

## **Chapter 15: Flight through the heather.**

About an hour after the murders of three policemen had taken place, a Lotus Europa was parked on the street not too far from Armley Lyon's Edinburgh apartment; its owner who had driven all the way from London in the two-seater sports car were currently having a conversation with a plain clothes detective when Scrimshaw approached them. The latter had visited Waverley station in order to make further enquiries. She had been given information that was beneficial.

"I'll contact you as and when I can for any updates on the events that have taken place here." Baker glanced at the scenes of crime that had occurred in the city of Edinburgh earlier. A card, containing the policewoman's contact details on it, she now placed inside one of her jacket pockets. "I'll expect your full co-operation, Detective Inspector MacGreyfriar."

"You have it, Ma'am." Detective Inspector Louise MacGreyfriar nodded. She was a white middle-aged woman wearing a tartan shirt beneath a beige jacket. It was also the first time that she had a face-to-face meeting with someone from WAGE.

Baker turned to Scrimshaw as the woman halted beside them. "Anything...?"

"Three young women in the company of an elderly man with a limp were seen at the station this morning." Scrimshaw stated. "Apparently, they purchased single tickets for Aberdeen so it's obvious they have no intention of returning to Edinburgh. Furthermore, they boarded the 10.28am departure."

Baker nodded and turned to the detective. "I want you to contact your colleagues in the force specifically, the ones based near any station where that train stops at. Have them check everyone who leaves that train at any of the stops along the line. Tell them to exercise extreme caution."

MacGreyfriar nodded. "I'll do that right away."

Scrimshaw turned from Baker to the detective. "It's due to stop at Arbroath at noon...then, about fifteen minutes later it's due at Montrose and twenty-five minutes afterwards at Stonehaven before finally reaching Aberdeen."

MacGreyfriar nodded. "That'll be an inter-city train from London."

With a frown, Scrimshaw glanced at her wrist-watch. "It should be approaching Dundee right about now."

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True enough; the train that had departed Edinburgh Waverly at 10.28am was just starting to rumble across the railway bridge that stretched over the River Tay. In no time at all, it began to slow down further still as it approached Dundee station. Passengers who were about to leave the train began to form a queue near the exit doors. Those who were travelling further to the north remained seated.

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It wasn't long before a certain black sports car was being driven across a road bridge that stretched over the Firth of Forth. Once more, the Lotus Europa was being driven in a northerly direction, though it was now proceeding at a somewhat slower speed than it had been during the early hours of the morning. This was partly due to the heavy build-up of traffic that the small vehicle shared the same route with.

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At precisely twelve noon, the inter-city service from London King's Cross pulled out of the station, only to continue its journey in a north-easterly direction. As the train was departing, two uniformed police constables hurried onto a platform where they drew to a halt and approached some travellers who had just arrived at Arbroath. This activity did not go un-noticed by a certain group of four who were on board.

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Still using a disguise similar to that of his father, Dave Alan glanced at the three women who were travelling with him; he was aware that one of them had indeed noticed the arrival of the uniformed police on the platform. "Did you see what I just saw?" The man asked his female travelling companions.

Rhythm nodded. "I noticed." She shrugged. "Probably just a routine check," she frowned. "It might not have any connection to us."

Dave Alan nodded. "True. Still, I think it might be a good idea to leave one stop earlier...before the train reaches Aberdeen."

"You know this area better than we do." Sonata smiled.

Dave Alan smiled back. "We can leave the train at Stonehaven."

"There won't be any problems doing that?" Concerto asked.

Dave Alan shook his head. "We've got details about public transport operating in the area." He smiled. "We'll be able to travel by road inland to Banchory and then continue towards the west from there."

"Is Stonehaven the next stop?" Rhythm asked.

Dave Alan shook his head. "There's one more stop before then."

"Any particular reason why we should not get off at that...?" Sonata asked.

"More choices in selecting a bus or coach to travel on," Dave Alan interrupted.

