



Heavy Duty Trouble

Iain Parke

With additional papers edited by bad-
press.co.uk

IN THE CROWN COURT AT NEWCASTLE

Case number 36542 of 2011

REGINA

–v–

**CHARLIE GRAHAM, ANTHONY JOHN GRAHAM,
NIGEL PARVIS, STEPHEN TERRANCE ROBINSON,
PETER MARTIN SHERBOURNE**

EXHIBIT 1

DESCRIPTION:

Reporter's notebook

Chapter 1 The Big House Crew

I'm a dead man talking, I know that. Realistically there's no way I'm getting out of this alive. The only thing I have a choice about is when I stop writing.

And despite that, and despite the fact that whatever he says, I still think it was Wibble who really got me into all of this shit, the weird thing is, he's also the only slim hope I have of ever getting out.

Saturday 13th February 2010

The fight had been all over the Press of course, TV, radio, papers, everything. So much so that even here, hiding out in the back of beyond, we had heard about it during the week.

I had my coffee in the small panelled back bar as I read the story in the week's worth of papers I had collected that morning, my shopping including the family fun pack of Fluoxetine, sitting on the chair beside me. There were the usual slightly blocky and pixelated pictures from CCTV cameras which always made me wonder how much use they could ever be for really identifying anyone doing anything.

But then it was an airport, so if there was anywhere that was going to have a lot of CCTV coverage, that would be it.

On the other hand, as the Home Office spokesman had pointed out, it was also a place crawling with armed police. So if you were going to go at it, I'd have thought that there were plenty of other places you would choose. Not that it had put them off, obviously.

A fourth man had now died in hospital, with another two apparently still on the critical list and under armed guard, so the toll could still rise.

As I read, the latest development was the Home Secretary's statement to the House, telling MPs how all overseas members of The Brethren and any known associated clubs would be barred access to the country. You could almost hear the sounds of sanctimonious cheering and see the order papers being waved in righteous indignation. There was debate about how this could be enforced in practice against citizens of other EU countries, and worries about how the authorities would identify, or even what would constitute, being 'a known associate' of any of the clubs to be named and shamed.

As if!

It sounded like a policy heading straight towards a hearing at the European Court of Human rights at some point to me, but then what did I care?

Frankly, given what getting messed up with them had done to me and my life so far, they could all kill each other to their hearts' content as far as I was concerned, just the sooner, the better.

Anyway, the end result at the moment was that Wibble et al were all currently in theory helping the police with their enquiries, although I could make a fairly shrewd guess how helpful they were actually being.

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By about 11am I'd finished everything I'd intended to do and it had stopped raining at last, so I began the walk back up the road. Climbing the hill out of town eventually I turned and picked my way between the muddy puddles along the rutted dirt farm track leading towards our cottage.

It should have been the quiet that warned me.

As I reached the gate and turned the end of the hedge, I looked up the slight rise towards where the cottage was set back on the plot.

They might as well have hung a sign out.

Right in front of the front door sat a classic outlaw hog, all the current bagger style with springer forks, apehangers and chromed risers, a set of flame painted fatbobs, footboards, forward controls, an open belt drive, fat back tyre in a soft tail frame, tombstone tail light, and slash cut exhausts spattered in mud.

Beyond it was a green Range Rover with tinted windows blackening out the interior. A real hood's car if ever I'd seen one.

I stood stock still for a moment, wondering what to do; options and scenarios, and plans I'd been thinking about constantly for the last year or so came racing and tumbling through my mind.

With the car there was no way of knowing how many of them there were, or where they were for that matter; there'd be some in the cottage no doubt, but the others? There could be some behind me in the lane, ready to grab me if I tried to make a getaway.

No. There was no point running I decided. I doubted there ever had been. And so, dreading what I might find inside, I walked up the drive and stepping round the bike, opened the door which led directly into the kitchen.

She was sitting there at the wooden table facing the door, looking directly into my eyes as I came in, quietly terrified, but just about keeping it together.

