



## Chapter One

The thud of a heavy fist crashed once more into the face of Stephen Byfield as a broken tooth fell onto the metal floor of the ship's engine room. Tied to a chair unable to move he had no choice other than take the beating. Blood dripped down his once pristine white t-shirt and onto the black filthy floor.

"I will ask you one more time Byfield, why are you working with British Intelligence? What use would they have for you? Tell me and this all stops now."

"I don't know what you are talking about, I am here on holiday and I wish I could help you," Stephen replied as a stream of blood ran down his chin.

"Why would you come to Tunisia without your family?" The educated English accent seemed so out of place in the dark end of this foreboding port. Tunis had seemed a throwback to another era, one in which an accent such as this may have been common place, but at this particular time, surrounded by container ships and danger, it stood out. Its owner remained in the shadows, unseen by Stephen.

"I just needed time away, that's all. I know nothing about what you are telling me," he repeated, his tone verging on desperation. Even as the words tumbled from his sore and bloody mouth, he could hear the high pitch signs coming from his own voice that a trained ear listened for. His lie was as clear as the tone floating from a lonely light house crying out it's warning to drifting sailors.

The heel of a dirty oil-stained boot crashed from nowhere into the side of his jaw, knocking him sideways, down onto the stinking floor. A blanket of stars flashed around inside his head and the ropes bit into his wrists as he was hauled back into a seated position.

"Stephen, maybe I have got it all wrong, or then again maybe you are just giving me a pack of bullshit. You stay here and have a think and I will be back in a while. I'm sure that my friends will take good care of you." The owner of the voice left the room.

Sitting in the gloom of this fuel-stinking hell hole was certainly not in the Byfield plan, a plan that in hindsight, could never have been as simple as when first explained. He had to fly over to Tunisia for a series of meetings in comfortable hotel rooms, meet local intelligence sources and then offer substantial amounts of foreign aid to a tribal arms dealer in the hope of sharing information. But the real prize would be having access to his hidden book of contacts, this was, according to Whitehall sources, 'The holy Grail.'

The stench of desperation behind the hunt for information had begun to stink out the oak clad government offices of Westminster. The very same scent which had led Stephen to Tunis.

He looked around, there had to be some options for getting out of here. Two men sat at the only obvious doorway leading out of the room, but restraints securing his wrists and a head that felt split in two prevented any heroics. Not that he would be in any condition to carry out an escape plan, particularly with an AK47 leaning against the wall next to the guy who nearly took his ear off with his boot. The stink of stale alcohol and tobacco that seemed to leak from every pore of his jailers invaded his nostrils and increased his feeling of nausea.

The English guy however, was a different entity. Perhaps early thirty's, he smelt freshly showered and the suit he wore was immaculately pressed. His shoes were obviously unused to the environment they found themselves in being highly polished, soft brown leather. Educated, toned and classy, he didn't belong here. He was certainly British intelligence, and his manner indicated the distinct feeling that Stephen was an expendable asset for Her Majesty. His lie had been exposed which left two options, tell the truth or die. In fact, if he told the truth he would still die, just hopefully a better death.

Thirty minutes passed, a chiming bell from the nearby clock tower seemed to give a running countdown to what was left of his life. A rap on the thick door brought both guards to their feet as the English man returned, this time holding a long devilish looking knife, the light glinting on the blade as he held it up theatrically. "Mr Byfield, I guess by now you know that I know you are lying to me. Let me give you a starter and you can finish the story for me. You are working with a

Government team trying to uncover corruption in Government offices.” He stopped. “Right so far Stephen?” Stephen nodded his aching head.

“So, all I need to know is why you are here and what have you done with my little parcel?” He walked towards Stephen, stepping out of the shadow and showing his face, exposing its hidden evil. Byfield had miscalculated this character; his early Englishman abroad impression was wiped away by the sight of the cruel scar that crossed his face. A warrior, well-educated and classy for sure, but an absolute cold-hearted killer as well. A man who served his country fiercely, able to look an enemy fully in the eyes and smell their dying breath as he pressed the blade deep into his opponents exposed throat.

“Talk to me, tell me what I need to know.”

“I honestly don’t have any parcel,” Stephen insisted shrugging his shoulders. “What happens next if I can’t give you what I don’t have? Can’t you just let me leave? I will not tell anyone anything about what has happened here.”

