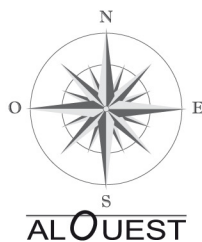


Malcolm Mackley

High Tension



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High Tension

Malcolm Mackley

High Tension

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Cet ouvrage a fait l'objet d'une première publication aux Éditions Publibook en 2011

This is a story about a young university scientist, Dr Tim Naylor and his research students who, in 1995, discover a new material that will replace metals and plastics in many high technology applications including strategic military utilisation. The discovery is challenged by a team from Euro Chemicals Company in Holland.

The ambitions and loyalties of both the inventors and the University become intertwined with university and UK national interest as the significance of the discovery becomes clear. A chance encounter at a Suffolk coastal village leads Tim Naylor to realise that he and the University are being manipulated by a mysterious government agency known as Pro Systems. The choice between the inventor's claims, the greed of Euro Chemicals and the nation's own interests progressively narrows and reaches a climax that allows no room for compromise.

Malcolm Mackley was born in 1947 at Ipswich in the County of Suffolk. He studied Physics at both Leicester and Bristol University before becoming a lecturer in Material Science at the University of Sussex. In 1979 he moved to the Department of Chemical Engineering at Cambridge University where he is now a Professor of Process Innovation. He is a Fellow of Robinson College at Cambridge and also a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering.

Malcolm is a scientist, an engineer and an inventor. His academic life has also involved balancing both research and teaching. He has written many scientific papers on his research work and *High Tension* is his first venture writing a book that is not all based on scientific facts. His past scientific and technology transfer work has given him direct experience of the excitement, difficulties and “high tension” associated with the discovery of a significant invention and the book *High Tension* captures the spirit of elements of events he has directly experienced.

Universities provide a rich vein of striking individuals to draw from and *High Tension* portrays a range of unusual and interesting people; however, of course, these characters are pure fiction and do not portray any particular person he has met in his academic and commercial dealings at Cambridge or elsewhere.

This first novel is dedicated to my wife Margaret who in the past has helped me negotiate my way through the roller coaster ride associated with invention, together with the real challenges of handling both multinational company and university politics.

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Chapter 1

Discovery

Tim stared into the test tube in front of him and saw a black shining mass. “Eureka!” he said to himself. “This is it, I really think this time I have done it.”

He looked around the laboratory, wanting to share the moment with someone else.

“Vicky, come over here and look at this!”

“What is it?” she said. “I’m in the middle of doing an experiment myself.”

“I think this time I have achieved my dream,” exclaimed Tim.

Vicky looked up from her own work and saw Tim beaming at her from the other side of the laboratory.

“Eureka! Vicky, I’ve made something that could change the world. That will change the world!”

“Just what has my Lord and master done then?” said Vicky, getting up and moving towards him.

“I have made High Tension and it’s terrific.”

Vicky looked over his shoulder and she too stared down at the test tube.

“That’s it!” he declared. “You are now looking at the world’s first sample of High Tension and its pure nectar.”

Vicky swept back her beautiful ginger hair from her face and whispered into Tim’s ear.

“And what, my dear Dr Naylor, is ‘High Tension’?”

“The black mass that you see in the bottom of the test tube is the beginning of a new era, the rising of a fresh dawn, in fact it is High Tension!”

Tim turned round and looked into Vicki's brown eyes. "You have seen it first and for that you deserve a very special kiss." He grabbed at her and before either could grasp the situation Tim kissed Vicky with a passion that surprised both of them.

"Ah, what is this!" declared Professor Ilga Kramner as he strode into the laboratory. "I see that I appear to have come at an inopportune time!"

Professor Kramner looked at both Tim Naylor and Vicky Hurst with an expression of surprise, disgust and envy.

"This University is a place of work, not a sex shop. I am disappointed in you, Naylor. As a member of staff, you should realise the consequences of cavorting with one of your research students." Professor Kramner then left the laboratory as quickly as he had entered, leaving Tim and Vicky looking at each other in amazement.

