer isn't going to stand by his word."

"I'm sorry my friends, I didn't mean to put you through this torment."

Billy thought he might as well put Morris out of his misery, "Morris, The pressures off you, we're not blaming you for what this prick's doing."

"He's raised his offer to twenty-five."

Billy said, "Normally I'd accept, but this bloke's been such a cunt he needs to be taught a lesson."

Shaughn asked, "You're going to give us his name and address aren't you?"

"You know I can't."

Paul was trying to help Morris, "He wasn't asking, please do yourself a favour, tell him."

"I'm leaving the room, please don't look in the folder." There was a folder sitting on his desk, as he stood, Morris, tapped it, and left the room, "Remember it wasn't me who told you."

Paul stepped forward and flipped open the folder, "Fuck me, look who the fuck it is."

Without seeing who it was, Shaughn said, "I don't give a fuck who it is, I'm gonna give him a fucking good hiding."

Paul held the folder in the air, "I think you'd better come and take a look."

Billy was the first to see the name, "Fuck me, I threatened him yesterday. How the fuck are we gonna get outta this?"

Shaughn, "let's take a look." When he saw the name he sat down. "Oh fuck."

Billy agreed, "Yeah, what do you two think we should do?"

Paul put the folder back on the desk, "Take the twenty-five and be thankful we're not all banged up in the tower."

Morris came back in his office and sat down at his desk, everyone was sitting in silence, "Am I to take it you have now reconsidered and would like to accept the new offer?"

All three answered at the same time, "Yes, Yeah, Yeah, we think it's a very fair offer."

"A certain person living not too far from here will be very pleased."

Billy asked, "Is there any way you can say how sorry I am for threatening him yesterday?"

"Why would I? You don't know who the buyer is. Do you?"

Again they answered in unison, "No, no idea, not a clue."

"So now our business is concluded, may I assume you have no objections to waiting a few extra days for your money, I hope it won't inconvenience you in any way."

Billy answered for the others, "It's OK, we're busy the next few days, we can wait till Monday."

As they started to leave, Paul hung back to speak to his friend Morris, "I can only apologize for their behaviour. But I won't be responsible for what might happen if the money isn't here on Monday."

Outside, Shaughn was a little annoyed at being kept out of the loop and wanted to know, "What is it were going to be so busy doing we can wait until Monday for the money?"

He calmed down when Billy told him what had happened to Mike in Spain, and they'd all have to go out there by private jet to finish the job.

Paul added, "I'll have the details by tonight, but we might be leaving as early as tomorrow afternoon."

Shaughn was happy, "I've got my passport in my car."

Paul said, you're not going to need it, Billy's getting us false ID's."

Paul then told Billy, "We're going to need those ID's, by tomorrow morning. Plus we're gonna need photo's, there's a photo kiosk down the road in Gamages. Let's go."

After they had their photo's taken, Billy and Shaughn went back to the cab office and Paul went home.

On the telephone to Angelica, talking about their wedding plans and Angelica wanting to know when Paul would be coming back. All he could tell her was, he hoped everything would be sorted out within the next two weeks. The front doorbell rang. Telling Angelica how much he loved her and how much he was missing her he hung up and answered the front door to Trevor, he was half an hour early. He had managed to arrange the plane, the flight plans, the airstrips and fuel, in fact, he had arranged everything needed to get them in and out of Spain undetected.

Paul used some of the £40.000 he had taken from Mike and gave it to Trevor. They had to be at Biggin Hill private airport by 5.00 pm the next day. It was an airport used during the second world war by Spitfire and Hurricane fighter planes and was the perfect location for what they needed.

After Trevor left, Paul called Steve in Spain and told him their plans and arranged a time he thought they would be arriving.

Paul used the next day to help Kim get Dave's car from Heathrow airport. He helped him sort out the logbook and paperwork. This took him up until 3.00 pm when he went home, he picked up a holdall with a few things in it and got Kim to drive him the twenty minutes to Biggin Hill airport.

Meeting up with Billy, Shaughn, and Trevor in the reception area, they showed their newly acquired false ID's. The ID's, because of the constriction of time had cost Billy a small fortune. After having their bags checked and waiting only five minutes to be released, they went out into the late afternoon sunlight and saw Trevor beckoning them to come forward and board the plane. Not expecting such luxury they were spectacularly impressed with the interior of the plane. After being seated and strapping themselves in, Trevor got permission for take-off and hit the throttle. They were off.

Once in the air, it wasn't long before they crossed the Channel and flew over Northern France, then onward out into the Bay of Biscay and over into their destination country of Spain. Not as fast as a commercial airliner it was a while before they reached Madrid and skirted Granada, finally making their descent into a small airfield seventy miles out from Malaga.

As arranged, Steve was there to met them. But not knowing exactly what time they were going to arrive, he had been there for over two and a half hours. On arrival, the first thing Paul did was to hand him six thousand pounds, three for the last job, and three for this one. The good thing was, Paul was still using the remains of the £40.000 Mike had given him at the airport. By now all they wanted to do was find a hotel and get something to eat. There would be no time to party in Puerto Banus, besides the fewer people who saw them or knew of their existence the better. They were not there for the fun of it. This was a serious time for them, and every hour away from the UK would be an hour they could not account for. They wanted to be out of there within the next twenty-four hours.

As he was unable to retrieve Mike's gun, Paul had asked Steve to bring another two with him.

Not knowing if they were going straight to Dave's rented villa, or if they would be going there in the morning, he had bought two Sig Sauer P229's 9mm handguns with suppressors with him.

Needing to have Trevor on standby, Paul took the phone number from the airport's public telephone and told him they wouldn't be going out. He could either go into town with them and stay in a hotel or stay with the plane and be ready to leave as soon as he got a call.

As the night was going to be free he thought about the hotel, but he thought seventy miles into town, and then seventy miles back by cab in the morning would be a bit much. He decided to stay at the airport with a sandwich and stay with the plane.

The others left with Steve and after fifty miles stopped at a modest hotel outside of town. Arranging to come back at 09.00 am, Paul told him to bring a small shovel back with him, he'd find out what it was for the next day.

Steve needed another three thousand pounds for the weapons he'd supplied. Paul gave it to him. It didn't matter to him how much he spent, he'd be getting it all back again as expences, it was just more money from the £40.000 stash he'd taken from Mike at the airport.

Steve took the money and went home.

It was an uneventful night, after booking into the hotel, they took a stroll and found a small bar still serving food. During their meal, it was decided Billy and Shaughn should be the one's to do the deed. They felt like it should be them as Paul was more brains than brawn and it fitted in more with their line of work rather than Paul's. Not because they were killers, it just seemed it was the right way to go.

After they had made the decision, they went back to the hotel and slept. Had Paul been selected to pull the trigger the next day, he doubted he would have been able to sleep, but with such a burden removed from his shoulders, restless though it was, he was able to snatch a few hours sleep. Breakfast was served from 07.30 am and by the time Steve arrived at 09.00 am. they were all ready to leave.

Paul sat in the front of the car leaving the two shooters in the back seat. It took them an hour to drive to Dave's villa, where Billy got out and tried the wrought iron gate.

It was locked and with high walls on three sides, there seemed to be no way in.

Paul noticed the house next door had all its window shutters closed, and there was no car in the drive. He got out of the car and went around the side of the house. Finding the perfect way in, he used a ladder he found lying at the side of the house. He was then able to climb up and see over the seven-foot wall into the back garden of Dave's villa. The ground on the other side was only three feet from the top of the wall giving easy access.

It was a bright sunny morning and Dave was sitting by the pool, he was reading a magazine, with a cup of something hot sitting on a white cast iron poolside table next to him.

Paul climbed back down the ladder and beckoned Shaughn over to him. He was followed around the corner by Billy. Paul told them what they would see when they climbed the ladder, he then stood back. Shaughn went up the ladder first, followed closely by Billy. Entering next doors villa and having only a three-foot drop onto soft grass they made no noise, Dave was still unaware of his impending doom. Paul gave it a minute and then climbed the ladder. He wasn't going into the garden, he was just peeking over the top of the wall. He saw Billy and Shaughn slowly and stealthily creeping up behind Dave.

Still seated Dave heard the click of the safety catch being released on Billy's weapon. Hearing the click he turned and stood up knocking the side table over and spilling his drink onto the concrete surrounding the swimming pool. Seeing Billy and Shaughn standing in front of him, both holding pistols with suppressors on them.

"What you doing, what you gonna do?"

Billy was calm, "You must be joking, you've robbed us twice, you fucked off with our money, what did you think was going to happen?"

"I was only joking, I was gonna send your shares back. Fella's we've known each other long enough, we go." He never got to finish.

Shaughn didn't say a word, he fired four shots into Daves body, Billy followed suit and fired another four shots into him. He staggered back falling into the swimming pool, there was a massive splash, both Billy and Shaughn looked down staring into the disturbed water, blood was snaking and oozing out of the lifeless body, the water had calmed down, it was obvious he was dead, the water surrounding him was turning a pinky red.

Billy said, "What else did he expect?"

Shaughn looked down into the ever-expanding red of the water, "What a cunt. He had it all and threw it away."

Paul was still watching, he said to himself, "Had to be done. The bloke was a fucking idiot." Then he shouted (Not too loud) over to the others, "Don't forget the briefcase and pick up the shell casings."

Going inside the villa it only took Billy a few minutes before he emerged holding the prize. After picking up all eight of the spent shells. Something Paul had told them to do the night before, they left the same way as they entered.

Steve had already turned the car around. Not wanting to be found with two murder weapons in the car, they drove to a spot they had picked out on their way to the villa. It was less than a mile from the villa, they got out and threw the spent shells into the undergrowth, dismantled the two pistols and buried them in various holes. Fifteen minutes later they were on their way again. They needed a telephone to call Trevor.

Earlier, on their way to the villa, they passed through a village square with a bank with a phone kiosk outside. They stopped and Paul made a call to Trevor telling him to get the plane ready, they would be with him in the next two and a half hours.

Arriving at the airport and being waved through onto the tarmac by Trevor, Paul gave Steve another four thousand pounds got out of the car and told him the invitation to his wedding would be in the post.

It was getting on for 2.30 pm by the time they had wheels up.

Now their attention turned to the payment of The Rhombus Stone and what they were going to do if the payment wasn't made. Shaughn said, "The same thing that just happened to Dave, I don't give a fuck who he is, he's not going to fuck me over."

They opened the briefcase, Billy took out £25,000 and handed it to Trevor. Paul had already given him £10,000. They divided up the money into four, and after all calculations, they each had just under £350,000. Billy said he would look after Ernie's share.

They all knew Shaughn wasn't joking, and they would all be drawn into the fight should payment not be forthcoming.

But for now, it was something they would only think about if it happened. Trevor wanted them to divert to the French alps and take the weekend off and go skiing, but after an hour-long conversation, they managed to convince him about the need for their anonymity at this precise moment in time it was more important than a weekend skiing. It was getting dark by the time they arrived back at Biggin Hill.

After they had landed they went straight into the airport building and ordered a local cab to take them the five-mile journey to Bromly railway station where Billy and Shaughn then changed cabs and took one of the firm's cabs back into London.

Taking Billy and Shaughn's ID's from them, Paul said he would burn them. There should be no clues, trails or links to who they were or where they had been, hence the precaution with the changing of the cabs.

Paul walked down the high street into a local mini-cab office and took a cab home.

It was Saturday morning and there was still nothing in any of the national newspapers about a dead body floating in a Spanish swimming pool. But the one thing which caught his eye was a report of "A private jet flown by a young English pilot who had to make a crash landing half pissed, off-piste in the ski resort of Val d'Isere. The report also read, "The pilot was unhurt but the jet was a total right-off." He had to laugh and said to himself, "Trevor you are one crazy bastard."

CHAPTER 23.

A SCREW UP AT BUCK HOUSE.

With Benjamin still in the hospital, it was obvious, Paul wasn't going to get his weekly round of golf. But still feeling like a game, he drove to the golf course and found a group of guys who he had seen before, it seemed whenever he was there, they were there. He introduced himself and was invited to play with them, he had a great day with them. The guys were friendly, and after a few beers in the clubhouse bar, he told them about his up and coming wedding and said anytime they wanted they were welcome to come over to the Dominican for a free round of golf.

On his drive home, he was looking forward to calling Angelica.

He was on the phone for over thirty-minutes and told her he had El águila's money, and if everything worked out on Monday, he would be back by the middle of the week.

Sunday came and went, with Paul doing some washing and ironing. He spent the evening with a few friends down the Clifton Arms, his local pub. After watching TV and going to bed around 11.45 pm he spent a restless night thinking about what might happen if the money wasn't paid. He was glad when the sun came up and it was finally Monday morning, and time to get things moving.

Waiting until 10.00 am Paul made a phone call to Morris, "Good morning Morris, I want to start by apologizing for the behaviour of those people I bought around last week."