“My employers say no, I say perhaps, it really does depend on you. You see where we are going with this?” Without warning, the lights flickered before failing completely. Stephen heard the shuffle of the guard’s feet trying to ready themselves for action before something eased past him, the flick of a jacket sleeve brushed his cheek and the smell of expensive aftershave cut through the putrid atmosphere before the door burst open. A flash light and the burst of flame from a gun barrel illuminated the room as cordite filled the atmosphere, catching the back of Stephen’s throat. The initial crack of the automatic weapon ended, leaving his ears ringing but still straining for what was coming next. The lights flicked back on and a stocky figure stood in the doorway, eyes scouring the room.

“Where is he?”

“I don’t know, someone passed by me, over there somewhere,” Stephen indicated to the back of the room with his head.

The man sprang forward, barging past Stephen, nearly upending the chair as he hurried towards the back of the room. He stopped just as quickly, and bending down behind the chair he untied the rope holding Stephen captive.

“He’s gone, don’t worry about him, just follow me and don’t fuck up.” The draft coming from the previously unseen door at the rear of the engine room was the only clue to where the English man had gone. They didn’t follow but instead dashed up the metal stairs and into the chill of the Tunisian night. A black Range Rover parked in the darkness spun into life and glided to a halt beside them where Stephen received another order.

“In the back, head down and do not move.” He climbed onto the leather back seat, lying down facing the rear of the driver’s seat as the car sped off. The man spoke again. “We are taking you to the Embassy, say fuck all and don’t look at us, understand?”

“Yep and thanks.”

“Save it Mr Byfield, we aren’t there yet.”

After another few minutes of back street driving in almost total darkness, the car once more hit the main road, street lights illuminating the inside of the car with an eerie orange glow. Both men scanned the pavements on either side of the streets, looking for danger before bringing the car to a brisk halt. Stephen rolled forward almost slipping from the seat into the foot well behind the driver’s seat. He composed himself and sat up, squinting in the bright lights to find they were in a pretty, open square in front of a magnificent white building. Balconies jutting out from the first three floors and light blue window shutters gave it a Mediterranean feel from a hundred years ago. A blue arched door stood at the corner with a British Embassy sign on the wall beside it. “Get out and ring on the bell, the rest is up to you. Goodbye, Mr Byfield.”

He stepped out as the car sped off, not completely understanding what had happened or what was coming. His head thumped and pain from the broken teeth was catching the night time chill. Ringing on the bell Stephen heard a distant echo of the chime. Shivering and immediately regretted taking in another large gulp of cool air, he looked down and was surprised by the covering of blood over his

new shirt. His mind briefly flickered back to the brutal conflict he'd had with Martin Heard the serial killer, who had come within an inch of taking his life, and the Broods, a ferocious criminal gang who had come just as close to taking his family and reputation. All in all, the past two years had been hell and he felt a surge of desperation rush over him before the door swung open. So lost in his thoughts, he hadn't heard the key turn in the lock.

A slightly built short man, possibly in his forties with thick black hair, stood in the light of an imposing hallway. He wore a crumpled suit that looked like it had been worn for too long and a blue tie, slightly offset, completed the image of a very tired consular official. Large paintings hung from the walls behind him, overseeing the proceedings as they would have done for the past hundred years, whilst the obligatory photograph of the queen watched all below. "Mr Byfield?" he stood waiting for a response. Stephen nodded, unwilling to open his mouth again and expose his broken teeth to the air.

"You'd better come in, we have been expecting you. My name is Trevor Hinton, Embassy official. I am the duty official this evening, it has been a very long day so forgive my somewhat disheveled appearance." The door closed behind them with a comforting clunk, the sound of safety.

"I will show you up to your room where we have clean clothes waiting for you. I have taken the liberty of calling in the doctor, although it looks like you may need a dentist as well. They haven't spared you any mercy, bloody savages." He showed Stephen into a small bedroom, possibly used for on call staff. He couldn't help but wonder if this would have been the Embassy official's own room for the night. A small pile of clean clothes lay on the bed and a fresh white towel and shower gel were on the plain wooden chair. Everything looked Government issue, a real contradiction to the elegance of the rest of the building.