Sitting opposite her, with his back to the door so his Union Jack patch was clearly visible, was one of the outlaws. Another biker with long blond hair tied in two Viking style pigtails was lounging off to the left hand side of the room, perched on the edge of the thick windowsill, his blue, white and black colours reflecting in the cottage window behind him.

What was he, and where did he fit into the picture I wondered? Escort? Ally? Observer?

The third biker in the room was a striker who also had his back to me as he was at the worktop pouring water from the freshly boiled kettle into the teapot.

'Hi there Bung,' I said to the seated figure as he swung his head around at the sound of the door opening. 'How are you doing? I've been wondering whether you would show up one day.'

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He grinned as he saw me, 'Oh really? And here I was wanting to give you a surprise!'

'Well that's one word for it,' I said, as I pushed the door closed behind me.

'Are you OK?' I asked Eamur urgently, but as calmly as I could, locking her eyes with mine.

She didn't say anything, just nodded and then her eyes fell away.

'Fancy a cuppa? We're having a brew,' Bung asked, as though nothing had happened and shouted over to the striker at the worktop, 'Stick another one out will you?'

I knew the Irish biker's colours. He was with the club that was top dog locally, the *Fir Bolg*. Their bottom rocker claimed the old kingdom of Connacht, but given the border they weren't restricting themselves unnecessarily and so had also added the old Ulster county of Donegal to their turf.

'So are you here to look after them? Or me?' I asked him.

He looked supremely relaxed. 'It's nothing to do with me fella. I'm just here to keep an eye on things while yer man there does whatever the fuck it is he's here to do, and to then make sure he fucks off home again.'

'But I thought you guys were part of the confederation. Pledged to remain independents and to stay out of this international type of shit?

'So who's getting involved?' He shrugged as the striker passed him a steaming mug, 'They just wanted a visit so they asked nicely if they could come and you can't very well refuse when they do that, now can you? It wouldn't be polite would it? So like I said, I'm just here to show them where they wanted to go and then show them on their way.'

'You're their chaperone?'

'Escort is more what I'd say now, but something like that.'

'I couldn't have put it better myself,' added Bung, as the striker plonked a steaming mug of tea on the table in front of him, and then another one in front of an empty place across the table.

Bung motioned for me to sit and so, reluctantly, I slid into the chair opposite him. There didn't seem to be anything else to do.

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Despite myself I had to give a wary smile. Bung was exactly as I remembered him, a huge scruffy bear of a man. His jacket with his colours over it was draped across the back of his chair, and he was wearing a black hoodie with the words *Gangland, Film this!* surrounding a graphic of a hand 'flipping the bird' American style.

'Nice,' I said, nodding at the logo as I sat down.

'D'you like it?' he asked, glancing down, 'I picked it up at a bash in the States last time we were over.'

'Would you get me one next time you go?'

'Ah well, I don't think that'll be for a while now,' he batted it back to me with a conspiratorial smile. 'So how's life been treating you then?'

'Not bad I suppose up until a few minutes ago, I was quite getting to like a sort of normal life again.'

Bung shook his head dismissively, 'Over rated that mate, if you ask me. I tried to be normal once, it was the most boring two minutes of my life.'

The Irish biker gave a snort and then there was silence other than a slurping noise as Bung sipped from his mug and studied me over the rim, sitting there like some tattooed, silver skull-ringed, Buddha. It was typical Bung, he was always a bit of the club joker. On a good day, he could be one of the funniest guys I think I've ever met. It was just that for some reason I wasn't really in the mood at the moment.

It seemed as though it was going to be up to me to make the running I decided, to start with at least.

I was surprising myself by how calm I felt. I'd had six months or so to think about this moment, to anticipate it happening I

suppose, and to prepare, if I ever could. Ever since I'd got out, Bung, or one of his ilk, turning up to take care of business had always been a possibility, something that might happen someday, something that I'd have to be ready for. It had been a constant shadow, sitting on my shoulder.

The only surprise really, I thought, was that they had come themselves.