"You've been a good friend, I don't hold their behaviour against you."

"I take it the money hasn't arrived."

"I've been contacted by the buyer who says he would rather make payment through his bank rather than have the hassle of coming up with such a huge amount in cash."

"If we go through banks he will know who we are."

Morris laughed, "And you don't think he knows who you are already?"

"It hadn't crossed my mind."

"My boy, tell your friends they are just crooks, they are not as clever as they think, they are so far out of their league they should just do as they are told, take the money as instructed and be grateful."

"I think I need to make a phone call and pass your message on."

"It's not my message, please emphasise it to your friends, It's a message from the top and when I say it's come from the top, it just don't get any higher. Do you understand?"

"I'm all for using banks, but don't you think if I put seven or eight million pounds into my high street bank, it would raise a few eyebrows?"

"An appointment has been set up for you and your friends to attend Coutts Bank in the Strand at 5.00 pm today. When you get there, they will set up offshore accounts for the three of you."

"Why so late? I thought banks close at 3.00 pm."

"Do you think your friends are the type of people who would be seen in the Queen's bank during working hours?"

"No I guess you're right, but there will be four accounts needed not three."

"I'm sure they will be able to accommodate you with an extra account."

"And let's not forget my commission to be deducted from the £25.000.000. I'll be there to guide you through the process."

"Right, I'll see you later, I'd better get off and make some phone calls to the others."

There was no point in making multiple phone calls and explaining everything over and over again. Paul made just one call to the cab office and told Ernie he was coming up at 1.00 pm, and to make sure Billy and Shaughn were there. He told Ernie to tell the others he had good news about the money.

There was a problem, Ernie said, "Shaughn's gone off half-cocked, he's gone down to the palace, he said he's going to get into the stables by going in through the kitchen entrance."

The stable entrance was near the palace kitchen in Buckingham Palace Road, a place the cab drivers knew well. The palace kitchen had an account with the cab firm, and Shaughn had planned to hide in the stables, he knew at some point during the day his target would come down to see his horses.

Paul made a call to Morris to tell him to warn Shaughn's quarry. Unfortunately, Morris had gone out and wouldn't be back until later, and there was no way of contacting him.

Paul had to make a quick decision, what was he to do? He had to get over there and stop Shaughn from making a complete balls-up of the whole thing. It took Paul less than thirty minutes, it was the fastest he had ever driven uptown.

He flew in through the palaces kitchen courtyard entrance and screeched to a halt.

He had been there many times as a cab driver and knew Oscar the Head Chef very well, but as much as he wanted to rush straight into the stables, he got a grip of himself and walked calmly into the kitchen.

He saw Oscar hard at work, and asked him if he had seen anyone from the cab firm, Oscar said he hadn't, and asked why would he have seen anyone? He hadn't called for a cab.

Paul made up an excuse, "He was supposed to be coming in to re-assess your account. Would be OK if I waited for him?"

Oscar told one of his staff to make Paul a cup of tea and give him some biscuits, "No problem, take a seat."

Paul was itching to get into the stables. He didn't rush, but he did hurry over the tea. Chatting to Oscar whilst he was working, acting cool, but inside praying the mark didn't come down to see his horses before he had time to get into the stables and stop Shaughn from doing something catastrophic. He knew Shaughn must be in there somewhere. He casually mentioned, whilst he was waiting, "Would it be OK if I went in and took a look at the horses?"

Oscar had so much to do, he gave Paul free rein to do whatever he wanted he just wanted to get on with his cooking.

Entering the stables Paul could see a row of at least twenty beautiful black shiny horses stabled on either side of a long straw lined floor. The stable doors were all painted with a high gloss black and had gold painted ironwork and gold painted handles. He could see two men working at the other end, he supposed they were Guardsman, 'Oh great he thought, two bloody great soldiers and he's trying to find a crazy Irishman about to commit the crime of the century, a crime the British government would no doubt be willing to bring back hanging for.'

Shouting at the two Guardsman so Shaughn could hear, "Have you see a little Irishman in here?"

One of them answered shouting back, "No we haven't seen anyone, we've only been here ten minutes, he might have been and gone."

Still hoping Shaughn could hear him, "OK, thanks, I just wanted to tell him his wages have arrived."

"Lucky him."

"Yeah, he must be worth millions now, lucky bastard."

The soldiers both laughed, "That'll be the day." And they went back to cleaning out the stables.

Turning around, he was about to start looking inside the horse boxes.

Shaughn was now standing in front of him. He was putting a pistol back in a shoulder holster, "Do you mean the money's been paid?"

"Yes, now let's get the fuck outta here before he comes down and catches us."

"He wouldn't know who we are, we could be cab drivers taking a look at the horses."

"You dumb fuck, he knows exactly who we are, I spoke to Morris this morning and he knows everything. Come on let's go. Oh by the way you've got to go in the kitchen and tell Oscar because they're such good customers, the cab firm is lowering their rates. It's your excuse for being here. Now go on fuck off in the kitchen and tell him. Second thoughts, I'll come in there with you, and then we've got to get to the office."

In the office, with another box full of custard doughnuts. Billy was sitting at his desk Paul and Shaughn were standing, making the tea. Ernie came in and joined them, "Well what's this good news you've got to tell us?"

"At five o'clock we're all going to have £6.25 million less Morris's commission put into individual offshore bank accounts. We've got to go to Coutts bank in the Strand at 5.00 pm."

They had a few hours to spare and a few more doughnuts to eat before going to the bank.

Billy asked Paul, "What are you going to do with your money?"

He said, "I'm going to buy a golf course in the Dominican Republic. When I played Playa Grande the pro told me the course was in the hands of the Bank and they wanted \$3 million dollars for it. Then I'm gonna build a luxury hotel and make it one of the worlds premier golfing destinations."

Paul asked Billy what he was going to do, "The first thing I'm going to do is to sell the cab firm. Then I'm going to buy a Blue Bentley and life membership to an executive box at Chelsea Football ground."

Asking Shaughn, he said, I'm going to buy a brand-new Aston Martin Convertible, and then a big fuck-off Catamaran and sail around the Caribbean, I might even drop in and see Paul. Oh yeah and a big fuck-off house."

Ernie said, I have no intention of retiring and I've made no plans. I like being a controller. I might treat myself to a new house and take the wife on a world cruise. Billy, how much do you want for the cab company?"

Billy said, "Mate if it wasn't for you I wouldn't be up six and a half million. The cab firm's yours, but I get free cabs rides."

Ernie took Billy's hand in both hands and shook Billy's hand, he was a little emotional, "Thanks mate, you got it, free cabs, but don't take the piss."

They all gave a little chuckle at Ernie's comment.

"It's alright mate, I'll have my Bentley I don't suppose I'll be overdoing it."

It was now 4.30 pm, they took Paul's car and made their way along Bayswater road, down Park Lane, around the front of Buckingham Palace, giving a little wave as they passed, and along The Mall into Trafalgar Square and into the Strand.

Once inside the giant black glass-fronted bank, three people were waiting for them. Morris was one of them, they were escorted into a ground floor boardroom, where they were offered drinks ranging from Champagne, foreign imported bottled beer to water. They were seated in large leather padded chairs. Sitting on either side of the table, papers had been prepared and placed in front of each of them.

Paul knew he wouldn't be able to carry almost £8.000.000 million in cash through customs, he had decided to send El águila's £800.000 and his own money to the Dominican via his new offshore account.

They were given credit cards, contact numbers and detailed information on how to use their accounts.

They left the bank in a daze. The realization they were now all multi-millionaires was slowly creeping upon them.

Inside Paul's car on their way to celebrate at the Savoy hotel was something they had dreamt about. In their previous lives, they were the ones dropping off their privileged passengers at the opulent doors of London's top hotels. But this time they were the ones going inside.

Stepping out of his car and handing over his keys, a feeling of euphoria came over Paul, it was as if a ten-ton load had been lifted from his shoulders. He had overcome so many obstacles this was the culmination of all his hard work.

By the time they climbed the gentle slope up the steps towards the American Bar, it was 6.45 pm. Walking passed the giant black highly polished grand piano, they arrived at the bar.

As it was a cocktail bar and they didn't know exactly what it was they wanted. Usually, they would start with a beer or three before going on to shorts, they asked the bartender what he would recommend for a celebration. He recommended they start with the bars signature Champagne cocktail and then work their way through the menu of the hotel's coast to coast cocktails.

At the end of the night, Ernie told them, "As I'm the one who started the whole thing and as I am now the owner of the cab firm I want to pay for the drinks." He proudly produced his newly acquired Coutts World Silk Card.

No one argued, they still hadn't come to grips with how much money they were worth.

Billy called the cab office for two cars, left a good tip for the barman.

Paul thought it would be a good idea for him to get acquainted with five-star hotels, and booked himself a room for the night.

CHAPTER 24.

ROCKETS DO THE JOB.

At 9.00 am the next morning Paul remembered something he was told the day before in the bank. He waited until after breakfast and called Coutts Concierge and let them book his flight to the Dominican Republic.

He called and ordered a cab, and it was 10.45 am by the time he arrived at Benjamin's bedside. He told him he was going back to The Dominican on Friday and he wanted him at the wedding. But Benjamin didn't know how long he was going to be in the hospital, or how long before he would be discharged?

Asking a passing nurse if she knew the answer to the question, she took a look at the chart hanging off the end of the bed, "It looks like some of the plaster will be coming off next week."

Paul wanted to know, "When will he be released?"

The nurse laughed, "You make it sound like he's in prison, we usually say discharged. I would say another two weeks at least. And then there's the physio."

"If I didn't look like something out of the Mummy's Tomb we could have had a double wedding."

Surprised, "I didn't know you were getting married."

"Neither does she, I haven't asked her yet."

"You're talking about Jenny, right?"

"She's been great, I never knew she was so?"

"Great?"

"Yeah, she's great, better than the other money-grabbing bitch."

"When are you gonna ask her?"

"When I get outta here, I've gotta buy a ring first."

"Don't worry about a ring, I'll get someone in to see you. They'll bring you a few to choose from. You do remember what it was we went to the Dominican for?"

"Yeah, but it looks like I'm gonna miss the wedding."

"Don't worry, you can still get married out there, leave it to me I'll sort it all out for you."

Paul had three hectic days of packing, sorting out his house, trying to work out what to take and what to throw away. He left his car in the garage. His parents could use the car and the house when they were in town. He had already been down to Yeovil to see them, and give them a set of keys to the house and the car and told them there would be a First Class airline ticket in the post. He was going to give them £1 million, but he was saving it as a surprise until they were in the Dominican for the wedding. He said his goodbyes and told them he'd see them in a couple of weeks.

Friday morning arrived and with a large suitcase, a holdall and his golf clubs, the car he had arranged through Coutts arrived to take him to the airport and a new life.

His life had changed, and he was now getting used to his new five-star lifestyle. This was the third flight he had been on flying first class and he was loving it. On arrival at Punta Plata Airport, he was first off the plane and first through passport control, and with the diamond from Billy tucked away in his golf bag he was slightly apprehensive as he approached the customs officers, he walked through the 'Nothing to Declare' Customs lane. Being in such a hurry to see Angelica he hardly noticed the officers stand to attention and salute him, he passed them, turned the corner and his heart sunk, she wasn't there. Why had they saluted him? Was this a sign of sympathy? Had Angelica been injured? Was Angelica alright? Had something gone wrong? Or was the salute just a sign of respect because Angelica's two brothers were standing there in police uniform?

"What's happened? What's wrong? Where's Angelica?"

The first brother Matías, "She safe, she's OK, she's back at the villa."

The second brother Sebastián, "She wanted to come, but El Jefe said it would be safer for her to stay at the villa."

"Safer why what's happened?"

Sebastián said, "We've been having trouble with Una Pandilla, a gang from the south, we haven't yet put a stop to their movements."

Guessing what Sebastián meant by "*Putting a stop to their movements*" he thought back to the previous two police officers from the south and what happened to them. "So you're here to escort me back to the villa?"

Matías said, "It would be more than our lives are worth if we let anything happen to you. Well, it's what Angelica told us."

"Yeah, it sounds like something she'd say. OK, let's go."

As they walked out of the building towards their police car the brothers flanked Paul. They used three police cars, with the front car

travelling at sixty to seventy plus mph through the narrow country roads, they followed and kept up with the lead car sandwiched by the third car. All three cars had their blue lights flashing, but only the lead car had its sirens blasting out.

Halfway to El águila's villa, a car appeared in their rearview mirror. At the speed they were travelling it shouldn't be there, but it was, and it was keeping up with them. There was no way they were going to allow this car to follow them to the villa, and maybe have a chance of following them in through the open gates.

Matías picked up the shortwave two-way car radio microphone and told the police in the other two cars, on his command and with their guns drawn, they were to make an emergency stop and confront the car behind.