He stripped off his dirty, blood-stained clothes tossing them into the grey, steel bin sitting by the sink and glanced at himself in the mirror. Red eyes and a face caked in blood and dirt stared back at him as he inspected the insides of his mouth and saw the broken stumps where white teeth once stood. Carefully cleaning his remaining teeth, he waited while the shower warmed up before climbing into the cubicle. The hot water cascaded over his filthy hair and ran down his body, every cut crying out in protest. With the adrenaline dissipating, his body began to stiffen up in protest and he could hardly raise his hands high enough to wash the soap from his hair. All he wanted to do was sleep but he felt that this wasn't going to be allowed to happen anytime soon. Dry blood and engine oil disappeared down the plug hole with the suds as he turned the shower off and dried himself. The radiators boomed in the room making it pleasantly warm, adding to his fatigue. A polite tap at the door was followed seconds later by a quizzical face popping around it. A white middle-aged man entered the room carrying a brown leather bag. Steven guessed who he was.

"Hello Mr Byfield, I am the duty doctor. What's been going on with you? You look as though the other guy might have won the round. Lie down on the bed and let's have a look." After a thorough examination, the doctor closed his bag.

"Seen worse. A couple of broken teeth and a nasty swelling to your cheek, your jaw will be stiff for a couple of weeks. The good news is nothing is broken. I am going to give you these pain killers and once back in the UK, you must see a dentist or infection will set in. I suggest you take a couple of tablets now because the guys downstairs need to chat to you about this evening's events. Don't eat anything too substantial as it will hurt your mouth, but you can have a little soup and maybe some soft food." Stephen took a couple of the tablets as the doctor headed towards the bedroom door. He stopped, and turning around to Stephen said, "You may as well follow me, they are only going to come up and get you anyway."

They both walked down the tiled stairs and into the hallway where a door to the left was ajar with a light shining through the gap. The scent of food drifted across and made Stephen feel nauseous. The shock was kicking in and the last thing he needed was food. The doctor stopped outside the room and turned to Stephen,

"I think that they are in there. Have a good evening, stay safe and give my love to Blighty on your return." They shook hands and Stephen vanished through the open door.

He stopped and looked around in awe as he found himself on a beautiful terrace where five white tables stood on a blue and white tiled floor. Ornate tiles of the same colour also covered every wall leading up to an elegantly painted ceiling. Three golden chandeliers hung down illuminating the whole area in a warm glow while white Greek pillars stood guard over a manicured lawn. The previous notion of cold air had evaporated as he realized it was cool, but not cold, a typical February evening in Tunis.

“Take a seat Stephen, we will be over in a minute.” The voice caught him by surprise as it seemed to come from another room. He looked over as Trevor and another man of similar age walked through an interconnecting door. They joined Stephen at one of the white tables, each sitting on a wrought iron chair covered with a luxurious padded cushion.

“Can I get you a drink, tea, coffee or something stronger?” Trevor asked him. “Just a water please,” Stephen replied and he slipped back through the door and returned with a small glass and a plastic water bottle.

“We have a little food prepared but firstly we need to complete some paperwork and fill in the details,” Trevor continued. “You know it’s not every day we deal with a Senior Prison Governor turning up here after torture and a fire fight. Bit strange don’t you think?” Stephen looked at him,

“Who mentioned that I am a member of the Prison Service?” Trevor moved in his seat a little awkwardly. His colleague tossed him a glance before interjecting.

“We know a lot about you Stephen, including why you are here. What we are unsure about is why you were taken captive and questioned. It doesn’t make sense to me. You are a minor cog in the wheel, over here to ask a few questions. If the people who took you wanted you out of the way they would have killed you in the street. No, they wanted something from you.” He sat studying Stephen for a short while before divulging some more information.

“The English guy who took you is known to us, we have followed him around the world. He is a member of a privately run security team and acts as a consultant to Security Services for any Government where dirty tasks need doing. He is a deniable asset as we say and he doesn’t make mistakes.” Again, he stopped and stared at Stephen. “What did he want?”

“I don’t know, he kept asking me about a parcel that he wanted. I don’t have one. I don’t know what he was talking about.”

“I don’t believe you Stephen, as I said he doesn’t make mistakes. What is in the parcel?”