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In the meantime, two other relations of Dave Alan were travelling west on the M8 motorway in the direction of Glasgow. Sindyann was behind the wheel of an estate car and was driving along at an average cruising speed. Her father, still in disguise

and sitting beside her, knew that they had plenty of time to reach their destination on Scotland's west coast. They were in no hurry.

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Not long after the train had stopped at Stonehaven, an elderly looking man without a limp walked along the platform in the direction of the exit that would take him out of the station. His journey on foot was not unduly noticeable by any of the four uniformed police constables that stood in two separate groups on the main concourse. Some several yards ahead of the elderly figure walked the red-headed Rhythm, while several yards to the rear walked Concerto. Further back, Sonata was just stepping down off the train.

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Having left the railway station building behind her, Rhythm came to a halt and glanced around the area at her surroundings. Carrying an attaché case, she stood still and waited until Dave Alan had passed her; she remained motionless until Concerto had walked on by; with Sonata eventually walking past. Then and only then, did she have another glance round; before bringing up the rear as she followed the other three in the direction that would lead them to the place where they would be able to board a bus or a coach.

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In a different part of Scotland, a Volvo estate was parked beside the pumps of a petrol service station; its five travellers were now outside the automatic car. Lincoln held a lead in his hand which was attached to the collar of the German shepherd, for it was important that the dog be taken for a little exercise as well; Wong himself paced about the area outside the cashier's counter.

Both Shapiro and Clouseau had entered the adjacent shop to do some browsing. At the present time, these women and their colleagues outside were the only ones who had stopped by at that particular time.

Eventually, the vehicle's tank was full of fuel and Wong replaced the nozzle back into its usual position; he must remember to obtain a receipt for the petrol else he might find himself out of pocket. The young man gave a yawn.

"Benji, I can drive for a while." Lincoln stated.

"That's a splendid idea, Donald." Wong nodded. "I could do with a rest."

"Well, it was quite a while since we left London." Lincoln commented.

Wong looked at his wrist-watch. "Over twelve hours ago."

Moments later, Shapiro and Clouseau left the shop, carrying a bag each.

"And prey what have Wanda and Josephine got there?" Wong asked.

"Six bottles of water, some fruit, some meat for the dog and some sandwiches," Shapiro held up her strong, well-made carrier bag.

"I've got some water, some crisps and some nuts." Clouseau raised her carrier bag. "Should keep us going for a while, it's not just the car that needs re-fuelling."

"Point taken Josephine," Wong nodded.

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Still wearing the similar disguise that his father had, Dave Alan and three women who had got off the train at Stonehaven were now on board a single-decker bus that was moving towards Banchory. At present, the four of them were sitting separately, so as not to arouse any undue attention. The public transportation they were travelling on had made good progress so far no doubt due to the little traffic on the road.

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Some distance to the south, a Lotus Europa was just starting to cross the road bridge that stretched over the River Tay, on its approach to Dundee. By this time, the afternoon sun was high; the weather was fine and there was not a cloud in the sky.

"Well, Jane at least one can stretch their legs out in this car." Scrimshaw was sitting in the passenger seat. "I'm not the least bit uncomfortable."

From behind the wheel, Baker smiled. "It's quite surprising how much legroom there is in this car even for someone as tall as I and parking it is a breeze. Luggage space is the main problem with this vehicle, Alice. It was my husband's car." She fell silent and spent the rest of the journey concentrating on her driving...though; from now on the two women were on first name terms.

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The public transport that Dave Alan and his three travelling companions were on, was heading west along the A93 towards Ballater and Braemar; the latter was some distance ahead. To the rear of them, was Banchory and even further to the rear was Aberdeen.

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Having passed through both Ballater and Braemar, the public transportation was held up in what seemed to be behind an enormously long queue of vehicles of different shapes and sizes; for the driver of the vehicle was unable to see the end of it from where he was sat behind the wheel. In the opposite direction, traffic flowed freely, travelling at a much more enticing speed. Alas, they were not proceeding ahead so well.

Seeing an identical looking form of public transportation heading in the opposite direction, the driver leaned out through the already opened window of his

door; thus causing the oncoming vehicle to slow down to a slow pace. A brief conversation took place between the two public service employees. A short while later, the oncoming bus continued on its way.