Another half mile further on is a place where the road bends to the right and then rises, for a brief moment they would be out of sight from the tailing car, this would be the perfect spot for them to put Matías's plan into action, and put a *permanent stop to the gang from the souths movements*.

Unbeknown to the following car each of the police cars were manned by ex-army personnel and each car was carrying an RPG '*rocket-propelled grenade*' As they approached the bend in the road Matías gave the order. The first car came to a screeching halt turning slightly to its right, the third car did the same but turned to its left, the middle car carrying Paul and Sebastián stopped in a straight line, Sebastián told Paul he wasn't to move, he was to keep still and lay on the floor in the back of the car.

As the police cars stopped the back doors facing the oncoming threat opened. The police on the left and right were immediately in position holding their "*rocket-propelled grenade launchers*" Not wanting to blow a civilian car to pieces, maybe one which could have had youngsters in it, and they were just having fun trying to keep up with the speeding police cars, they waited until it stopped and waited to see if they were aggressors.

In a cloud of dust, the suspect car came to a screeching halt. Three young men got out carrying machine guns and immediately started firing at the police cars. It was the last thing they ever did.

The ex-military policemen, both let loss with their RPG's. There was an orange fireball, the car lifted five feet into the air and disintegrated, the three young men and their driver were now nothing more than a red mist. The heat from the two explosions and the close proximity of the two blasts caused the police cars to rock on their wheels.

Matías was standing in the middle of the road holding his machine gun with one hand and tilting his cap back on his head, looking at the carnage, "I think next time maybe we only use one rocket launcher?"

The other police were cheering and laughing, Paul hadn't listened to his instructions and had seen it all, he was now standing in the middle of the road with the rest of the men, turning to Matías, "Now there's something you don't see every day, well not in Croydon anyway."

Sebastián told the police in the third car to stay with the carnage and he would send a truck out to clean things up. The other two police cars took off and drove the remaining few miles to the villa. Approaching the gates Sebastián used his remote. As the gates opened, he could see six armed guards, they gave him a wave and the two police cars drove through and up the tree-lined driveway to the villa.

Waiting for them was El águila, Catalina and of course Angelica. There were a few armed guards, but they stayed back out of the way.

El águila and Catalina greeted their sons with enthusiasm, whilst Angelica threw herself into Paul's open arms.

El águila wanted to know how things went at the airport, Catalina wanted her boys to go inside and have something to eat and drink, Angelica just wanted to hug and kiss Paul. After things had settled down they all went in through the house to their favourite plushly decorated and comfortably seated poolside area.

Drinks were served, then Sebastián and Matías told El águila what had happened.

The answer to the question El águila wanted to know was, "Are the gang from the south now terminado?"

Sebastián told him, "Well it's the end of four of them, we will have to enter into more subtle negotiations tomorrow morning to make sure they have no more interest in our business."

Paul asked, "Can I come?"

Everyone went silent, they were all looking at Paul in amazement. El águila asked, "My son, do you speak Spanish yet?"

Surprising everyone, "No hablo español pero estoy aprendiendo." Meaning 'No but I'm learning.'

They all clapped and said he was doing very well.

Angelica wasn't happy with Paul putting himself in danger. She knew his offer was one of bravado, she knew he wanted to show he wasn't afraid and he wanted to be a fully accepted member of the family.

She was right he didn't want to be the husband of Angelica, the pussy from England who was just riding along on the skirt tails of El águila's daughter.

El águila could see what was happening, "I know you want to help, but they will be going in, in strength as police officers. There will be plenty of opportunities for you to prove your worth, but in the meantime, I would like my daughter to have a wedding with a man who hasn't been used as target practice. Excuse me for one minute, I have to go and get something." He left them by the pool and went inside the house.

Angelica told Paul, "You have no reason to prove yourself."

El águila was back in minutes holding a gift-wrapped present for Paul, "I was going to give this to you the day of your wedding, but I think with all the bad things going on it is more appropriate I give it to you now." He handed Paul the present.

He immediately opened it. Inside was a wooden box, and inside the wooden box was a brand new Walther PPK, a leather shoulder holster, three boxes of ammunition and a cleaning kit. Paul was overjoyed, thanking El águila and then telling Angelica, "Now you'll have to teach me how to use it."

With the gang from the south still out there, it was too dangerous for Paul to stay in a hotel, so the decision was made he would be staying in one of the villas guest rooms.

The brothers left to deal with the carnage they had left earlier. El águila and Catalina went to bed leaving Paul and Angelica alone by the pool.

The next morning, Angelica wasn't allowed to go near her stables or into town to have her fitting for her wedding dress, so they called the dressmaker out to the villa, and as Paul wasn't allowed to see the dress until the wedding day, he left the villa with El águila, and with two bodyguards, they drove down by the beach where Paul was instructed in the use of his new present. El águila tutored him in the finer points of using his pistol. He showed him how to load the magazine, strip it down for cleaning, and just as he had shown his daughter he showed Paul how to control his breathing when under pressure, showing him how to squeeze the trigger and not to jerk it. They used two of the three boxes of ammunition, leaving one box for personal protection. They would have to order some more.

Paul told El águila about the Rhombus the millions he now had and his Coutts offshore bank account. He told him he had put the £800,000 he'd got for the diamonds, in his account for safekeeping, and all he had to do was give him his account number and he would transfer it, of course, less his percentage.

El águila was now even more convinced how much Paul loved his daughter, and with almost £8.000.000 in the bank, he knew he wasn't after her money.

Asking where they were going on honeymoon, Paul said, he thought the Tortuga Beach Resort sounded really nice, and as it wasn't too far to go, he asked if he could use El águila's yacht and crew for the trip? He said he would, of course, pay the fuel and the crews wages.

El águila wanted to know if Paul had any plans as to what he wanted to do after the honeymoon?

He told him, "The last time I was here I played golf at Playa Grande, I was told by the pro the bank had Playa Grande Golf course up for sale."

"What do they want for it?"

"\$3.000.000 million, I'm also going to build a five-star hotel there and a house overlooking the ocean for Angelica."

"Ah, your big fuck-off house? Tell me what is a big fuck-off house?"

"It's a local saying, it just means a big house, something like yours, you've got a big fuck-off house."

"Well, when you do build your big fuck-off house, you must have many guns secreted around it. This is a dangerous country, and you've put yourself directly in the firing line for kidnappers and thieves. You must be vigilant at all times, treat Angelica as your most precious possession, and her safety the most important task in your life."

"She's pretty good at protecting herself, I remember the night we first met."

"I know she's a power to contend with, but on to the other subject. If you're going to buy this golf course, you're going to need some help at the bank."

"Maybe if I took a lawyer and an accountant along with me?"

"You want I come with you? I might get the price down."

"Perfect, I'd like to get things started before the wedding, any chance you could book an appointment at the bank and bring along a lawyer? Maybe it would be a good idea if I had a meeting with the lawyer and accountant before the meeting at the bank."

"It's Monday tomorrow, leave it to me. Have you told Angelica about this?"

"No, I want it to be a surprise, I want her to come with me and pick out a piece of land for the house. I'm also going to need planning permission for the hotel and the other houses I want to build."

"You're going to need many licences."

"What I want is a walled community, and have many security guards."

"Right let's get home, it looks like I've got a lot of telefono calls to make."

They arrived back at the villa just as the wedding dress had been put away and just as the fitter lady drove out of the gates.

It wasn't long before the brothers, Sebastián and Matías arrived. During the day, they had been in touch with the police down in the south of the island who told them they had raided the villa of the same gang who had been causing trouble with El águila's family.

At dinner that evening the brothers told the family they had raided the villa of what was left of the gang they encountered the night before.

The outcome was similar to what had happened to their friends in the car. The difference being they left one alive to tell his friends in the south what a bad idea it would be to try and muscle in on El águila in the north.

El águila made a toast to the brothers and said, he thought it would be safe for Angelica to go back to her stables.

They talked about the honeymoon and Angelica loved the idea of going to Tortuga by boat and staying in the famous Tortuga Beach Resort.

El águila hadn't yet said yes to them using his yacht. He had another idea, it would be his wedding present to them both.

CHAPTER 25.

A PLACE WITH A VIEW.

The next day, Paul and Angelica went to the stables, they spent the day working happily hand in hand with each other. At 14.30 Paul noticed a lone man he had seen earlier he had been wandering near the outer road, but this time he was closer walking near the perimeter fence. Remembering what El águila had told him about Angelica's safety being the most important thing in his life. He went to his car and retrieved his Walther, put it in the waistband of his trousers and covered it with his shirt.

Returning to work with Angelica they saw one of the Dominican's large rats go into the barn, chasing it Angelica had her Walther PPK out and was looking to terminate the pesky rodent. After a few minutes it was obvious they had lost it. They were coming together from opposite sides of the barn, but when they were six feet apart they were confronted by the stranger, the one who had been hanging around. He was standing in front of Angelica pointing a pistol straight at her.

Straight away Paul screamed out at the man, "Hey cunt, I'm over here." The man distracted by Paul's loud voice gave Angelica the split second she needed to raise her pistol and shoot the intruder square in the chest. In an instant, and as El águila had shown him Paul dropped down on one knee, at the same time drawing his pistol and with controlled breathing, he fired two rounds, hitting his target square in the chest. He was dead before he hit the ground. With four holes in his chest, and

a complete look of amazement on his face he pitched forward.

Paul and Angelica with their guns hanging down by their sides were looking deeply into each other's eyes, for them, time seemed to stand still, the spell was broken by the ranch hands rushing into the barn, their pitchforks raised wanting to help or know what was happening.

As it was their sister's ranch, Sebastián and Matías were the police officers assigned and sent to investigate the incident.

It turned out they recognized the dead man as the one they'd let go and was supposed to be on his way down south delivering the message to his boss's about what a bad idea it was to mess with El águila's family. A message he should have delivered but never would. The reality of the message hit home hard, it was one he learnt the hard way.

During the evening, the four of them had a quiet dinner, El águila and Catalina could see the profound effect the day's events had had on Paul and Angelica, the trauma of the day was evident, after the wine, the brandy and coffee, a decision had been made, El águila and Catalina had discussed it in private, they thought it best the couple should not spend the night alone and even though it went against their belief, they allowed them to spend this one night in the guest house together. Tomorrow night they were back in separate rooms.

Before everyone separated and went to bed El águila took Paul aside and told him he had organized a lawyer and an accountant and he had an appointment at the bank at 11.00 am the next morning.

The night was perfect, it was just what Paul and Angelica needed. They were in each other's arms, they were together and it was all they needed. The night had nothing to do with sex, they were just happy to be alive feeling the warmth of each others body next to each other, this was love and they knew it.

The next morning Paul told Angelica he was going into town, he said he had to arrange something for the wedding. Angelica took it as an excuse to go into town and buy her a present.

Knowing the threat from the south had been neutralized, but not wanting to take any chances, El águila sent a guard to the stables with Angelica.

The day before, El águila had searched the phone books, and as there were only twelve banks in the Republic it didn't take him long to find the bank which held the papers for the golf course. El águila drove his Rolls Royce Corniche into town, and at 11.00 am on the dot, Paul and his three companions entered the bank where they were immediately escorted to the bank's board room.

He told them he wanted to buy the Playa Grande Golf Course but not at the \$3.000.000 figure they were asking. Going in at a starting figure of \$2.000.000 and expecting a big knockback, to his surprise, the bank manager and the executive in charge of the project merely told him they would take it under advisement and let him know if the offer would be acceptable.

After going through the terms and conditions, and an hour of beating around the bush as to what they called tea money, the banker's conditions, were accepted.

One of the bank's conditions was, there had to be a minimum of five villas built and no more than fifteen. One of which must be let out to the bank at a nominal fee of \$50 per year. The other condition is the land remained as a golf course. Not letting on this was exactly what he wanted, he was very happy with all of their conditions, but before the conclusion of the meeting, Paul had a condition of his own. Before he would sign anything or make any payments, he needed to have planning permission with all permits and licences in place, enabling him to build a luxury hotel a new clubhouse, fifteen villas, and he needed them all in place by the end of the week. Having El águila there helped, the banker's knew who he was and they knew he was a serious man and not someone to try and take advantage of.

They said they would do their best to accommodate Paul and his wishes. Paul needed to let them know just how serious a man he was, he slid a Coutts post-dated cheque over to the manager, dated for the coming Saturday. Made out to cash for \$50,000, he wrote on the back "Tea Money".

They concluded their business, and whilst walking out of the building with the executive in charge, Paul was told, "There will be a lot more tea money needed to accommodate your wishes."

Nodding his acceptance of the situation, he told him, "Get the property for \$2.000.000 and you'll see a lot of tea money."

After they had left the bank Paul asked El águila if he knew of an architect capable of producing a five-star hotel? Or would he be better off flying one in from the USA who'd already built one?

El águila thought for a moment, "let me make some phone calls. I know we have many beautiful five-star hotels on the island, I must be able to find someone."