We were off grid here out in the rolling damp hills above the village, and quite cut off from the world. No mobile signal, no telephone line, no internet. It was the way I liked it, part of the attraction of the place. But back down the hill, stuck at the back of one of the shops cum bars that lined the straight main drag of the village, there were a couple of desks with PCs on them that constituted the local internet café, and which ever since we'd arrived had been a strict part of my routine on my weekly walks in.

The one-percenter bikers had gone online alongside everyone else, and so I kept a close watch on the biker websites, forums and newsgroups that shared those essential snippets of news about busts, bust ups, rats and undercover LEOs amongst the postings and announcements. So I kept tabs on the boards, reading between the lines, although sometimes I didn't even have to do that, it had been clear for a while that a power struggle had been developing between Wibble and Charlie for control of the English part of the club, with Stu and the Scottish crew under his command sitting on the sidelines waiting to see how they played it out between them.

But one of the club turning up themselves wasn't what I'd been expecting. As well as keeping abreast as far as possible with what was happening on the club scene; the alliances,

the patching in and members out in bad standing announcements that made up the outlaw versions of hatched, matched and dispatched notices, I'd also been looking for something else. Something that might sound innocent, even innocuous, but something that would actually have a deadly intent; it could be something as simple as a greeting, something like, *'Hey a big Irish Blue and White hello to all our Union Jack Bros and anytime you need anything just give us a call.'*

But from the time I'd spent with Damage and then watching Wibble at work, it was the way these things worked. Favours exchanged. No obvious link between victim and killer to give the cops something to pursue, and no actual involvement by anyone from the club in making it happen. Just a dead body and a series of dead ends.

With Bung here now though, I had mixed emotions. Despite everything that had happened, on a personal level I actually still liked the guy. Like I said, he could be fun, friendly and funny. But then I'd also seen what he, and what the rest of his club, could and would do without hesitation when it came to taking care of business. And of course, there was also what they had done to me, the reason I was stuck here, in hiding, trying to rebuild my life from scratch and living in long term fear for it.

So I tried to keep my anger in check. Anger about what I'd seen and knew, anger about what they had done to me, anger about what I'd had to do, and anger about how I was sitting here, now, having to deal with this shit again.

Besides which, we had a deal, I told myself. That was what I was clinging on to in some corner of my mind. Wibble and me, we had a deal, one that made sense for both sides. A

deal that gave me some protection from the club in their own interests. So why would they want to screw it up now? What had changed?

‘So what is it then Bung?’ I asked, ‘Let’s get on with it then. What the hell are you here to do?’

‘How do you know I’m not just here to see you?’

‘A social call? Is that it? You should have let me know,’ I said, an edge of bitterness in my voice, ‘I’d have baked a cake.’

Which led on to another question of course.

‘Who else knows you’re here Bung? Christ, more importantly, who else knows I’m here?’

‘Oh everyone,’ he said casually.

‘Everyone?’ I asked, shocked, ‘But I’ve been in hiding for Christ’s sake.’

‘Oh all the key guys know you’re here and what you’re up to, Charlie, Wibble, Toad, the lot.’

‘So a fat lot of good being stuck out here has done me then,’ I observed. Eamur had been right all along. If they could spy on me in an empty café back in London, they had obviously been able to keep an eye on me here across the water and over the border.

‘Oh I wouldn’t say that,’ replied Bung, sipping his tea and smiling in what I guessed he intended to be a reassuring way at Eamur, ‘the plod ain’t got you for instance. And so long as the guys knew you were shackled up here nice and cosy, and keeping your head down, then they were happy enough.’

The trouble was, however avuncular a grizzly bear was feeling, to someone who met them the first time they were

still a big scary animal, so I didn't think Eamur was quite getting the message.

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'What about Robbie?' I asked, remembering the snout guided furry missile I had been relying on.

'The dog,' I added, since it was obvious from the puzzled looks this generated that they didn't know.