“Like I said, I don’t have a parcel. Thanks for arranging the Calvary to get me out but I honestly have nothing to give you.” Stephen took a cautious sip of his water, waiting for the pain to hit from his teeth. Thinking deeply about Stephens’s response, the man looked out over the lawn, as if calculating the conversation against what he already knew. He shrugged and looked briefly at Trevor.

“No problem Mr Byfield, it is a dangerous world that you chose to enter, be cautious.” He pushed his chair back with a harsh scrape and got up and left without a backward glance, leaving Stephen and Trevor together. They heard the familiar noise of the front door closing before absolute silence descended.

“Who was that guy Trevor?”

“I am not at liberty to disclose that Mr Byfield. Can I interest you in some soup?”

## Chapter Two

### HMP Northway

The Governor, Mark Skinner sat at his desk. He had worked for the prison service since leaving the Navy sixteen years before. More used to the Victorian local prisons in London, he decided to head north to try his hand at a new project, a brand-new state of the art prison. He felt that the Government were demanding a far softer approach, one in which prisoners made the decisions which affected them. Tempted by the promise of a blank canvas and fresh beginnings, he took a promotion and waved goodbye to the city.

H.M.P Northway sat in the middle of a large brown-field site just outside of Manchester, another desperate idea from a struggling Government who had long ago run out of ideas and prison places. Being tough on crime took its toll as the Government had to be seen to address society's problems of rising violence. And this High Security prison, holding twelve hundred prisoners was seen as part of the solution. The other headache the British Government had inherited from twenty years at war, was the rising problems extremist prisoners could cause. The public feared an epidemic of I.S. fighters taking to the streets and they were not far from the truth.

Grabbing his notepad, Mark made his way across a large tarmac area overlooked by cell windows and security cameras, as he headed to a small isolation unit sat in the middle of the establishment, the classic prison within a prison. Security was extra tight here and no one could work within the confines of this unit without the express permission of the Director of High Security Estate. Even then, the prison control room had to authenticate a reason for entry, it could be a royal pain in the ass if you were already late for a meeting. Having just experienced exactly this form of delay, Mark entered the meeting room. "Sorry I am late everyone, let's get straight on with business. Top of the agenda is the visit next week from the Home Secretary, and Mr Sadiq's visit tomorrow afternoon. Can I please have an update about where we are with the discussions with the Home Sec's office?"

Deputy Governor, Lisa Burton picked up her briefing notes.

"Thank you Mark. Susan Whitfield, Home Secretary will be arriving at the prison in her official car at 14.00. She will have her own unarmed security staff with her at all times. All weapons normally carried will be left outside of the prison in the car supervised by the driver. She will meet five selected prisoners from the unit who are taking part in a group work session with the Imam. She will then meet some unit staff before leaving the Prison at 16.00. We will have a Control and Restraint team available in the unit but out of sight in case of any dramas. I do not expect anything to go wrong as the prisoners chosen are near to release and are considered lower risk if that actually exists. Whitehall and the Met Police are responsible for security en route, we just have to get things right here and look after the publicity.

All journalists are security cleared and will be briefed by our Head of Operations while outside the prison in the visitor's waiting room, all domestic visits are cancelled on that day. They will all go through enhanced security checks as they enter the prison as normal.

We have a police helicopter arranged to be in the air and the normal no fly zone is in operation. Should we have an issue while in the unit, we have staff assigned to take the journalists directly to the gate. The Control and Restraint team along with her body guards will ensure that the Home Secretary is safe and removed from the prison once the press have been escorted away. The Home Secretary does not want a lunch or buffet and needs to be back at Westminster for a debate at 20.00 regarding Brexit. Can anyone think of anything that I may have missed?"

"Sounds very thorough Lisa," Mark confirmed. "How about you Matt, where are we with tomorrow's visit?"

Matt Phillips was a young Governor on an accelerated promotion scheme. At thirty-two, he had taken on the responsibility for the running of the isolation unit. He had volunteered for the role after having extensive knowledge of Afghanistan and Iraq while serving as a Captain in the Rifles.