* * *

Tim could hardly contain his excitement, and went home to share the news with his family. The Naylor family tried to maintain the tradition of eating a family meal together and it was at this moment that matters of the past day were usually raised.

"I think we should open a bottle of wine for supper this evening."

Ruth was surprised at her husband's request. However, she went off to the larder and produced a respectable wine that she had bought from the local supermarket.

As Tim uncorked the bottle, Jonathon, the youngest of their children, chipped in with his laconic style.

"Drinking again, dad? Is it desperation or celebration this time? Our teacher at school says alcohol is really bad for you."

"Your teacher may well be right," Tim replied, "But this time, we really do have something to celebrate."

Ruth raised her eyebrows and listened with increased interest as she served out the casserole.

"I couldn't rest last night and in desperation I did some work, in the hope that it would make me tired enough to sleep. At about midnight, I had an idea on how to get around a tricky problem that had been confounding us at the laboratory for some years. When I went to work this morning, I set up an experiment using this new idea and by midday had produced ten grams of a material I am going to call High Tension."

There was silence around the table. Ruth and the children, Jonathon and Laura, sensed that they had been told something of importance but they didn't really have a clue as to the full significance of what their father was saying. None of them really understood what he did at the university laboratory.

Tim saw their blank faces and explained.

"I think I've made a new material that could revolutionise much of contemporary life."

"Good gracious!" cried Ruth.

"Blimey!" exclaimed Jonathon.

"Well done, dad!" shouted Laura.

"It's stunningly simple really," continued Tim "This new material is better than anything else. Plastics are too soft, metals too heavy and ceramics too brittle. High Tension beats them all, in fact, diamond is about the only thing that gets anywhere near to High Tension."

Ruth asked, "Are you saying that you have discovered a wonder material?"

"Yes." replied Tim.

They all looked at each other and laughed.

"Wow! That's fantastic dad," Jonathon exclaimed. "And we just thought you were some kind of academic nutcase."

"Thanks," replied Tim, "I'm glad you don't think your father is totally worthless."

"What does this stuff look like?" asked Laura.

"Well," Tim said rather hesitantly as he pulled out a tissue from his pocket. "This is it."

The children and Ruth were stunned. All they could see was a black blob of something that looked like a cross between a pebble and a piece of chewing gum.

Jonathon was immediately sceptical. "Are you sure this is a world shattering discovery, dad?"

"Not absolutely sure Jonathon, but from the tests I've carried out so far, I am pretty well convinced that this ten grams of High Tension represents the beginning of a new era for the design of rockets, aircraft, vehicles and ships."

"Have you told anybody about this yet?" asked Ruth.

Tim turned round to her and smiled. "Only Vicky at the laboratory and you lot and I'll shoot any of you if you tell your friends. This could be a very important discovery and I don't want anybody to know about it until I'm ready to tell the world."

Ruth responded: "But, surely you must tell someone in the University about it?"

"Yes, in my own good time. When I'm sure of my facts I'll go and see the university's Chief Administrator sometime next week. I might even have to see the Vice Chancellor, Sir Alec Taylor."

There was an air of anticipation and excitement about the remainder of the meal and the rest of the evening but Tim had declared that until further tests had been carried out, he would prefer not to talk further about High Tension and that the family should erase it from their minds until the overall picture became clearer.

That night Tim and Ruth lay in bed together. Ruth moved across to Tim and kissed him on the cheek "You really are a clever chap, aren't you?" she said.

Tim looked across at her and then pressed his body onto hers. "To High Tension," he declared. "May it prolong

active life." They embraced each other and made love with the vigour of newly weds.

* * *

Ruth saw very little of her husband during the following week as he was totally pre-occupied with the discovery of High Tension. His life revolved around the laboratory and the experiments necessary to establish the validity of High Tension and its properties.