Bung laughed. 'Oh don't worry about him; he's in the shed snoring off a steak full of tranqs. He'll have a bit of a headache when he wakes up, but he's all right.'

'So what about her?' I said nodding at Eamur, 'she's got nothing to do with this.'

'What about her?' Bung shrugged. She obviously hadn't really entered into his calculations at all. 'She's nothing to us. They said you'd got yourself a good looking ol'lady.'

'So what about her?' I repeated.

'Oh don't worry about her; we'll take care of her.'

I didn't much like the sound of that.

'Thanks a bunch,' I said, 'That's what I'm worried about.'

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'Oh come on,' protested Bung, 'now you're hurting my feelings.'

There was a snort of derision from the direction of the Irish biker but Bung didn't turn a hair.

'Don't be like that. Here we are just having a quiet chat. You know that if we'd wanted to cause trouble we'd have done it already.'

He had a point, but it wasn't one I felt like conceding just at that moment.

'More trouble than just turning up you mean?'

He chose to laugh at that.

'You're a bit bloody cool about it aren't you?'

'So what do you want Bung?' I asked. 'You're not here to snuff me I guess. As you say, if you wanted to do that then either you'd have got his mob to do it,' I said, nodding across the room to where the *Fir Bolg* patch was perched on the windowsill, cradling his cup in both hands and looking dubiously out of the window and up at the sky as if judging the chances of more rain, 'or you'd be on with it by now. So if it isn't that, what do you want?'

'Oh that's easy. They want you.'

'They want me? Who's they in this conversation Bung?'

'Wibble...'

And Charlie,' he added, almost as an afterthought.

So Bung was still working for Wibble I decided, not that I'd ever expected anything different.

'I'm not sure I fancy that. Don't forget I've had Wibble's offers before, and look where it got me.'

He laughed at that too.

But meanwhile I was thinking furiously. Wibble and Charlie? That surprised me. One or the other I could understand. I wouldn't much like it but I could understand it. But both of them? That didn't make much sense.

But was Bung really suggesting that they had agreed they wanted to see me? Or was it just a coincidence?

'Jointly or separately?' I asked.

'Well they're both inside,' he said, 'but they're at different clinks...'

'No,' I interrupted, 'I meant, do they each want to see me separately, or is this a joint request by both of them?'

'Well, that's a bit of a tricky one,' he rubbed his beard thoughtfully as he decided and then said. 'Well I reckon it's sort of jointly, if you see what I mean.'

Which I didn't at all, but I let that pass for the moment.

'So why have they asked you to come Bung?'

'Because they thought there'd be more chance of you coming if I popped along and asked nicely.'

'What, rather than have Scroat pitch up for example?' I asked.

'Well yes, now you mention it. He'd be Charlie's choice.'

I bet he would, I thought, suppressing an inward shudder at the prospect.

'So why me Bung? Why do they want to see me? What can I do for them, what do they want me to do?'

'Negotiate,' he said simply.

'Negotiate?' I asked, 'Negotiate what? With whom?'

'A deal,' he shrugged as if it was a daft question, 'What else do you negotiate?'

I still didn't get it, what sort of a deal I wondered, about what?

Then Eamur chipped in for the first time, 'they need someone to act as a broker between them, that's it isn't it?'

Bung nodded.

'They want someone they both know to sort out a deal between them,' she continued, 'that's what this is all about isn't it?'

'You see, your bird here's smart, she gets it,' he said approvingly. Out of the corner of my eye I could see Eamur bristling at him although Bung seemed completely oblivious, 'They need to sort out a deal and they want you to help them do it.'

Christ, so that was it, shuttle diplomacy? I'm Henry sodding Kissinger now, I thought.

'Why me?' I asked. 'To what do I owe this honour?'

He counted the reasons off on his fingers, and as he did so they had a heavy inevitability about them.

'Well first off it can't be someone in the club, it has to be someone who has a bit of independence of either side and so can be seen to be neutral.

'But at the same time it's got to be someone who knows enough about the club and how we work to be able to talk sense.