"I'm taking Angelica to the golf course tomorrow, I want her to pick out a piece of land for her villa."

Half laughing, "Ah, the big fuck-off house."

"Yes you got it, but don't tell her, I want it to be a surprise."

During the evening, they are having dinner, El águila found it hard to keep Paul's secret, but the conversation turned to diamonds. There were now five diamonds gifted to Angelica, one from the treasure his friend Manuel had hauled up from the deep, one from Billy back in England, two Manuel had given to El águila and one Paul had taken from the original stash.

El águila asked Angelica, "What have you decided to do with so many diamonds?"

"I think the beautiful one from your friend Manuel would make the best ring and the one from England would make a beautiful pendant."

Paul was wondering about the diamond he had given her, "How about my diamond?"

"I know it's not polished, but it's the most precious to me. I want to keep it nearest to my heart, we must think of a way we can make it special."

Paul said, "How about when we build our villa we have it concealed somewhere only we know where it is? We can call it our secret heart diamond."

Catalina had a small tear in her eye, "Oh, how beautiful, Angelica you are so lucky to have such a romantic man in your life."

Paul said, "I also thought we could call the villa "The Secret Heart" how would you like Secret heart for the name of our house?"

Angelica got up from her seat rushed over to Paul and kissed him hard on the lips, an outburst of emotion never seen by her parents before.

Surprise by their daughter's outburst of emotion, El águila and Catalina looked at each other. Catalina said, "I think she likes the idea."

The following day, Paul drove Angelica to Playa Grande Golf Course. He took her down the drive leading to a large building where the greenkeepers and gardeners store their tools. The secret to why Paul wanted Angelica to see this part of the golf course was hidden on the other side of the building. They walked around it and saw the most magnificent view.

Looking out from the clifftop high above the golf course's immaculately manicured emerald green grass, they had a perfect view over seven of the golf holes bordering the crystal clear turquoise blue-green ocean. There were three golf holes to their right, and another four were in front of them and to their right. Like many other days, the sky was a cloudless azure blue and Paul thought the spot they were standing on would be perfect for the Secret Heart Villa.

Angelica loved it, "I now name this place, The Secret Heart villa. But the ugly shed, she has to go." They laughed.

"Don't worry darling, it's going to the other side of the golf course, you'll never see it again." He then showed Angelica where he was going to build the five-star luxury hotel and if she was interested where the tool shed was going to be, it would be behind the new

clubhouse. Then he showed her where the other villas he wanted to build would be.

He said, "I want a Heliport on top of the hotel and a luxury boat dock down below the cliffs, but I'm going to have to build an air-conditioned lift up the face of the cliff so the players and hotel guests could get up to the golf course."

Angelica was very impressed with all of Paul's plans, but at the same time worried he wouldn't have enough time for her or her little stables.

On their way out, Paul showed her where he wanted the security guards building to be.

The same afternoon the bank called El águila's villa and left a message. They said they were unable to procure all the building permits and licences he had requested, but the good news was the purchase price of \$2.000.000 had been accepted.

Paul called them back and thanked them for all their hard work, but as he had said in the meeting he would not be going through with the purchase until everything was in place. He wanted to finalize things before his wedding which was now only eight days away.

Telling him they would do their best, but again they asked him if he would consider buying the property before his needs were met?

His reply was a swift and sharp, "No, how do you expect me to make money? The reason why the last people went broke is because they were relying on green fees, You can't survive on green fees alone. If you can't get the permits then let's forget it. Or do you need more tea money? Just let me know."

Paul told El águila about the phone call, he didn't ask and he didn't want to know how it was done, but by Tuesday the following week and \$250.000 worth of tea money later everything was in place.

The big day had arrived, another meeting at the bank. This time Sebastián and Matías were there in uniform, El águila and Catalina were there, Angelica was with Paul. The boardroom had Champagne and Hors d'oeuvres laid out around the room, there was Paul's Lawyer who had translated and notarised all the documents for him, his accountant, and the architect he had hired for the job of building his house and the new clubhouse was there. There were a few people Paul hadn't seen before. After the signing ceremony and the passing over of the \$2.000.000 cheque, the Playa Grande Golf Course was now Paul's.

He was still looking for the architect qualified enough to build the hotel.

The next day Paul's parents and his friends were due to arrive for the wedding, but before he went to the airport to meet them, he went to the golf course with Angelica, a builder and his architect. Specifying they wanted a two-story, five-bedroom house with lots of sea view balconies and an infinity pool the colour of the ocean. He told the

builder he wanted the Greenkeepers tool shed moved and the clubhouse to be started on at the same time as his villa.

CHAPTER 26.

A NIGHT OUT WITH THE BOYS.

His next task for the day was to go and meet his parents and friends at the airport. He had sent Morris, Ernie, Trevor, Steve, Benjamine and his parents first Class Airline tickets, but knowing Benjamine wouldn't be able to travel, he wasn't expecting him, and after Trevor's skiing trip which ended in almost disaster, his hopes of seeing his crazy face appear through the arrivals gate were very low. He hadn't heard back from Steve in Spain and there was no answer from his phone. He could only imagine what had happened to him, he would try his phone again in the next few days.

There was a chauffeur-driven limousine waiting to take his guests to a five-star hotel only ten minutes drive from El águila's villa. His parents, however, would be travelling with Paul and Angelica in the convertible Rolls Royce El águila had lent them.

As they had all travelled first Class on the same plane, they all came out from the customs hall together. It was a frantic meeting.

Morris, Ernie and Paul's parents had never seen Angelica before. His parents were bowled over by her beauty, she was wearing a long yellow flowing cotton dress and her hair was long black shiny and free, they immediately took her to their hearts. Morris and Ernie kissed her on the cheek and shook her warmly by the hand.

Trevor already knew her, and high fived her, hugged her and also giving her a kiss on the cheek.

Surprised to see Trevor, Paul pulled him aside, "I never expected to see you, what happened?"

"It cost me all the money you gave me to get out of my little alpine scrape."

"So you never got to go skiing?"

"No, I paid them all I had to get to the wedding. How could I miss this? I wasn't going to miss it, even if I had to steal a plane to be here I wasn't going to miss your wedding."

"Can you promise me you won't do anything too crazy while you're here?"

"I'll do my best."

Laughing and giving Trevor a hug, "Come on I've got a limo waiting for you. I won't see you tonight I'm taking my parents to meet Angelica's parents, but I'll see you at 10.00 am in the morning."

With all the luggage secured they went outside. Whilst the guys went to the Limo, Paul pushed his parents' trolley to his car.

Walking out to the car Paul whispered in Angelica's ear, "Where've you got your gun?"

Being playful as she usually was, "I'll let you find it later."

His friends were chauffer driven to the hotel. And as it was on the way to El águila's villa, Paul followed them. Stopping at the hotel, Paul told his friends he was going to take his parents to meet El águila at his villa he didn't know what time he'd be bringing them back. So they might as well just rest up. He said his goodbyes and reminded them he'd be picking them up at 10.00 am to show them the golf course and where he was going to build the hotel.

Leaving them he drove the Rolls Royce to the villa. Without Paul's parent's knowledge, there was a car with four bodyguards following them.

As they approached the villa Paul used the remote to open the gates. As they started to open another car coming towards them from the opposite side of the road swung in front of them and drove in through the gates. Paul slammed on his brakes, by the time Paul's four bodyguards arrived from the car behind, the guards at the front gates had showered the intruder with machine-gun bullets. Paul and Angelica both jumped out of the Rolls and with his Walther in hand, he calmly walked up to the stationary car and put a bullet through the rear side window into the head of the nearest passenger, carrying on he put another bullet into the head of the driver. He turned, saw Angelica standing by the car, kissed her on the cheek and carried on back to see if his parents were OK. They were transfixed, at what had just happened, and not sure if they believed what they had just seen, Angelica and Paul jumped back into the car, he asked his parent's if they were alright.

They said they were OK, so he put the car in gear, waved at the guards and drove around the stricken car and carried on up to the villa.

El águila and Catalina had heard the shooting and had come out to see what was happening. El águila was holding a pistol.

As the car stopped he said, "I think my parents need looking after."

El águila and Catalina opened the passenger doors allowing Paul's parent's to get out, they introduced themselves apologizing for the unconventional welcome into their house.

Hearing two more gunshots, El águila had to excuse himself and ran off in the direction of the front gates followed closely by Paul.

Catalina and Angelica ushered Paul's parents into the house. Concerned for Paul and El águila, everyone was on tenterhooks until they returned.

In high spirits, El águila returned with Paul, announcing to everyone, "My sons have arrived and told me the four in the car were the very last of those pests from the south."

Confused by almost everything they had seen and happened during the past twenty minutes, Paul's parent's were offered and accepted drinks.

Sitting down at El águila and Catalina's favourite spot they were once again out by the swimming pool.

The drinks came strong and fast. They were there for thirty minutes having everything explained to them. Paul's mother just wanted her son to go back to England. His father understood how things were and could see how much in love Paul was with Angelica. He knew his son wasn't going to leave the Dominican.

El águila then told them how Paul had already become a part of their family, "When I first met young Paulo I knew he was the one for Angelica, look at him, strong handsome and with such integrity. You should be very proud. Even before he had his wealth I had promised Angelica \$5.000.000 for their happiness, and now just look at him, he owns the most beautiful golf course on this island and he has plans for a luxury hotel. Twice he has been there beside my beautiful daughter and twice he has saved her life."

At this Angelica tried to intervene, "Papa?"

"I know you can look after yourself my darling, but it is still nice to have a strong man by your side." He then returned to talking to Paul's parent's, "We took Paulo into our family the first night we met him. Did you know he dived at a man holding a gun? He did this with no fear for his own safety, he did this to protect my beautiful Angelica."

Paul's father said, "Yes it sounds like Paul, always there always trying to help everyone."

El águila tried to lighten the atmosphere and raised his glass, "As we are to be family joined by marriage, please toast with me, to Paulo and Angelica, I am sure their wedding will be blessed and a joyous one, one we will all remember, and may we have strong and healthy grandchildren."

Paul's mother was still concerned, "As long as there isn't going to be any more shooting while we are here?"

Just then Sebastián and Matías arrived. They were in their police uniforms.

El águila could see Paul's mother was still not able to comprehend what was going on, "These are my two wonderful son's, soon to be chief's of police. They assure me there will be no more killing, and if you are hungry, I do believe our food is ready."

With everyone in a much calmer frame of mind, and with drinks still in their hands, they all moved inside for dinner. During the meal, it was suggested Paul's parent's stayed at the villa, at least for one night.

With protestations from Paul's mother about not having any toiletries or clean clothes, she was reminded her things were in the back of the Rolls Royce and would be in her room and they would be ready for her within the next ten minutes.

Yielding to El águila's wishes she agreed it might be better for them to stay the night. They finished their meal and went back outside by the swimming pool. It had been a long day for everyone, and they all had a lot to do before the wedding. Everyone had one more drink and went to bed.

The next morning Angelica had her last fitting for her wedding dress, after which she was going into town with her mother to do some last-minute shopping. Inviting Paul's mother who gladly accepted. They also had to pick up Paul's wedding suit.

Paul used the Mercedes to pick up his friends, there would be plenty of room in it for the five of them. On the drive to the hotel, Paul thought last night's shooting would be better kept under wraps, he didn't want to upset the rest of the group. His father agreed. They arrived at the hotel and found all his friends waiting for them in the reception area.

Their night had been uneventful. After they had dinner and a couple of drinks at the bar they all had early nights.

They all climbed into the plush leather seats of the Mercedes and were driven to the golf course.

Trevor had played golf at the Playa Grande golf course on his last ill-fated tip. Wanting to play again, Paul said he would sort things out for him, but he couldn't play, he had to go to the airport at 3.30 pm to pick Ken up.

Arriving at the golf course, he showed them where the hotel was going to be built, then from the beautiful piece of land where he was going to build his villa he took them to the area on the other side of the golf course where he was going to build the other villas telling them they could each pick out a piece of land for themselves. It was 12.15 pm by the time Paul had finished the tour, telling Trevor if he still wanted to play golf, he would have to play on his own. Reminding them they were going out on his stag night to a flamenco and merengue dance show later.

After sorting out the clubs, cart and caddie for him, he waited to see him tee off, telling him not to play too slow, he would send a car for him at 4.00 pm.

After taking Morris, Ernie and his father back to their hotel he drove to the airport, picked Ken up and took him to the same hotel as the rest of the guys.

Ken had just finished booking in and was just leaving the reception area when Trevor arrived back from golf.

Paul introduced him and told Trevor, "This is the bloke you'll be going out with tonight, let me warn you, if you want to pick up any crumpet tonight, you'd better get in quick 'cos if he gets a sniff he'll be in quicker than a rat up a drainpipe."