He left the Army feeling disillusioned after seeing two Afghan interpreters thrown out of Camp Bastion after an argument over money. They had helped the Regiment for six months and walked out on family ties in order to help the British. As a result of a petty squabble with a civilian manager they had been asked to leave. The following day both men were found bound, tortured and beheaded. They had been badly let down and it stuck in Captain Phillips' throat. He threw himself into learning as much about Islam as he could in the hope of making sense from the chaos he found himself in. He secretly donated two months wages to the families of the dead men after inviting them into the base. Their dignity in the meeting struck a chord with him and he made the decision that the UK had no right to be at war with these peaceful people. He was invited to leave the Army after questioning the role he was asked to perform, and gladly accepted the offer of redundancy.

Matt then thrust himself into Islam converting to becoming a Muslim within a year of discharge. He also spoke at mosques about the horrors he had witnessed and the peace that his religion had given him. Within a few months he was approached by fellow Muslims expressing extremist views and Matt found himself drawn towards these thoughts and quickly became an active member.

When the idea of an isolation centre opening on his doorstep was raised in the local papers, the group were very quick to suggest that Matt should apply for a job inside the Prison Service. With the help of some Senior Prison Service managers who also shared these views, they assisted him with the application process and once successfully enrolled onto the promotion scheme, they manipulated him into the unit. The fit was perfect for the upcoming operation. In truth Matt had become a ticking time bomb for the Government.

Matt looked up at Mark. "The plan for the Home Sec sounds really good and I will make sure that my guys are all playing ball. It should be a great visit and good publicity for the unit and for the Home Secretary. Mr Sadiq's visit is still as we planned with no issues at all."

"Fantastic! Okay everyone, we will get together again on Monday just to run through things once more and I will chat to the five prisoners as well Matt. Let them know please."

"No probs."

Mark packed his things up, he was proud of the way the unit had been set up. After year of chaos in the prison service and the thought that Muslim gangs were taking control over many prisons, with poison being preached to vulnerable people in order to convert them to extremist thinking, the Justice Secretary had taken the brave decision to make separate units for the most disruptive extremist prisoners. The units were to hold twenty-eight prisoners, working closely with religious leaders, probation and psychologists in the hope of changing behaviour. It was one answer to the issue but others however, thought that these places encouraged extremist views. What was unknown to Mark and most others was that a small group of influential people had concocted the very idea of these units with the sole intention of the promotion of violence and terror.

Blissfully unaware of the danger in his own camp, Mark left the unit to visit the other areas of the prison for his daily inspection. Unlike the isolation unit, this brand-new dream was quickly descending into a nightmare. Opened one year before, it had rapidly lost the promise of hand-picking prisoners to take part in constructive group work. Prison cells with phones and computers installed along with flat screen televisions, were supposed to encourage prisoners to behave or risk losing their luxuries. Staff would have to knock on cell doors before being invited to enter and prisoners were to be called 'Mister' as a sign of respect.

This brave new world lasted around four months, before becoming openly hostile with prisoners hating staff, staff hating prisoners, and everyone hating the management. The phones were abused and organised crime was conducted from within the prison walls with prisoners becoming rich by arranging large shipments of drugs on a regular basis. Corrupt members of staff living and mixing with these same people outside of prison quickly found wealth from smuggling contraband into the prison. Staff had lost control and due to the shortage of numbers, had become punch bags for prisoners who knew that there were no repercussions and management who were looking for someone to blame. It was a bubbling pot of hatred that simmered, away from the public eye.

Every prison in the country had emptied their segregation blocks of the most disruptive prisoners, and these were all sent to Northway. Mark mused as he walked. At least in the London prisons they still had a number of staff with experience of how a prison should work. The staff here had no clue, prisoners ruled every wing, it was a mess and no one cared so long as the prisoners were happy.

That very evening, a young twenty-three-year-old lad from Liverpool was readmitted back into custody. He had only been released two days before and he had been given an offer too good to miss, a thousand pounds into his bank and the promise that his family home would not be burnt to the ground. His instructions were to fill his stomach with packages of heroin and breach his license so that he would come back into Northway.

He sat on the wooden bench trying to ignore the stares from those around him. All he had to do was get through reception, get the drugs out of his aching gut and do the twenty-eight days before gaining release again.

"You packed up scouse?" the prisoner sitting next to him demanded.

"No man, just fucked up with probation, bitch didn't give me a chance. Missed an appointment and straight back." The fact, he had thrown her computer screen through the window and was arrested the same day wasn't mentioned.

"Bollocks, you are packed with gear, you cunt. You better cut me in."