With a curious expression, Rhythm glanced across the aisle at Concerto; she nodded in the direction of the driver.

With a smile, Concerto stood up and walked down to the front of the bus; where she too had a brief conversation with the driver. Shortly afterwards, she returned and then whispered into Rhythm's ear who in turned nodded indicating she understood.

Concerto moved further towards the back of the bus where she then whispered to Sonata and provided her with all the details that she had just learned from the driver.

Sonata nodded.

Still in disguise, Dave Alan leaned out of his seat slightly to speak to Sonata who was sitting across from him. "What gives?"

"The police are looking for someone. They're searching every car, every van. In fact, they're searching every vehicle where someone might hide. The only ones they're letting through are motorcyclists."

Dave Alan fell into a studious mood. "Solo motorcyclists could not possibly hide one person let alone four." He lowered his voice a fraction. "I think that maybe they're looking for a man with a limp and three women."

Sonata nodded. "I think that maybe you're right." She smiled. "It's certainly no accident that's holding us up."

"The wisest course of action to take now would be to leave the bus and proceed on foot, or take a different route." Dave Alan suggested.

Sonata nodded. "I agree. You still have a map of the area?"

Dave Alan nodded.

"In that case, follow me." Sonata stood up and moved away from the rear seating area, with the man following her; she briefly halted between Concerto and Rhythm where she whispered two words. "Let's go."

Continuing forwards and with the man in tow, Sonata now led her two female associates towards the front of the bus; where for a brief moment the driver seemed rather reluctant to open the door.

"Open the door and let us off or else I'll blow your brains out." In her hand, she held her black pistol; which she now aimed at the driver's forehead. Then he had opened the door and allowed them to get off.

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A hundred yards or so down the road, Dave Alan and his three female travelling companions were moving on foot. At present, he seemed to have a limp; which was for the benefit of anyone peering out of the stationary cars and vans that were stuck in the queue of traffic. Immediately behind him was Concerto. Still carrying the attaché case, Rhythm came next and Sonata brought up the rear. The small group of criminals on the run proceeded onward.

Ahead of the small group a smaller narrower road led off to the right. While approaching the turning, Dave Alan halted and removed the map from his jacket pocket, where he immediately tried to figure out their exact location. Concerto halted beside him with the other two women joining them.

"Do you know where we are?" Concerto asked.

"Yes, I think so." Dave Alan nodded at the turning ahead. "We could take that route. At least, it'll take us away from the police road block ahead of us."



"We could proceed ahead and shoot it out." Sonata stated.

"Suppose there are some armed police ahead. Just how much ammunition are you carrying? Enough to fight an entire army...?" Dave Alan asked.

"I get your drift." Rhythm nodded.

"I say we proceed down this road. See where it leads us." Dave Alan started walking ahead. "Coming?"

With a slight degree of reluctance, the three women set off walking behind the man who was now proceeding onto the narrower road, away from the main A93 route.

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By late afternoon, four figures moved in single file on foot through the heather; the one out in front carried his attaché case with the three women bringing up the rear.

"Do you know where we're going?" Concerto asked as she followed the man.

Dave Alan nodded and aimed an index finger. "West into the Grampian Mountains and north into the Cairngorm National Park...then, with any luck we might be on the road by morning."

"Just so long as you don't lead us round in circles." Rhythm stated.

"We're not going to spend the night out here in the middle of nowhere, are we?" Sonata glanced round. There was not another soul to be seen in either direction.

"That depends on how much progress we make." Dave Alan called back.

"We might have to walk at least fifteen miles. Still I'm sure we'll make it."

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With a sigh, Baker stepped out of the building that housed Aberdeen's police station and approached Scrimshaw who was standing beside the car. The latter had a map of Scotland spread out across the bonnet. By this time, it was late afternoon.

"Well, we finally made it to Aberdeen." Scrimshaw stated. "You've not had any luck, have you?"

Baker shook her head. "The Gaffer did not leave the train here...nor did those three women."