Paul left them and went back to the villa to see Angelica. But before he was able to reach Angelica, El águila caught him and told him he would be going out with him and his friends to the stag party. Pleased at the prospect of spending time away from the villa with him, they left the villa at 7.45 pm and taking three cars with them they were driven to the hotel. With everyone in the hotel bar and all in good spirits, they were looking forward to the night's entertainment. After one more quick drink, they left the hotel and were driven to the nearby five-star Merengue Club where they were treated like kings, the seating, the food and the service was first class. The dance show was phenomenal and they were even encouraged to participate. The first to jump up was Ken, closely followed by Mike and Trevor. Morris and Ernie graciously declined. One of the girls eventually persuaded Morris to get up and try his hand at the Merengue.

With the girls trying to get everyone up, El águila pushed Paul onto the dance floor telling him, "This is a dance of passion Paulo, you must be ready for tomorrow night."

Paul was somewhat stiff at first, but loosened up and tried to dance. El águila sat in his chair clapping, drinking and laughing at Paul's efforts.

The night went well, everyone enjoyed themselves. El águila had a good time staying a little aloof and distant from the guys, but whenever Paul looked over at him, he could see he was enjoying himself. After his dance class Paul took it easy, he didn't want to overdo things and let himself down in front of El águila or his father, not to mention he didn't want to feel like shit on his wedding day.

The guys didn't notice, but their drivers were three of El águila's armed guards positioned around the club. Even though they had been told there was no more trouble expected they still had orders to keep an eye out just in case.

At 10.30 pm Sebastián and Matías showed up in uniform. No one in the group knew who they were, or what was going on, but when they found out they were El águila's sons everyone relaxed and were relieved they were friendly and everything was OK.

Trevor, who by then had had quite a few drinks, came up with, "Fuck me if we'd have known the old bill was on our side we could have driven here ourselves."

As it was the night before the wedding, Paul had to stay at the hotel. Arrangements had been made earlier in the day for Angelica, Catalina and Paul's mother to leave his suit, shirt, shoes and everything he would need for the wedding at the hotel.

CHAPTER 27.

THE BIG DAY.

The next day, Paul had breakfast with his friends, he took it easy, went for a swim and at 11.00 am he went back to his room and started to get ready for his wedding. Ernie who was going to be his best man visited him in his room and helped him with his tie and cuff-links. Paul told Ernie he had a special surprise for him. But it was at the villa.

Paul went in one car with his parents to the villa, whilst the rest of the guys followed on in a white stretched limousine.

Over the past two days, the villa and its grounds had been converted into a fantasy wonderland, with white trellises, pink ribbons and rosettes everywhere. The wedding ceremony was to take place on the villa's private beach. Looking down from the villa there was a red carpet leading down in between the white and pink covered chairs and the floral arch where Paul and Angelica would declare their wedding vows to each other.

The day was perfect, it was warm, sunny and cloud-free. At 11.55 pm Paul was in position wearing his new white suit, white shirt, light pink tie, and white shoes, standing with Ernie at the front of the aisle next to the priest.

The previous night Angelica had eight of her friends over to stay. They opened presents, drank a lot of Champagne and played in the swimming pool until about 01.00 am.

At 08.00 am Angelica's mother woke her up giving her plenty of time to have her hair and makeup completed by professionals hired for the day.

But first, breakfast and thanking her friends for all their presents, they toasted the beginning of the day with Buck's Fizz, Bellinis, Mimosas and scrambled eggs with smoked salmon.

At exactly 12.00 o'clock the wedding music started to play. Four of Angelica's girlfriends dressed in light pink bridesmaids dresses accompanied her down the aisle. Her father was with her he looked happy and proud. But all eye's were on the most beautiful bride you could ever imagine. Angelica's dress was a white snug-fitting dress with a low front and long sleeves, it was made of tulle material to show off her slim figure. She looked radiant, Paul could hardly catch his breath, looking at Angelica and drinking in her beauty, he could have never imagined the dust-covered girl he first met at the stables could ever have looked so beautiful as she did that day.

As Angelica drew closer and finally stood by his side, he whispered into her ear, "You look so beautiful I can hardly breathe."

She squeezed his hand, "Do your best, you're going to need all your breath later tonight."

He relaxed a little and squeezed her hand back, "Don't worry I'll be OK by then."

With their vows taken, they exchanged rings, and after they kissed, everyone clapped as they made their way back down the aisle and into the main body of the villa.

The photographer needed them all lined up with their parents, and then with the bridesmaids, then on their own until everyone had their pictures taken with the bride and groom. By now all the guests had been given Champagne, leaving Paul and Angelica free to mingle for a few minutes until they were all called into the main room for the serving of the wedding banquet. After they had finished their meal, and with the speeches and the cutting of the cake out of the way, Paul made a signal to one of the servers who went away and bought out a much smaller cake and placed it in front of Ernie. It was as he had promised him a long time ago back in London, Paul had had a custard doughnut cake specially made for him. With everyone clapping, Ernie picked up the cake and took a big bite out of it. He had custard all over his face. Luckily it was a picture the photographer was able to catch. It would be a picture Ernie would treasure for the rest of his life.

El águila introduced Morris and Ken to his best friend Manuel in the hope they would be able to find some mutual ground where they might be able to help each other.

Manuel invited them both onto his yacht, it was one of three giant yachts moored at El águila's dock.

Morris asked Manuel, "Which one is yours?"

"It's the middle one, maybe we can go on it a little later?"

Both Morris and Ken accepted the invitation and they arranged to go aboard in an hours time when no one would miss them. They need not have worried. The party was in full flow but unbeknown to the bride and groom who thought they were going on their honeymoon to Tortuga on El águila's yacht he had a surprise for them.

Calling a halt to the music, El águila had hold of the microphone, "I have an announcement to make, my beautiful daughter and her husband Paulo who we have taken to our hearts asked me if they could use my yacht to go down to Tortuga. Unfortunately, I am going to have to let them down, and tell them they can not use my yacht."

There were big sighs from everyone. "Oh no, shame, boo."

"I know I am a terrible father and a terrible father-in-law, but as they can't use my yacht, (He paused) I have bought them a yacht of their own." Pointing in the direction of the dock and the three yachts, "If you all want to go down there it's the one on the right, the one named "Secret Heart" The people erupted cheering and clapping, they all filed out and made their way to the dock. The band started playing again. They played Rod Stewart's "We Are Sailing" then "The Life On The Ocean Wave"

Paul and Angelica reached their yacht with the rest of the wedding party behind them, Paul was amazed at the size of it.

Sitting at the dock was a fifty-five metre three-story high gleaming white yacht. Standing at the bottom of the gangplank were five people all dresses in white uniforms. This was the crew, Angelica and Paul said hello and boarded the yacht. Followed by the whole wedding party, the Captain asked them to take off their shoes.

It didn't take long before everyone was once again drinking Champagne and eating giant prawns. It seemed as though the party had moved to the yacht.

Paul and Angelica found themselves a quiet place and were relaxing drinking champagne and eating the giant prawns.

Paul said, "Your father sure knows how to buy wedding presents."

Angelica whispered in Paul's ear, "He's also given us \$5.000.000 in cash. He likes you."

Paul held his glass up in the air and made a toast. "I like him too, especially if he keeps buying us presents like this."

Angelica, "I hope he likes being a grandfather."

Paul spat out his drink and turned to face Angelica, happy, laughing smiling, "This day just keeps getting better, Oh I love you so much."

"We can't tell my parents, not until we get back from our honeymoon."

"Can I tell my parents before we go?"

"Only if they promise not to tell mine."

A message came over the tannoy sound system, "Everyone not going to Tortuga please leave the boat, we must leave within the hour to catch the tide, thank you for your cooperation." The same message was repeated fifteen minutes later, and then when there were only a few people left, Paul and Angelica gave his parents the good news and asked them not to tell El águila and Catalina they wanted to tell them when they came back. Paul said goodbye to his parent's and told them not to worry about anything. He told them to order whatever they wanted, he would be back in two weeks, telling them to just relax and to remember to keep their secret.

Their yacht pulled away from the dock with everyone on land waving back at them. As they passed Manuel's yacht, they could see, Morris, Ken, Manuel, El águila and Catalina waving and toasting them with Champagne.

From the land, the sight of the "Secret Heart" heading West, straight out to sea, silhouetted against the going down of the sun, and the orange sunset was magical.

On Manuel's yacht, Morris buried his hand deep into a pirates chest full of diamonds, rubies, opals and emeralds, "I have a licence allowing me to carry gems but not by the trunk-load."

Manuel put his arm around Ken's shoulder, "No, we only need you to help us with the big ones, the small ones we can handle."

Ken had now officially fallen in love with the Dominican, "I think I might be able to help you out there. How about if I come out say once a month?"

Everything was settled, every month Morris and Ken would make the trip with El águila and go out to Manuel's yacht, sift through the month's haul of gems and take them back to England to sell.

Paul and Angelica had been on their honeymoon island for a week and having their very own superyacht moored in the bay, they had attracted many new friends, they were enjoying the scuba diving, jet-skiing and the luxury of the place. They even had a small party on the yacht, after which instead of going back to the hotel they stayed and enjoyed the peace and tranquillity of being alone on the yacht.

On the eighth day, they awoke to see a familiar sight. There was another superyacht moored up in the bay near their yacht. It was, of course, the family yacht, The El águila. He had bought Catalina, Paul's parents, Morris, Ken, Ernie, and Trevor.

Calling over to the "Secret Heart" by two-way radio, El águila invited Angelica and Paul over for breakfast. After being woken by one of their crew they had a quick shower and a glass of fresh orange juice. Being ferried over to El águila's yacht by their yacht's tender they were happy to see everyone lined up and waving at them, after waving back they arrived and were helped onboard.

Angelica was greeted by her mother, and everyone gathered around. Paul's father gave him a hug. El águila invited everyone inside for breakfast. At the table, Angelica asked her father what were they all doing there?

"It's the time of the month when I've got to meet Manuel. We're going out there today, I was wondering if you wanted to come for a ride with us?"

Angelica looked over at Paul, "What do you think?"

"Why not, it'd be nice to spend some time with our friends, maybe Manuel will give us another diamond."

El águila clapped his hands, "Okay then, let's go."

The crew heard him and understood what he meant, there was immediate movement and a general scurrying around, five minutes later the anchor was pulled out of the water and they were on their way.

It took them five hours to reach Manuel and his sunken treasure ships.

With millions at stake, it was obvious someone at some point would try to steal some of the treasure. A month earlier El águila suggested to Manuel he employ a security team, which he did.

It was a good thing he did, because after three weeks they caught two of the divers, trying to stitch diamonds into the lining of their dive bags where they kept their equipment. With typical swift Dominican justice, like the type handed out by Angelica's brothers at the cantina. they were involved in a nasty diving accident and were never seen again.

As usual, El águila and Manuel were happy to see each other and greeted each other like old long lost brothers.

Happy to see Angelica and Paul again, he wondered what they were doing there, "I thought you were on your honeymoon in Tortuga?"

"Papa thought we needed a break from the luxury and solitude of our five-star hotel and the fifty or so new friends we'd met."

"He was probably missing you, I think he just wanted to make sure everything was alright with his little girl."

"We have telephones on the yacht and in the hotel."

"You know your father, it's much easier for him to do things his own way. It just goes to show how much he loves you. And what's so bad about taking a day off from your new friends to visit your uncle Manuel?"

"Nothing, everything is wonderful." Putting her arms around his neck she gave him a big kiss on the cheek.

Paul took his parents to one side, "I thought this would be the perfect time to give you this present, it's a cheque for £1.000.000. I was going to wait until we got back but thought being out here in the middle of the ocean on a luxury yacht would make it more memorable."

His father was overwhelmed, "You can't go around giving away millions of pounds, you might need it."

His mother said, "We can't just plonk £1.000.000 into our bank account, they'll wonder where it came from."

"Don't worry Mum, it's been shorted, it's from the Queen's bank, it's all OK."

"Oh my god the Queen's bank, what have you done?"

"No Mum, It's Coutts Bank, they just call it the Queen's bank because she banks there. Don't worry it's all OK. Now enjoy yourselves you're millionaires, and another thing, did Dad tell you about the villa on the golf course?"

His father tried to stop Paul from speaking, "I didn't think it was worth telling your mother about the land you gave us, we wouldn't have had the money to build a villa so there was no point."

"When I told you to pick out a piece of land for a villa, I meant I'd build the villa. I thought it might be a nice place for you to see your grandchildren grow up."

Catalina overheard the word grandchildren, "Grandchildren? Who's having a baby? Angelica, are you having a baby?"

Angelica, "We were going to tell you, but we were going to wait until we came back home."

Catalina was so happy, she called over to El águila, "Darling, you're going to be abuelo (Grandfather)."

Everyone heard and they all went to the couple shaking Paul's hand and kissing Angelica.

Manuel, "This calls for a party."

El águila said to Manuel, "I think we need to take Morris and Ken down to see the treasure first."