'And finally of course, it has to be someone who'll keep their mouth shut about it and that we know won't go blabbing to the cops.'

And on the last point of course I couldn't, courtesy of Wibble. 'So you've got a fairly short list of candidates then?' I asked.

'You've got it.'

It was taking my mind a while for this development to sink in.

'So indulge me on one question then, just out of interest,' I said, 'What if I don't want to come?'

Bung was having a good day, I could tell he was enjoying himself now as he just grinned at that. 'Well, it's up to you mate isn't it? After all, it's your funeral.'

Turning down Charlie and Wibble? Yes I guess it would be. These guys had an absolute knack of making the sorts of offers that you really couldn't refuse.

'But if you don't, well I think I'd invest in some portable protection, if you know what I mean.'

'Oh, and watch out for bikes drawing up beside you at traffic lights,' chipped in the Irish guy helpfully.

They surprised me with that. 'A drive by? I didn't think that was your guys' style? I thought you were more a little something under the car of a morning?'

'You know your trouble don't you?' Bung asked, putting down his tea, the smile suddenly gone from his face as the level of tension in the room shot up in a heartbeat.

'No,' I replied. 'Go on then, surprise me. What's that then?'

'You believe too much of what you read in the papers.'

'You forget,' I said, putting my mug down on the table as well and speaking slowly and deliberately. There was no way I wanted him to misunderstand what I was getting at, as underneath one half of my mind was screaming at me, we

had a deal, I'd disappear and they'd leave me alone; while the other half was frantically trying to work out what had changed to make Bung turn up now and drive a coach and horses through the arrangement.

'I used to write what you read in the papers.'

'Oh no we hadn't,' he replied, equally carefully.

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'So how am I meant to see them?' I asked.

'What d'you mean?' he seemed puzzled at the question.

'I mean practically. They're both inside.'

'Yes, and that's where they want to see you.'

'So how do I get to see them?'

'Same way as you saw Damage of course,' he said. 'You visit.'

Oh that was just great. I'm the bod they could use as a negotiator since I'm the one who can't go to the cops since Wibble had set me up as number one suspect for the murder of a copper that he'd carried out, and now he and Charlie wanted me to go waltzing into prison to see them? What were they on, I wondered?

'Hang on a sodding minute, let me get this straight,' I demanded. 'You want me to act as a bloody go-between? To visit them and shuttle between two guys on the inside and negotiate a deal? While I'm still a wanted man? How the hell do you think I'm going to get away with doing that?'

'Easy,' he said pulling out an envelope from inside his leather vest and dropping it on the table in front of him, 'with these.'

'So what's that?' I asked. Although with a heavy heart, even as he'd produced the envelope I immediately worked out what it had to be.

'Fake ID,' he said as though it was the most obvious and normal thing in the world.

'But what excuse would I have for visiting them?' I asked in increasing desperation.

'Oh that's OK,' he said, 'it's all taken care of. You're going to be a guy from their solicitor's office.'

I shook my head in disbelief, even as I started to realize this was really going to happen to me and that I had absolutely sod all choice about it, 'You have got to be fucking kidding me.'

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Of course they were inside, after the fight.

There had been a message in the Union Jack tabs that Wibble and his crew had adopted along with Stu and his lads. It was just that I'd been too dim to see it. The clue was in the names.

Union, the union of the two UK clubs, The Rebels and The Brethren.

And Jack, as in jacking in the old allegiance to the Yanks.

Listening to Bung explain what had been happening, it was clear that Wibble, Stu and Charlie between them had teamed up to pull off an MBO. Only in this case it was a bit more of a management bust out.

'Hadn't the Yanks suspected something was up? Once you'd got together with The Rebels and all?'

There had been bad blood between The Brethren and The Rebels clubs in the States for longer than any of the current participants in the eternal bush war could ever remember. It had become almost a Hatfield and McCoy's thing, a hillbilly style blood feud stretching down through the generations years after the original reasons and offenders were long dead and forgotten.