"Did the train make an unscheduled stop by any chance?"

"No, it did not. I checked."

Scrimshaw frowned. "So, they must have left the train at an earlier stop...unless they jumped off."

Baker chuckled. "The Gaffer left London with a bullet in his leg which I put there while he was trying to run from the Penthouse Suite. No, I don't think he jumped off." She studied the map. "Stonehaven. That's where I'd have left the train. Our four suspects would then have been able to board a bus or a coach at that location."

"We've got company." Scrimshaw nodded at a figure approaching them.

Turning round, Baker took a written note that the uniformed police constable had just handed over; she quickly ran her eyes over the information. The latter confirmed her latest suspicions, for an elderly looking man answering the correct description had left the train at Stonehaven. Three young women, also matching the appearance of the three who were wanted in connection with the murders of three police officers in Edinburgh were also seen at the same railway station. "The four of them left the train at Stonehaven and appeared not to be travelling together. Still, they were seen boarding a bus bound for Banchory." The icing on the cake was the

last line stating that police road blocks had been put in place on all roads south of Braemar. "The police are checking all vehicles south of Braemar."

"Sounds like they're hoping to make an arrest," Scrimshaw smiled. "But you've got something else planned for one of 'em."

With a grim expression, Baker turned to the young man and motioned to the building behind him. "Lead the way." Glancing back, she smiled. "I won't be long."

Scrimshaw watched her team leader re-enter the building.

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That evening as the sun set on the horizon, Dave Alan continued to lead the three women in a solitary file up and up into the Grampians; their progress was now a little slower than before for they were proceeding up a steep hillside. There was still an abundance of wild heather growing here and there. The man knew that the temperature would drop even further after nightfall so he pushed onwards and upwards.

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In the early hours of the darkness, more than a hundred miles to the south, an overnight sleeper service travelled northbound. Lights affixed to the ceilings of the corridors of the various carriages, were on. As it passed above and beneath road bridges, it snaked round bends like a snake covered in silvery glitter; weaving its way ahead as it forged a path through the dark landscape.

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Later that morning, both Baker and Scrimshaw were leaving Aberdeen's police station; having recently received news that the driver of a public transport vehicle had been threatened by a woman with a gun. The incident, having occurred the

previous evening just south of the main A93 route through Braemar, indicated that the four fugitives were now proceeding over land on foot.

"So after having threatened the driver they forced their way off the bus only to proceed on foot?" Scrimshaw enquired.

Baker nodded. "My guess is that they spent the night up in the mountains."

"If you ask me they've got themselves a head start. Also, if they hide away in the Grampians one might never see 'em again. How are we supposed to catch up?"

"I've ordered a chopper." Baker smiled.

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After they had indeed spent the night under the stars, four figures moved slowly through the morning mist of the Scottish Highlands; a light drizzle was blowing along a soft breeze. For these four, their flight through the heather wasn't over just yet, for they were in the Cairngorms National Park. Still in disguise and still carrying his attaché case, Dave Alan led the three women ever onwards, as the group continued on foot over uneven ground.

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The Caledonian Sleeper service from London Euston was already stationary alongside a platform at Fort William station. A young married couple were the last two to leave the train. The first person who had stepped down immediately upon arrival, now waited for a connection that would take him further to the north for Knackeroff; his final stop would be Mallaig.

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Across the other side of Scotland on the east coast, a Lotus Europa slowed to a halt; it was soon stationary in the car park adjacent to Aberdeen Airport.

"You'll need these." Baker handed her car keys over to Scrimshaw. "Drive over to Mallaig. You'll find Knackeroff there. Tell him everything."

"And the other four...?" Scrimshaw asked.

"If they haven't turned up anything, they should go to Mallaig." Taking her boomerang from the passenger footwell, Baker left the car, walked over to the stationary police helicopter whose motors were warming up and then she was on board.

Having got out of the two-seater sports car, Scrimshaw watched the helicopter flying away into the distance; before proceeding over to the nearby building where she felt sure that there would be a place where she could buy something to eat.