Tim had a small group of research students working under his supervision and on the Monday morning that followed his discovery of High Tension, he called them in for a group meeting. The team consisted of Jack "Brains" Blunt, who everybody at the university considered to be by far the brightest thing that the University of Winchester had ever produced. Brains' speciality was computers, together with interfacing them to complex experiments. The second member of the team and by far the prettiest, was Vicky Hurst. She did not conform to the stereotypical image of a scientist as she was a very beautiful girl indeed. Her long flowing ginger hair caused admiring looks from both male and females alike. All the unattached and indeed, many attached men in the physics laboratory were in love with her. It wasn't as though Vicky encouraged this mass love movement, it was simply that she was just a very beautiful girl in the prime of her life.

In some ways, Vicky's beauty was a handicap to her scientific endeavours. Intellectually, she was no match for Jack "Brains" Blunt, but equally, she certainly was not just a pretty face. Vicky was a dedicated and hard working student who was scrupulously systematic and analytical in all of her work.

The final member of the team was Roger White. Roger was something of a mystery man. The joker in the pack, his quick fire East End humour and accent gave him the reputation in the laboratory of the 'Cockney Barrow Boy'.

His jokes were spontaneous, quick-witted and sometimes extremely funny. However, Tim also knew him as a deep thinking person who would penetrate concepts well beyond what normal people would dare to contemplate. Roger was a loner, a joke, a philosopher and generally very good company.

Vicky, of course, was already aware of the great discovery, but Roger and Brains could only guess that something unusual was brewing, because being summoned to Tim's office at nine in the morning was quite an unusual event.

"Well, here we are," declared Roger. "I hope this is going to be worthwhile, it's not good for my image in the Department, being seen here early on Monday morning!"

"I'm most grateful to you all for coming," replied Tim. "What I have to tell you is, in my opinion, the most important thing that has happened to me in my lifetime."

Tim then went on to explain the discovery that he had made during the previous week. They all knew the general aspects of what he had been working on, as their own research projects were all related to each other's. He explained in detail the method of preparation for High Tension and then he outlined the tests that he had carried out to establish the properties of the material. The three students sat in silence as Tim described the data which showed that High Tension was as stiff as steel and had a strength five times greater than the highest quality tool steel. The density of the material was similar to that of normal plastics and so High Tension was a super-strong, super-stiff, lightweight material. He then went onto the technical aspects of the material and finally compared High Tension to diamond.

At this, Roger stood up. "Tim, is all this true?"

"Yes," replied Tim, with a big grin on his face.

Brains extended his hand and shook Tim's hand vigorously. "It's incredible, fantastic. What pure luck!"

Vicky also got up and gave Tim yet another huge hug, which again took him quite by surprise.

Roger sat back and said: "By my quick calculation that could equal a Ferrari next year, a professorial chair in the following year, and a Nobel prize in seven years' time!"

"Don't be so callous," quipped Vicky. "It's great news and it's very exciting; it will certainly put the University of Winchester on the map now" she added.

After a lengthy technical discussion on the scientific aspects of the discovery and the technological implications of the work, Tim outlined, to his now enthralled group, the steps that needed to be taken.

"Firstly," he said, "I would be grateful if each of you could help in preparing sufficient results for us to write a scientific paper on the work and of greater urgency, help me to prepare material for a patent application."

"That sounds interesting," replied Brains. "Are you able to take out the patent in your own name?"

"Unfortunately, no. When I was appointed to the university, the terms of the contract stipulated that any invention made within the campus had to be the joint property of the inventor and the university". Tim then explained that he would have to go and see the Vice Chancellor, Sir Alec Taylor, and the university's Chief Administrator, Richard Wainwright, in order to establish the correct procedure.

"I think we all realise the incredible potential of this discovery," continued Tim. "Obviously, until the patent is filed, I would expect you all to keep our findings secret. I know that is difficult to do in a university environment and in many ways, it is against our whole philosophy in sharing knowledge. In particular, please do not give Professor Ilja Kramner any indication that we've made a breakthrough. That chap is trouble as far as I'm concerned. Between you and me, he's not to be trusted. He's so ambitious, he would do almost anything for a bit of glory. Any

hint as to what's going on and Kramner will be on our trail."