El águila, Manuel, Morris, Ken and Paul went down to the lower deck to see if there was anything in the treasure chests Morris and Ken could help them with.

Both Morris and Ken were surprised at the amount of gold, jewels and gems there were.

Paul had been giving the situation some thought and said, "I think I should be getting a share of this."

El águila asked, "You are my son and my only daughters husband, you have saved her life twice and stood in the way of bullets, but I fail to see how you think you should be getting a share."

"If it wasn't for me neither Morris nor Ken would even be here, I was the one who bought them together, and now you want to use them to fence your diamonds, I feel like I'm being squeezed out."

El águila wanted only the best for Paul and his daughter, "I can see how you feel but it's not my decision, all this is Manuel's treasure, it's up to him."

Manuel gave it some thought, "To be honest our children are going to need all the help we can give them. We must be good too them. We make more than \$15.000.000 every month and we still have millions just sitting around, I say we get together and whilst we are still bringing up the treasures we give them \$1.000.000 finders fee."

What Paul understood, or rather didn't understand from Manuel's half Spanish, half English answer, was he going to be getting a one-time finders fee whilst everyone else just went on and kept earning big money every month, or was he going to be getting \$1.000.000 every month?

Still unsure what was going on, Morris plunged his hand deep into one of the treasure chests. Sifting through the smaller Yellow, Orange, Pink, Blue and Green diamonds he pulled out a large red diamond, "Here we go chaps, this one must be worth \$3.500.000 or maybe even \$4.500.00."

El águila said, "Something Ken will be able to help us with. The small ones we can distribute throughout the island, we even have some American dealers interested, but it is the big ones we need help with and for us to have such a man from London's Hatton Gardens is a big bonus for us."

Morris slightly bowed his head in respect of the compliment, "Thank you but I am just a small cog in a large wheel."

Manuel, "But you have the knowledge, and my brother says you are a man who can be trusted."

"Of course. My word is my bond."

Manuel threw his arms around Morris's shoulders, "My word is my bond, I love it, I love you too my friend, let's have a drink we have much to celebrate."

Ken asked, "Will you be needing me to bring the money back in cash or have you already made other banking arrangements?"

El águila, "We will need you to bring the money back in your political bag."

"We need to discuss the terms, this is a very dangerous game we are playing."

"You and our good friend Morris can have ten per cent of the diamonds, and you can have a further ten per cent of all the money you carry."

"Will it be alright if I take my ten per cent before I bring it over?"

They all laughed at Ken. El águila, "You are a funny man. My friend, we trust you to do the right thing by us and if you do the right thing we do the right thing by you. Let us have a drink."

Ken thought it sounded like a yes, but with dangerous undertones.

Morris saw the worried look on Ken's face, "Why so worried? Like he said if we are above board and don't try to screw with them, we'll make a fortune. The art of the deal is not to be greedy."

"How about at your end? How does anyone know the real value of the diamonds we take back?"

"Do you think they haven't thought it through?"

"No, I would think they already have, so how can they stop you from screwing them over?"

"They told me they have some low life from the South of the island who will be giving them a valuation before they give them to you."

"For fuck sake, what if he gets it wrong?"

"Then I guess we're both fucked."

"I can't see how some lowlife fucking up, involves me."

"Don't worry Ken, they are going to let me know what their man values them at, and every time I can, I'm going to get them more than the valuation."

"What if he overvalues the stuff?"

"I'll know, Don't worry, I'll put them straight. I'm not going to let some small-time idiot screw this up for us."

The day was a celebration of good fortune, good food, good wine and baby talk. The "Good Heart" had followed them and moored a short distance away.

It was now 5.00 pm and so after many long and tearful goodbyes, Paul and Angelica went back to their own yacht. They had a five-hour journey ahead of them, arriving in Tortuga at 10.00 pm, they were so tired they decided to stay aboard and sleep on the yacht.

The next day they went to their hotel and met up with their new friends. One couple they liked and got on with more than the others came from Bournemouth in the South of England. Their names were Clive and Barbara. They had been going out with each other for ten years and living together for the past five, after having a baby they decided to get married and chose Tortuga for their honeymoon.

There was something about Clive Paul liked, he had a glint in his eye and he was easy to talk to, he was a property developer, originally from the same part of London as Paul. Clive had a boat in Poole harbour, but as he said, it wasn't as big as Paul's.

Barbara his wife had given birth to a baby girl a year earlier and Angelica wanted to know all about it.

During the last five days of their honeymoon, they had one more party aboard their yacht. During one conversation, Paul invited Clive and Barbara to the opening of their new hotel in the Dominican Republic.

After sailing back from Tortuga to the dock at El águila's villa, Paul and Angelica made the decision. Until their villa was ready for them to move into, they would live aboard their yacht.

Now back, the first thing Angelica wanted to do, was to visit her stables. After an hour of both Angelica and Paul making a fuss of her horses, Paul dragged Angelica away to go and see the progress being made on their villa.

As planned, before the wedding, the builders had started to lay the foundations and start the building of the villa and the golf course clubhouse.

On arrival at the golf course. The first thing they saw was a team of builders working on the clubhouse. They had made very good progress, and it was looking good. After taking a walk around the building, they drove to the site of their villa. It was fantastic, the foundations were perfect, they had even started on the second floor where they could see the outline of where their bedroom balcony will be, it would overlook the golf course and the ocean, it was going to be spectacular.

CHAPTER 28.

BOATS RINGS AND WEIRS.

Back in England Jennifer and Benjamin were in a hired rowing boat just above Teddington Lock on the River Thames. A place where the TV series Benny Hill was made, and what happened to Benjamin and Jennifer wouldn't have looked out of place if it were in the show.

They had been warned not to go near the weir, but they were so wrapped up in their own little world, they hadn't noticed they had strayed to within touching distance of the danger. With Jennifer rowing and as Benjamin was still on medication, he was a little groggy, he didn't notice what was happening.

Benjamin was sitting in the boat as a passenger, he was wearing a neck brace and still had one arm in a plaster cast stretched out wide and held up by a wooden support.

He was paying more attention to Jennifer than he was to his surroundings.

With his good arm, he was holding out an open ring case, exposing a beautiful diamond ring, but when Jennifer saw the ring she let go of the oars and leant forward to kiss Benjamin, the oars slipped through the rollocks of the boat and floated away. The movement of Jennifer standing up and grasping for the oars caused the boat to rock in turn causing the ring and the case to fall from Benjamin's grasp into the water.

At that point, Benjamin thought maybe this boat thing wasn't such a good idea and wondered if anything else could go wrong?

Just then it started to rain. Jennifer was frantically pointing behind Benjamin, shouting, "Look."

The boat was rapidly approaching the fast-flowing weir. Benjamin was finding it difficult to turn around because of the restriction of his neck brace and his plaster cast, but just as he managed to turn to see his predicament and the boat about to go over into the weir he screamed, "Oh Shit."

CHAPTER 29.

WENDEL ARRIVES

Whilst away, El águila had been working on behalf of Paul and contacted a top American architect for the hotel job. The day after Paul and Angelica arrived back from their honeymoon he had Wendel flown in on a private jet.

He was a forty-year-old celebrated architect from Atlanta, Georgia, who arrived with his young twenty-year-old assistant Jerry. They were taken to the same five-star hotel used a few weeks earlier for Paul's friends and family.

Wendel was there to help Paul, and to give him an idea of what type of hotel he could build on the land available and give him a more visual view of what he could expect, Wendel had bought plans, pictures and drawings with him.

The following morning Angelica went to her stables whilst El águila and Paul went to the hotel. It was 09.30 am Wendel was a very pleasant man with a flamboyant way about him, he was well-groomed with blonde hair, wearing a pink jacket, white shirt and yellow Bermuda shorts and white deck shoes. His assistant Jerry was a smaller version of Wendel, carrying rolls of technical drawings under his arm and various other useful pictures and paperwork in a light tan leather briefcase.

They met at the reception area and after introductions were made, they jumped in El águila's Rolls Royce and drove them to the golf course and on to the site where Paul wanted the hotel to be built.

Paul told Wendel, "The one thing I want is 232 rooms, the same number as the famous golf hotel, Gleneagles in Scotland."

"Why so specific?"

"It's a homage to the name El águila, The Eagle, and I'm going to call the clubhouse las águilas descansan, The Eagles Rest."

"Have you thought of a name for the hotel?"

"I was thinking of calling it la cañada de las águilas, The Glen of Eagles."

Jerry had been listening, he hardly said anything, "That's a lot of eagles."

Paul answered, "Yeah, it's a family thing."

El águila turned and flashed a quick, secretive and friendly smile at Paul.

As they approached the golf course Wendel and Jerry were bowled over by the sheer beauty of the property. After Paul showed them the new clubhouse he was anxious to see where Wendel thought the best location for the hotel would be.

Apart from the number of rooms, Paul was insistent the hotel didn't overlook his new house.

They were at the golf course for over two hours, Wendel and Jerry spent their time looking around and taking measurements. They found plenty of room for service and utility roads, the parking and security wouldn't be a problem. He saw no reason why they couldn't build a five-star hotel and stay within the guidelines and conditions laid down by Paul.

After pointing out where the tennis courts should be, Paul wanted a swimming pool with subtle water features and a giant waterfall, at no point during the day should the pool be in shade, it must have the sun on it all day, he didn't want the shadow of the hotel or surrounding hills casting shadows over it. Underground parking, an indoor air-conditioned, soundproofed pistol range, a medical centre, and out of sight from the hotel, he wanted nice accommodation for at least sixty staff. There was something else Paul had noticed. Just as you turn off the main road into the one-kilometre drive to the hotel, there was a large flat piece of grassy ground he thought would be the perfect place for a polo field and stables, something he would hold back on as a surprise for Angelica.

The weeks past, contracts were drawn up and signed, and within the next three months, the work on the hotel had begun. Angelica was now showing her pregnancy and so they moved from their yacht into El águila's villa.

Even though Paul spent a lot of time at the site of the hotel and Angelica spent time at her stables, they would always meet up at 4.00 pm back at the villa. If Angelica felt up to it, they would take their yacht out, and from the top deck in comfortable seats, they would enjoy the solitude and the company of each other. Gently kissing and caressing each other, Paul was a slave to the warmth and love she showed him, Angelica was like a beautiful drug to him, a drug he could never get enough of. They would take in the magnificence of the cloudless golden sunsets. Sometimes if the mood took them, they would spend the night on the yacht.

Now seven months pregnant their villa was almost completed. With three sides of the villa protected by a vertical drop of two hundred feet down to the golf course, Paul had a high white wall built at the entrance to the courtyard and drive. With room for six large cars, there was a garage through which gave access to the house. The villa now had six-bedrooms with the thinking, if Paul had three friends staying to play golf and they had another baby, they would need six-bedrooms and not the original five as planned. With a nursery and maids quarters, and their beautiful oversized infinity pool with jacuzzi, overlooking the ocean, the orange of the terracotta roof tiles, this was going to be a magnificent villa.

Every month El águila and Paul would pick up Morris and Ken from the airport, and cruise out to meet Manuel.

Morris would sift through the diamonds and pick out the largest, the ones they would find hard to sell on the island. After they were valued by the Dominican dealer, and the value agreed on by Morris, he would declare his share at customs and Ken would take the largest through undeclared in his diplomatic pouch.

When they were back in England they would share a taxi and on their ride back to London from Heathrow airport Ken would hand over his share to Morris.

With deep gratitude on Paul's part and the fact he needed the money for his hotel and the villa project, every month, there was always \$1.000.000 placed into his Coutts offshore account. He didn't know if it came from Manuel or if El águila was helping him out, he never asked.

It was now nine months and the baby was due, the nursery was fully furnished and ready for the new arrival. Angelica and Paul had secretly placed the diamond they said they were going to hide, underneath the villas ornate nameplate and plastered it inside the cover of the entrance's intercom.

They moved into the villa a month earlier, but the security wasn't as tight as it could be. It wouldn't be one hundred per cent until all the security cameras and the building at the hotel were finished. Paul asked El águila for two of his guards to be placed at the villa. It was not a problem and El águila liked the fact Paul was still thinking about Angelica's safety.

CHAPTER 30.

IT'S TIME

It was after 4.00 pm and Paul arrived home from his work at the hotel.

Angelica had just said goodbye to two of her friends. Paul was halfway through a dive into the swimming pool when Angelica called for Paul, "It's time for us to have a baby."

Coming up for air, "What did you say babe?"

With forethought, in preparation for this very event, and the nearest medical clinic some seventy-five kilometres away. Paul decided, as there was going to be a medical facility in the hotel, why not make it a priority and have a separate medical centre built and employ the staff in advance of the hotel's opening.

During the months of its opening, it had become a busy place, useful for the worker's minor injuries, including one broken arm, and a broken nose sustained during a fight. It had also become a place where local people had started to go for treatment.