So the two clubs' British arms joining up in an outbreak of, if not outlaw biker peace and love, then at least mutual respect and working arrangements, wasn't something that would have gone unnoticed on the other side of the Atlantic, by either mother club. God knows what they would then have thought about a formal cessation of hostilities such as had happened at The Brethren's August 2009 Toy Run, never mind that latest development.

'Sure they did,' Bung said, 'but what could they do? And anyway, by the time they did work it out, it was too late, we'd done it.'

And 'it' was what the patch on the back of his cut represented; the one I'd seen in the Press, on the websites and now grinning over the back of the chair as I'd walked into the room. The one with the Union Jack coloured skull in the centre, the words Great Britain underneath across the bottom rocker, and across the top rocker the new club name; one that had never been seen before, until this New Year's day when the two clubs finally came together to put on their new patches, and declare themselves a new club, one that answered to no one in the USA and which called itself The Rebel Brethren MC.

Strategically, for the clubs in the UK, I could see that the merger made perfect sense. It was Wibble it seemed, who

else, who had named it Project Union Jack. Unite and jack it in, unify and declare UDI, combine the clubs together and take over the UK.

It was simple, it was brilliant, it was unprecedented, and it was impossible to say how very, very dangerous and challenging a step it was to the accepted international order of things.

In a club like either The Brethren or The Rebels it was a simple equation. You died, or, if you lived long enough and you were a member of sufficiently good standing, you might sometimes, with the club's permission retire, or you got chucked out in bad standing. Those were the only three ways you exited a club.

No one, but no one, just upped and left. Not as an individual, and certainly not as a club. Never had, never could, never would – until now.

It was, I knew, the reason for the fight at the airport, the logic of each side's position was inexorable. The Yanks wouldn't stand for it, and had come over to take care of business. It was just that when they landed, the club was waiting for them in arrivals, resulting in the stills from the CCTV images that I'd seen splashed across the paper, bodies grappling, weapons raised, casualties on the floor; and then right at the end, a strange and so far unexplained image.

It was a shot of two men, taken from a camera high up in the roof of the building, and facing towards the immigration doors by the looks of it, so it had only caught them from the back as they stood over one of the bodies. Both their faces were obscured by the camera angle but all the same I had known with a lurch in my gut who they were the instant I had seen the photo.

But what I didn't understand as I stared at the pixelated image, was why Wibble and Charlie had each come to a riot armed only with a medium sized stuffy bag.

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As the split had come about over the last few months it had made me reassess everything I had seen so far in my dealings with Damage, Wibble and The Brethren, and made me question my understanding of what I had seen.

It was a moot point now I guessed, but it had made me wonder. The big mystery in my mind was still who had killed Damage and why. Knowing now about where the club politics had been heading I asked myself if it had actually been Thommo who'd moved against Damage in a bid to become national Prez?

I had always dismissed the thought before as it seemed to me that it would have been a very, very risky plan without some serious back up given Damage's position, contacts, and importance to the club's business.

But the present situation cast it all in a new light. What, I wondered to myself, if the roots of this went back further? What if Thommo had believed he actually did have back up? Serious back up? What if the Yanks had put him up to it? To stop Damage who had been planning the split that Wibble had then gone on to execute?

Did that also explain the decision about succession? That Thommo had tried to become Prez but had been held off by the Damage loyalists led by Wibble? If so, that could explain why it was so sudden, and why it had been a triumvirate, as a way of balancing, at least temporarily, the potentially warring factions.

It would also explain the beef between Wibble and Thommo which had always seemed to me to have had a real personal edge to it.

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But back at the here and now, they had worked out the practicalities, I'd give them that.

When I'd got out last time it had been in a hurry and I'd had to make my own arrangements. 'We ain't no fucking travel agents,' Wibble had growled at me when I'd started to ask about where I should go. And to be honest, once I'd got my head around the fact I was still alive at all and started thinking straight, I realized of course that The Brethren were the last people in the world I wanted knowing about where I was intending to hole up.