"We also have a further problem, next week, a delegation from the Dutch company Euro Chemicals is visiting us. Again, it's absolutely essential that they're not given any hints concerning the discovery. From our own visits to their laboratory, we already know that they're working in the field of high performance materials and have some fifty scientists throughout Europe actively trying to do what we have achieved. Until the patent is filed, we're very vulnerable and complete secrecy is essential."

"I never knew science could be so exciting," responded Roger. "Would you like me to arrange for some of the lads from the university rugby club to offer you a bit of protection?"

"That won't be necessary," replied Tim. "But we have certainly got to be on our guard. This discovery could be the beginning of something very big and potentially very dangerous. However, firstly we must prove beyond any reasonable doubt that High Tension is as good as I think it is and in order to do that, I would like some help from all three of you. Brains, would you please get all this data into your computer system and generate some computer graphic plots showing how High Tension is superior to all other engineering materials? Vicky, we need technical data on the special creep and fatigue properties of this material. If it's going to be used for jet engines, aircraft wings, missiles and other high-tech applications, we'll need the full information. When you have the data, pass it onto Brains for logging into the master database. Roger, would you please use the recipe I have described and go and make a moulding with High Tension? Maybe something serious and something silly but I'm not quite sure what".

"No problem there," replied Roger. He thought for a moment and then came back saying, "I'll mould the worl-

d's strongest condom and also, the worlds finest turbine blade and leave you to decide which one is serious and which one silly."

There was a pause as no-one was quite sure how to follow Roger's comments until Vicky said, "Tim, I've been thinking. This is a very important discovery. Not just scientifically, but in terms of strategic and economic significance. Anybody with knowledge on manufacturing High Tension will be in a very strong position. This material could be dynamite. If you had a world patent, you would have the monopoly on the ultimate engineering material. That is a fantastic and very frightening prospect."

"I agree," replied Tim. "As they say, knowledge is power and in this case you're quite right." He sat back in his chair and looked at Vicky. "I must admit that I hadn't realised that by telling you about this discovery, I may have placed a potentially very serious burden on you as well." He sat and thought for a while. "On reflection, I should offer you all the option of opting out of this if you wish, on the basis that you haven't heard anything."

"Oh no, Tim, I want to be in on this." replied Vicky.

"Me too." responded Brains.

Roger held back momentarily and then said, "I wouldn't dream of telling all my Chinese and Middle Eastern friends about High Tension and as for my brother, who is a used car salesman on the Mile End Road in East London, he is discretion itself when it comes to secrets!"

* * *

The following week was one of hectic activity. Roger did indeed manufacture both the world's finest condom and turbine blade using High Tension. Vicky carried out a staggering amount of work on the material and established beyond doubt that High Tension outperformed all other engineering materials. Following one of her suggestions

concerning the manufacturing technique, Roger was able to improve the strength of the material even further.

During this period Brains had modified one of his own computer programmes and had entered all of the information on the manufacture and properties of High Tension into his own database. Part of his research for his own Ph.D. was concerned with 'expert systems', sophisticated computer programmes capable of analysing problems and data. By using his own expert system, Brains was able to cross-correlate all data, identify potential weak links in the material and generally optimise the whole process. The feedback from Brains' data manipulation was impressive. Tim, Vicky and Roger responded to this information and by the end of the week, they all felt that this was the real thing; an incredible discovery.

Containing their excitement from colleagues in the department was not easy. The tearoom was generally the focal point of discussion and gossip and Tim had deliberately tried to stay away from it, in order not to be drawn into a conversation that might cause an information leak. On the Wednesday, he passed Professor Ilja Kramner in the corridor only to be greeted with:

"Hello Tim, what's going on? I see that you seem to be getting on very well with our beautiful Vicky and I saw that chap of yours, Roger White, in the laboratory at nine o'clock on Monday. Most strange, what's come over the fellow? Then, last night I found your whole group working in the laboratory at ten pm. Are they up to something?"

Tim's heart rate rapidly accelerated even though he had feared someone would notice the increased activity.

"Of course something's up," replied Tim. "You know full well that next week we have visits from Euro Chemicals and the University Grants Committee. Both of us are competing for a research grant from Euro Chemicals and both of us are praying that some much needed government money will come our way. I've put my team on red alert

to enable us to give them as good a show as possible when they tour the department."