"Sweet mate. Drop by later." He didn't want to draw any attention and to agree was the easy way out.

"Flynn!" That was music to his ears, he jumped up and swaggered through the recently unlocked door through to reception.

"Fuck me Flynn, back already?" the officer looked at him, shaking his head.

"Love it boss. Can I go back onto House Block 2?"

"I think your old cell is still empty," the officer scanned his computer, "yeah it is. Grab your stuff, you can go straight up there."

Fifteen minutes later, David Flynn was sat on the same bed which he had left barely forty-eight hours earlier.

House Block 2 held one hundred and fifty prisoners. This evening there were only three members of staff on duty and every prisoner was unlocked. All three staff sat in the office, it was much easier for them as they saw nothing and didn't get in the way of anything the prisoners wanted to do. In return the prisoners promised staff an easy time, and at 21.00 they would all return to their cells without any issue. In truth, the wing was drug filled and a horrendous experience with some prisoners getting bullied to within an inch of their lives.

The Office door opened. James Sullivan stood at six feet four, a travelling man who dined out on the fact that he was Tyson Fury's sparring partner, a tough bare-knuckle fighter who feared no one.

"Boss." All three staff looked up. "Stay in the office for the next thirty minutes, you understand me?" The officers knew the score as one replied, "Yeah Jimmy, don't cause us a problem though." He turned and walked towards David Flynn's cell, en route calling over another three people to join him. Flynn was expecting a visit tonight, just not this type of welcome committee. His door was pushed open and Jimmy was blocking the view outside.

"Where are my drugs you little scouse cunt? If there is even half a gram missing, I am going to cut you into little bits." With that, the other three prisoners piled in and grabbed Flynn, pulling down his track suit bottoms and tearing his prison boxer shorts off.

"Ey Ey lads, easy!" Flynn protested. "I've swallowed, they aren't up my arse for fucks sake!" Throwing him down onto the bed they grabbed a plastic spoon and rammed it straight into his anus, digging around, searching for drug packages.

"I've swallowed Jimmy; there's nowt up my arse," he continued to insist, but the attack didn't stop. A hand was forced up as far as it could go, the pain excruciating, before the shit and blood was wiped onto the back of his shirt.

Now sobbing with pain, he curled up onto his bed trying to protect himself as the blood flowed down the back of his legs. Jimmy stepped back into the cell. "Hold the bitch down," he ordered. They



grabbed his arms and forced him into a kneeling position. Pulling his shorts down, Jimmy parted the bleeding arse cheeks and raped him before pulling his shorts back up.

"You've got twenty-four hours to get that package to me bitch. Don't make me come back for you again." He turned around and walked out. Still held down by two of the men Flynn realised that the third had filmed the entire scene on a phone.

"One fucking word Scouse and everyone out there will see you getting your arse fucked, you want that to happen?"

"Course I don't, you bastards, fuck off and I'll get your package for you." They laughed as they left the cell, shouting, "You've just got arse fucked for a grand!" Left alone he climbed painfully under his sheets, *fucking bastards* he sobbed to himself.

The sun shone through Flynn's window waking him from a restless sleep, he was still in agony as he tried to walk to the toilet but the pain was too great. He had less than twelve hours to get these drugs from his stomach. He limped down to the queue of prisoners waiting to see the nurse.

"I can't go to the toilet miss," he told her when his turn came. "I need something to help me crap."

"I will put you down for the doctor, he will see you tomorrow."

"I need to shit today miss, my stomach is killing me."

"Tomorrow," she insisted, "I can't give you anything without a prescription."

"Fucking bitch," he spat in the nurse's face. She pushed the alarm bell and staff came running from everywhere before Jimmy appeared and stepped in.

"What's going on? No one is touching my boy. Call all the staff off and I will deal with it."

A member of staff stood waving his colleagues away from the scene.

"Okay everyone, it's all dealt with." The wing manager cancelled the alarm bell and sent the staff away.

He turned to the Nurse. "Give him what he needs, I don't want trouble." Feeling absolutely alone, she handed over the medication and walked away from the incident. Jimmy turned to the manager.

"There's a good boy. Now go back and read your paper."

From the landing above, the six Muslim prisoners watched and waited. In one week and they would be the ones running this jail.