This time it seemed was going to be different.

Bung and the striker were here to collect me, but I had time to pack some things.

'Oh don't worry too much, we won't be that long,' said Bung vaguely, when I asked how much to take. The plan was they would drive me back over the border and across to Belfast airport. Bung and I were to fly back, and he would sort me out with a hotel room once we got there, the striker got the balls ache of the ferry and then slogging it down from Stranraer to get the car back.

The striker wasn't saying a word, but then I didn't expect him to. Strikers very much lived a speak when spoken to sort of life. Training, Damage had called it. While a full patch was around, a striker would always defer to let them do the talking. The hierarchy and etiquette was ferociously strict. A striker had to give respect to a patch, not only of his own

club, but of any other friendly club, since as the logic went, even as part of another club, the man had earned his patch, whereas the striker hadn't. A striker couldn't even call a club member 'brother'; he hadn't yet earned the right.

'So Bung's your sponsor huh?' I asked.

The guy stayed dumb until a shrug from Bung let him know he could respond, but even then he just nodded warily.

'You want to ask him what happened to the last guy.'

'I don't give a shit what happened to the last guy,' he said.

OK, so he had to hold his end up. I got that.

Frankly, after the crap talking to a striker had gotten me into last time, he was on his own. What the hell. If he'd chosen to get involved with this mob, it was his look out, not mine.

'So what am I supposed to use to pay for this trip of yours?' I asked turning back to Bung.

'You shouldn't need much cos you'll be with me.'

'And you're picking up the tab are you?'

'Not me mate, the club. Anyway, you can use what's in there,' he said, pushing across the envelope he'd put on the table, 'It's part of the deal.'

I opened it.

It was a complete package, a new identity. A new life almost. if I wanted it, but one supplied by, and therefore completely in the hands of, the club; so probably not.

There was a passport and a driver's licence, in the name of Michael Adams but each with my photo inside and a passable imitation of how I would write the name as a signature.

I was impressed. 'A bit of work's gone into these hasn't it?' 'Money, it gets shit done,' he shrugged dismissively, 'They're real, it just costs a bit to set up that's all. There's people who can organize getting it arranged for you if you need it.' It seemed it wasn't a big deal as far as he was concerned, just a service you bought when you needed it.

Apparently, I saw, I lived in Reading and worked at a solicitors' firm in town since I had a company photo ID tag on a lanyard as well.

'That's real as well,' he said as I held it up, 'and you're on their personnel records too. They're Wibble and Charlie's solicitors so that's your ticket inside.'

That was what was worrying me.

'As far as the screws are concerned there's going to be nothing to see. You're just going to be a bloke from their lawyers coming to see them about getting ready for the hearing. Nothing to it, no sweat.'

He seemed completely relaxed about it, but then he wasn't going to be the one trying to pull this off.

Then for access to dosh, there was also a debit card and PIN.

'Like I said, you're going to be with me so it's not like you'll need much but we'll keep an eye on it and make sure the account is kept topped up, so you'll have enough to pay for what you need to get around as and when, food, booze, that sort of shit. But not too much access, you know what I mean? So keep it budget eh?'

Sure enough, when I checked later at a machine, there was a balance of a grand to keep me going.

But the underlying message was clear, the club weren't trusting me to pick up my bags and go trotting back over the water just because they had called. Bung wasn't just here to invite me back, he was here to escort me as well. However much he didn't say it, we both knew he was a tour guard, not a tour guide.

*

We stayed overnight in Belfast and on Sunday we took the early afternoon flight out of the City airport down to Gatwick. Sitting shoved in together in row fourteen we ignored the stewardess doing her fixed grin, arm swinging synchronised exit signing and useless lifejacket training. We were just another anonymous pair of travellers in a hundred seater turboprop powered steel smarties tube with wings about to hurl itself into the air, I thought she looked a bit like Eamur.

But of course Eamur wasn't with us. No, she was going to stay behind.

As insurance.

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