Paul saw what was happening and how much local people needed help. So with all his good fortune and his newfound wealth, it was time to do something to help others. He talked it over with Angelica, El águila and Catalina and they all thought it was a good idea. So they decided after the hotel opens they were going to build another medical facility for the people, but nearer to their town.

Climbing out of the swimming pool he threw on a shirt and calmly ushered Angelica into the Mercedes. He closed the passenger side door, and calmly walked around to the other side of the car and got in behind the steering wheel, "Bollocks I forgot the keys." Rushing from the car into the villa the maid was standing at the front door holding the keys up in the air. Snatching the keys, he rushed back to the car and drove the short distance to the medical centre.

Anticipating this day, everything at the clinic had been prepared in advance. Over everything else, all other treatments taking place in the clinic would have to stop, the birth of his child was the priority. He gave strict instructions if Angelica was in any kind of danger they were to save her rather than the baby. He was more nervous for Angelica than anything he had ever been worried about in his life. He would give up everything he owned as long as Angelica was safe.

He made a call to El águila, who together with Catalina, both jumped into their newly acquired helicopter and were there within fifteen minutes.

Everything went well, and the birth of their little girl Isabella was timed two hours later at 6.45 pm.

Catalina said, "With so many men around it will be nice to have another girl in the family."

El águila was excited, "I'm a grandfather." Grabbing Paul by the shoulders and kissing him on the forehead, "Thank you my son."

Angelica was in bed holding the baby, "I did have something to do with it, papa."

"Of course you did my darling, I'm just so excited. What are you going to do now? You can't stay here."

"I think I would like to sleep and then maybe go home in the morning."

"That's OK, anything you want, I'll arrange everything."

Paul, "It's OK I've arranged for the staff to stay the night and for the guards to be vigilant, they will be changed at four-hour intervals."

El águila, "The boy has become a man. Angelica, you made the right choice, Paulo is truly the man for you. We will go now and we will see you and the baby in the morning. Con su permiso (With your permission) we stay at your villa tonight?"

"mi casa es tu casa, (My house is your house) no question, you know you are welcome to stay at our house anytime."

"I just don't want to fly in that helicopter thing at night."

Catalina told Paul and El águila, "I'm going to stay here with Angelica, I need another bed bought into the room."

"Madre, I'm going to be alright, I'm going to be asleep, please go with Paulo, please go to the house."

The next morning Paul went to the clinic and collected Angelica and baby Isabella, he drove them back to the villa where everything was ready and waiting for them. For the next three days, El águila and Catalina stayed at the villa and helped out, Paul and Angelica were pleased to have their help, but they were also pleased when they left and gave them room to do things their own way.

CHAPTER 31.

ANOTHER WEDDING

The phone rang in the villa, it was Benjamine. He told Paul about his excursion over the weir, and how he had to spend the last seven months in traction and extended physiotherapy, it was only now he was able to travel, and after congratulating Paul on his baby, he asked, "Was the offer you made to sort out a wedding still open?"

"Just tell me when you want it and I'll sort it for you."

"How about some time at the end of next month?"

"Leave it to me mate, I'll sort you out a five-star wedding you'll never forget. Just let me have the dates and I'll sort it all out for you."

Paul had his yacht moved around to the more sheltered bay where the new landing platforms and moorings had been built in readiness for the yachts of the hotel's five-star guests.

The private beach would have a bar, serving à la cart food, drinks, water-skiing and boat trips to nearby islands, there would be fishing trips and organized BBQ's.

With everything in place, this would be the perfect place for Benjamine's wedding.

Angelica was the perfect mother, glowing from her experience of motherhood whilst still being attentive to Paul. Her mother and friends would come around on regular intervals, and like El águila's villa, the swimming pool with its magnificent views over the ocean and golf course had become the focal point for family and visitors.

Three weeks later Paul drove his white convertible Mercedes to the airport. He was there to meet Benjamine and Jennifer. Their reunion was a joyous affair Benjamine looked a lot better than when Paul last saw him in hospital.

With them were Jennifer's sister and her mother and father. It was the same day as Morris and Ken were due to arrive, they were also invited to the wedding.

Benjamine sat in the passenger seat. Joking he said, "Looks like nothing's changed, you're still driving me around."

"Wait till you get the bill. I've booked you all in at your old hotel."

"How long before your hotel's open?"

"Another couple of years before it's ready, I'd put you up in my villa but with the new baby and only two days before your wedding, you're all better off at the hotel." To Benjamin, "Well all except you, you'll have to stay in the villa tomorrow night."

The night before the wedding Paul and Angelica took everyone out for a fantastic meal at the same restaurant where Paul proposed to Angelica. Again they were treated like royalty and everything was perfect. The mariachi band were pleased to see Paul and Angelica again.

In keeping with tradition, on the day of the wedding, Benjamine was not allowed to see the bride, so as arranged, he stayed the night with Paul at his villa.

Paul had organized a Rolls Royce to pick up Jennifer, her sister and her parents from the hotel. The wedding ceremony took place on the hotel's private powdery white sandy beach, underneath an archway of light blue and pink flowers, with the beautiful turquoise sea as the perfect backdrop.

With El águila, Catalina, Morris, Ken, Paul, Angelica, and family in attendance, it was magical. After the ceremony, a group of four golfers gave them a wave and a cheer from atop the cliff on the sixth hole of the golf course. Everyone was in high spirits and they all waved back.

In the restaurant on the beach, Paul had organized a reception with lobster, champagne, caviar, and a wedding cake, and as a further wedding present, Paul offered them his yacht to use for their honeymoon. Suggesting Tortuga as a good place to start.

Benjamin jumped at the offer, he told Jennifer, and Jennifer told her sister and her sister told her parents.

"Great thanks they all want to go."

So the whole family boarded the yacht and within two hours they were disappearing off the dock and sailed out into the ocean.

A week later in the security building at El águila's villa, an emergency ship to shore message came over the two-way radio. It was from Paul's yacht, they were being attacked by pirates. The security guards immediately called El águila. He took his personal bodyguard a machine gun and flew the helicopter to pick Paul up. With the pilot they had four people in the helicopter, it would take them at least forty minutes to reach the yacht.

Unbeknown to the pirates, El águila had the yacht kitted out with many weapons, for Angelica's safety, secreted in every cabin there were at least two weapons. The families favourite Walther PPK handguns were everywhere, there was also five SLR 7.62 rifles, and a GPMG (General Purpose Machine Gun). Two of the crew were from El águila's personal bodyguard, and Jennifer's father was an ex-Royal Marine Comando used to handling weapons and killing people. And as Green Park proved, Benjamin himself wasn't averse to shooting people in the head.

The yacht had been anchored off a small deserted island, the sea was calm, the sun was hot and there wasn't much of a breeze, Benjamin and Jennifer had been in the crystal clear water swimming for around ten minutes.

All of a sudden two large inflatable dinghies came towards the yacht at speed.

The two bodyguards knew something wasn't right. One of them rushed to the bridge and told the captain to call El águila, tell him what's happening and to stay on the line. The other one ran to the rear of the yacht and called Benjamin and Jennifer telling them to get out of the water.

The first bodyguard took the GPMG out of hiding and mounted it on the top deck. Looking through binoculars he could see the barrels of rifles sticking upwards inside the dinghies. He wasn't waiting to find out what they wanted, he opened fire tearing the dinghy on the right to shreds, turning it into an orange fireball killing everyone on board. The second dinghy swerved to the left catching a few more 7.62 rounds of military issue ammunition.

Benjamin and Jennifer were by this time out of the water. Bodyguard number two handed Benjamin a Walther PPK, Jennifer's father asked if he could have one, telling him he was a Royal Marine Comando during the war.

With their attention focused on the remaining crippled dinghy coming at them from astern, they didn't see the other dinghy approaching from the port side.

It wasn't until it was right up against the swimming platform and about to board the yacht Jennifer's father put two bullets into the first pirate. Standing next to his newly acquired father in law, Benjamin followed suit and put two more rounds into a second pirate.

It was now a free for all with the bodyguard holding a Sterling submachine gun, unfortunately, he was hit in the arm by a round from one of the pirates, Benjamin's father-in-law took the familiar machinegun from him and with Benjamin by his side, they blasting the remaining three pirates into a bullet-riddled mass of subhuman jelly.

Bodyguard number one was still on the top deck with the GPMG, he had continued to fire on the stricken dinghy. It didn't explode, but there was smoke coming from the engine, it had stopped and began to sink, he couldn't see any movement. The target was no longer a threat, he had done his job, and he had done it well.

Suddenly, the noise of the past few minutes just stopped, everything went quiet, the yacht was rolling gently to the swell of the calm ocean.

There was a heavy smell of cordite in the air, and with three half-submerged rubber dinghies full of dead bodies only a few yards from their yacht, they started wondering what to do next.

Taking in the enormity of what had just happened, the bodyguards were pleased to hear the womp, womp, womp, womp of an approaching helicopter.

Knowing they had sent a message out to El águila before the fight, it was reasonable to assume who it was.

From the helicopter, everyone could see the devastation below. El águila told the pilot to take a closer look at the dinghies and then land on the nearby island.

As they passed over the two stricken dinghies furthest from the yacht, They could see there was no movement. They landed on the island. The crew launched a tender from the yacht and picked them up. El águila was pleased with what he saw. Thinking to himself, 'it just goes to show how well the "Secret Heart" was protected and how well she could repel an attack.' the safety of the people on board was paramount, now glad no one was hurt, his concern was for any future attacks on his beloved Angelica when she might be aboard.

Boarding the yacht the first thing El águila decided was his personal bodyguard could stay on the yacht whilst the injured guard could go back with them him in the helicopter. Making sure everyone else was OK they used the yacht's tender to drag the remains of the pirate's dinghies onto the island. They had eighteen dead bodies and a lot of blood. He had thought of loading up the helicopter with the bodies and making a few trips out to sea, dropping them into the ocean for the sharks to feed on, but with so many witnesses this was something they wouldn't be able to hide. El águila told them after he leaves they must call The Coast Guard and report what had happened.

Landing back at the clinic next to the hotel, the bodyguard was taken in and taken care of. The bullet had shattered the ulna bone in his right arm, he had lost enough blood to make him woozy and he was still losing blood, he was going into shock. He would need specialized treatment the type of treatment the clinic couldn't provide, so after patching him up and putting him on a drip, provision had to be made to get him to a hospital with better facilities. The nearest and the best was down south, so the attending nurse from the clinic went with him in the helicopter.

This gave El águila an excuse to see his granddaughter, and as he didn't have a car with him, he had an idea which would also give Catalina a chance to see her granddaughter. Calling her and giving her the good news, she drove over to pick him up.

Paul had already driven El águila to the villa and it was another hour and a half before Catalina arrived. Carrying arms full of presents for the baby, it seemed, whenever she was out shopping nowadays, all she would buy was things for the baby.

They were still at the villa two days later when Benjamin, Jennifer, and her family arrived back at the hotel's dock.

They were told the Coast Guard had to bring in the police. They were there asking questions and taking statements for a full day and it took another day's cruising for them to get back.

Paul said they could all stay on the yacht, or if they preferred he would arrange transport to take them back to their hotel. As they had another week left Benjamin and Jennifer said, they would like to stay on the yacht. The rest of the family had thought it best to leave the two of them alone for the rest of their honeymoon.

Paul told Benjamin as he wasn't there when he bought the golf course he wasn't given a chance to pick out where he wanted a villa built. They spent the morning together with Jennifer in a golf buggy, driving around the golf course looking for a plot of land for Benjamin's villa.

They found a beautiful spot near to where the other villas were going to be built but just far enough away from them as not to be on top of the others. It was now the afternoon and Jennifer wanted to go to the beach and go sunbathing. Benjamin wanted to play golf and with a lovely girl like Jennifer, it wasn't a problem. Paul hadn't played for weeks and was happy to join his friend for a game.

After golf they were in the new clubhouse bar were one of the builders named Alonso, wanted to have a word with Paul. He was most concerned with a project he was involved in helping distressed and injured monkeys, he asked Paul if he could help. Paul who was always open to help people said, "Tell me where it is and I'll look into it."

Alonso said, "If you are interested I could take you there."

"What now?"

"Yes, I have finished work I am going there now."

Paul turned to Benjamin, "How do you fancy a trip to this monkey place?"

"Yes, great, I need to tell Jennifer."

"It's OK I'll send someone down to the beach to tell her."

"OK, Alonso, let's go, I'll follow you." Paul called a waiter over and asked them to take the message down to Jennifer.

They followed Alonso for five kilometres until they turned off the main road onto a dirt road leading to a small building next to an enclosure housing many monkey's.

As they were getting out of their cars, an open-top jeep pulled up behind them, it was the type of vehicle tourists hire. A group of four hippie type youngsters jumped out, two male and two female. They had heard about the monkey sanctuary and said they wanted to help or if not they would pay to see the monkeys.

This gave Paul an idea. If people were willing to pay to see the monkeys, Why not help the sanctuary, and at the same time use any money they take in at the front gates to finance the free clinic he was going to build.

Paul told Alonso his idea, telling him he would help with the animal's food and the building of extra enclosures at the sanctuary and pay for some roadside billboards and radio advertising.

As if he didn't have enough on his plate, this was going to give him an extra project to work on, but he was also thinking, in a few years, apart from the obvious connection with Angelica and her horses, his little daughter might take an interest in the monkey project.

After seeing the monkeys they went back to the villa and picked up Angelica. A quick drive down to the yacht and within thirty minutes they were off, out to sea to spend the evening watching another beautiful orange and blood-red cloudless Caribbean sunset.

Benjamin still had his job with Alfred-Dupont and together with his new wife, they both had to be back at work by the following Monday.

The week flew by and after some enjoyable nights out at special venues with Spanish type entertainment and great food, it was time for Benjamin, Jennifer and her family to leave. But just before they left Jennifer's father took Paul aside and said it was the greatest holiday he had ever had, especially the part where he got to handle a Sten gun again.

CHAPTER 32.

A FEW LAST TWEAKS.

Morris and Ken had been visiting the island every month since they first met El águila and Manuel. With the amount of gold and gems starting to taper off during the last few months, they were thinking this might be their last trip. To their relief, Manuel's team of crazy treasure hunters had located another Spanish galleon, it was only forty miles east of their present position, and they think it might be part of the Eric Selena fleet. If it is indeed the Santa Maria it is said to have gone down with even more treasures aboard than their first find.

On their way out to see the new find, Morris and Ken were worried the pirates of the Caribbean might have heard of the new find, and there might be another group of murdering cut-throats lurking out there somewhere.

When they arrived at the new rendezvous point, El águila told Manuel about the concerns Morris and Ken had. He reassured them, he and his crew had now upped their game and had six brand new RPG (Rocket Propelled Grenade launchers) deployed throughout their fleet of security boats, they are the same RPG's the police used on the poor unfortunate car who followed Paul a few months ago.

On El águila's yacht, Manuel had only bought over one box, but he also bought over a small bag full of gems, unloading them onto a table, there were twelve diamonds and an emerald, every one of them bigger than any of the others they had bought up from the other ship.

On seeing them Morris said, "Oh my god, I think I know someone who might want to buy these."

Ken knew about "The Rhombus Stone" and who bought it, "Don't you think it's funny how these jewels were once on route to Spanish royalty, and now they're going to British royalty?"

Morris is all about the money, "The difference is they've got to pay to get them."

"If you think about it, the Spanish paid in advance by financing the armada's."

Morris asked Manuel "Do you still want the uncut stones sold as they are or do you want them cut and polished, and sold for more money?"

He gave it some thought and looked at his friend El águila for advice, "What do you think?"

"I think we shouldn't change anything, we are doing alright with things as they are, if people want to cut the stones after they've bought them, it's up to them. Why do we need to take any risks?"

"I agree, no Morris my friend, we carry on as before, no cutting we OK with what we got."

Before seeing El águila and going out to sea to get the stones, Ken always arrived a few days early giving him time to see Tiff, Angel, and Goldie, the girls at his hotel, and for security reasons, Morris and Ken always left the Dominican the same day as they were given the stones, this cut down the chance of anyone trying to steal them. Every time they left El águila's yacht, El águila would always have two bodyguards escort them to the airport.

After six months Paul was pleased with the progress of the monkey sanctuary. The roadside billboards and radio advertising had worked wonders, the takings at the front gates were enough to start the financing of the staff at the free clinic.

The hotel had been built, it was the plumbing, electronics, the kitchen, furnishings, fittings, telecommunications, and a thousand other things had to be done before they could open. A manager, a head chef, three chefs for the three restaurants, and a whole host of other people had to be hired. The swimming pool and tennis courts were finished. The greenkeepers from the golf course were taking care of the gardens. It was going to take another year before the hotel would be ready to open. But now it was time for Paul to start on his secret project, the one he wanted to build for Angelica. The polo field with a grandstand and stables, this was something he had to do without her knowing, he wanted to open the hotel and the polo field by next year. In time for his wedding anniversary.

As this was primarily a golf hotel, the opening should be marked with a celebrity Pro-Am golf tournament. He gave it some thought and came up with a list of names he would like to have there. It would also be an opportunity for him to raise money for his charities.

As the opening date grew nearer, the stress level had gone through the roof, and what happened next took it up even higher.

A beautiful catamaran had just glided into the bay, and after mooring up, the owner asked to see Paul.

Paul got the call and scurried down to see if it was who he thought it was. He didn't recognize the name, but he remembered something Shaughn had said back in London. He told him he was going to buy a catamaran and sail it to the Dominican. If the police or customs officers capture him he'll be in jail by the time Paul got to him. This was something Paul didn't need right now. If Shaughn was to get himself captured, he would have to rely on El águila's contacts and a lot of money to get him out of their clutches.

Greeting Shaughn, "They said a guy named Sheamus was looking for me. After they said he came from a big catamaran I remembered what you'd said back in London, and guest it must be you. You're as crazy as Trevor, what's with the name, Sheamus?"

"I got a friend in a certain Irish organization who got me a new passport."

"You're going around the world on a dodgy passport?"

"No, it's a real passport, it's genuine it's not a fake it's just not my name."

"Are you on your own?"

"No, I've got Emma with me. I'll get her in a minute."

Looking at the moored up catamaran, "You've certainly got yourself a beautiful boat."

"Yeah, it took me almost a year to learn how to sail properly, I bought a place down on the Humble and started out with a small one. They got a sailing school down there, there's a fucking lot to learn in this sailing lark."

Paul bought Shaughn's attention to his yacht. "Not unless you've got a crew to do all the work for you."

"Is she yours?"

"Yeah, it was a wedding present."

"Ernie said you were doing OK, he said he'd be out here in a couple of weeks for the opening of your hotel."

"You could have called, and said you were coming."

"I thought it would be a nice surprise."

"Oh, it's a surprise alright, but I've got so much to do."

"We can help you, Emma used to be in hotels."

"What did she do?"

"She was in management. Staff rotas, supplies, wages, you name it she's done it. You can use her for a couple of weeks, I'm gonna need a bit of time to do some minor repairs and re-supply."

"We've got a great chandlery and there's a dive shop if you need anything else. I'll send a car down for you. Right leave it until tomorrow, I'll pick you up at nine tomorrow morning. I'll take you up to the hotel. I can't see you tonight, I've got to go down to the monkey sanctuary when I've finished here."

"Monkey sanctuary?"

"It's just something I'm doing to finance the free clinic."

"Right tell me about it tomorrow, and remember it's Sheamus."

The following day, Shaughn stayed on his boat and attended to the repairs whilst Paul picked Emma up, and took her to the hotel. He introduced her to the general manager, offering her services as a temporary assistant. He was pleased to have the extra help.

Paul had to go and interview a golf pro who had flown in from Florida. Whilst there he took a look at the caddies new uniforms. Then on to the hotel to inspect the hotel staff in their new uniforms.

Moving on to the employee's accommodation, three of the roofs needed looking at, and there were a few little niggerly things wrong with the plumbing. Luckily these things only needed a few hours work to put them right.

The security was going to be fierce, Paul had to bring in El águila

and his two brothers-in-law Sebastián and Matías who were now both captains and climbing high in the Policía Nacional Dominicana. Paul and El águila's private security team would be working side by side with armed Nacional police.

With two security checkpoints to reach the hotel, and three security points to pass through to get to the golf course an almost impenetrable route to the front gates of Paul and Angelica's villa, a water patrol was set up at the mouth of the bay with further security at beach level guarding the lift to the cliff top.

With the amount of 'A list' celebrities, government officials and royals attending the golf tournament and the polo game, this type of security would have to be in place for the next four days.

The next thing on Paul's list was the polo field. It was almost ready for its unveiling and Angelica's anniversary surprise.

Morris, Ken, Ernie, Benjamin and Jennifer arrived two days before the opening, this time they would all be staying in the new hotel.

CHAPTER 33.

A BOY OR A GIRL

The celebrities and golf pros had turned up for their five-star freebie. There were baseball players, writers, minor TV celebrities and as expected they all took advantage of a first-day practice round of golf.

The place was soon awash with brightly coloured golfers performing with various degrees of skills, some were excellent but some were seen thrashing about hitting balls into bunkers and over the cliffs down into the ocean.

Two enterprising guys in a rowing boat had positioned themselves below one of the difficult par three holes. Floating on the crystal clear water they were waiting for golf balls that didn't make it across to the other side of the ravine. Diving into the deep water they would retrieve the balls and either sell them back to the golfers or to the golf shop and sell them to them.

Ready or not, the hotel was now going to be tested to the full. The first night there was a welcoming buffet dinner with drinks, welcoming speeches, entertainment by the mariachi band from Paul and Angelica's favourite restaurant, and on the stage, the flamenco and merengue dancers from Paul's stag night. With the dancing and feasting over, the starting times were posted for the next day's golf.

At great expense, Sean Connery had been invited, he was given a life membership to the golf club and as expected his membership number and his locker number was 007.

Robert Wagner and his beautiful wife Natalie Wood flew in on their private jet, costing Paul another small fortune. Paul wished he hadn't invited them as all they seemed to do was get drunk and argue with each other. Mind you, Robert was a very good golfer and a nice person to be with on the golf course.

The following night at the Gala Dinner, the entertainment was provided by rock star Billy Fury, and the great and zany magician/illusionist Doug Henning.

El águila and the beautiful Catalina enjoyed mingling with the celebrities, inviting a select few for drinks on their yacht and at a future date dinner at their villa.

The auction raised \$89,000 for charity, with one of the prizes being a weekend stay on the yacht "Secret Heart".

A raffle with prizes ranging from gold earrings from Aspres of London to Gucci handbags down to a dozen golf balls was well supported.

A trophy was handed out for the best individual golfer who also received free entry into next years tournament, a voucher for a weeks stay at the la cañada de las águilas, The Glen of Eagles hotel and a set of golf clubs.

Benjamin was given a place in one of the teams, and no surprise to Paul his team came in last. At the other end of the scales, the winning team were each given trophies, and the same as the individual winner, free entrance to next years tournament and a set of golf clubs.

With the hotel opening and Pro/Am golf tournament both being a great success. The following day was taken up by the arrival of the polo players and their horses.

At 08.30 am Paul drove Angelica to a section of land he had screened off nine months ago, behind which he had secretly built a polo field, stables and grandstand, and for an anniversary surprise, he had the screens taken down in the early hours of the morning.

Pulling up, Angelica couldn't believe her eyes, she had no idea this was what had been going on behind the screens, she was overjoyed.

"Happy anniversary darling, just a little something I thought you might like."

"Ah, a big fuck off polo field, I love it."

Paul burst out laughing, "Yes darling, a big fuck off polo field, and this afternoon I've organized a game of polo for you."

"Oh, I love you. We'll have to bring Isabella she loves horses."

"I wonder where she got that from?"

"You don't mind do you?"

"Darling, I think it's wonderful, you're the best mother in the world."

"Not a wonderful wife?"

"Oh my god, if I could only tell you how wonderful you are and how much you mean to me."

"I think, not many wives get polo fields for their anniversaries. I think you tell me how much you love me already."

The same afternoon, Morris, Ken, Ernie, Shaughn, Emma, Benjamin, Jennifer, El águila, Catalina Paul, Angelica and Isabella a few local dignitaries and a royal couple all sat in the VIP section of the grandstand watching the game. At half time Isabella wanted to take part in the "Divot Stomp" but Angelica thought maybe she was just a little too young so she settled for a strawberry ice cream.

Following the game, there was another gala dinner in the hotel. With the winners of what Paul had named the "Anniversary Cup" receiving their prizes and afterwards there was a band and a free bar with plenty to drink allowing them to dance their way into the early hours.

The following day, Ernie, Benjamin and Jennifer took a last look at the progress of their villas and left for London.

Talking to Shaughn and Emma, Paul had suggested Tortuga would be the perfect destination for them to go next. They said their goodbyes. Shaughn told Paul they had such a great time they would be back again next year. Leaving the tranquillity of the bay, the giant catamaran turned left and headed for the honeymoon island of Tortuga.

It was time for Morris and Ken to go out to sea with El águila. Once again they had to sort out the gems from Manuel's latest haul of treasure. El águila's yacht had been in the same bay for the past five days. His yacht left the bay and headed straight out to sea.

Paul and Angelica needed a break from the hectic merry go around of the past six months, they're yacht left the bay and turned right.

On their first night at sea, they were relaxing with a cool glass of wine, watching another beautiful sunset, Angelica kissed Paul gently on the cheek, "Tell me, darling, do you hope this one's a boy or a girl?"

THE END.