"Well done, Tim," replied Ilja with a cryptic inflexion in his response. "You're right of course. My good friends, Mark Lawrence from Euro Chemicals and Sir Malcolm Lucas from the government will certainly be on the lookout for signs of good work and excellence, although they're both no fools and will easily identify hastily prepared work."

With that passing comment, Ilja Kramner continued down the corridor leaving Tim wishing that he had a knife that he could press firmly into the professor's back.

The tearoom proved to be the most vulnerable area for maintaining secrecy. News had spread that Roger White was constructing a condom out of exotic materials. Research students and staff alike were actively probing both Brains and Vicky to find out what was going on. Even Ilja Kramner got to hear the tale and was heard saying to anyone within earshot: "Tim Naylor's group is in a real mess. They're hard up for new ideas and completely disorganised. To make matters worse, they are in danger of bringing Winchester University Physics Department into disrepute, if this tale about condoms is true."

Tim kept his head down during that week and tried to avoid the verbal onslaught from Kramner and some of his other academic colleagues who had also seized on this apparent silliness in order to gain a few points within the complex dynamics of University politics. It was not an easy week for Tim, nor for his group. The bond between them grew strong as they shared in the excitement and progressive realisation of the discovery, but the isolation between them and the rest of the Department generated an awkward and uncomfortable feeling which began to trouble Tim in particular.

Tim's mind had been working overtime during the past week, as the increasing complexity of the situation became

evident. The issue of trust had taken great significance. He had been an academic long enough to know that trust was a quality that could not be automatically assumed even within a university. Most academics were very ambitious and some were unscrupulous in the way they achieved success. The Vice Chancellor, Sir Alec Taylor, was a good example. Sir Alec was an extremely able man and universally acclaimed as an outstanding historian, specialising in European Studies. However, he was also well-known as a cunning and devious man who was quite capable of auctioning his grandmother to the highest bidder if he could get a net benefit from the transaction. This having been said, Sir Alec was considered, on balance, a good Vice Chancellor for Winchester. The government had squeezed the university budget to the limit and it was to Sir Alec's credit that by his cunning manipulation, he had enabled the university to survive without serious staff or student losses but could he be trusted, particularly in view of Tim's previous dustings with the university hierarchy?

The problem had concerned an initially minor issue relating to a student, Jenny Mathews. Jenny had started at Winchester reading Physics and Maths, but after her first year, she decided that she would like to switch to Philosophy. Several other students thought this was a good idea too, particularly as they thought some of the Physics course was being taught very badly. The university administration was not in favour of the move as, at the time, it was an active policy of the Government to increase science-based students. The administration put up every possible barrier to prevent the move of the Jenny Mathews 'gang' from Physics to Philosophy and Sir Alec ruled that it would not be in the interests of the university to allow this particular transfer. Surprisingly, the student body as a whole were apathetic to the university's decision, but Tim Naylor and a few academic colleagues were appalled by the situation and fought the issue within departmental

meetings and finally at the University Senate Council. One particular Council meeting became very heated. The Vice Chancellor made a declaration on the university's decision on the matter, only to be challenged by Tim Naylor that section 22.3 of the university charter guaranteed that changes of subjects could be made by students providing they had proved their academic ability in their original subject. The debate became very messy and it was a humiliated and very annoyed Vice Chancellor who finally acquiesced on the matter. The university's Chief Administrator, Richard Wainwright, was not amused either and Naylor subsequently suffered a severe verbal dressing down from him, along the lines that it was very bad for for the university to be seen by the public to be internally squabbling. The verbal castigation was followed shortly afterwards by Tim receiving formal notification that his application for senior lecturer had not been successful.

With this in mind, Tim Naylor was in a cautious mood as he walked across the gardens towards Senate House. The bright February afternoon sunlight was penetrating through the bare trees, casting shadows across the lawns. Students were passing by, but not noticing the world around them. The earnest looks on their faces reflecting the mood of the moment, namely work, toil and degree followed by economic reward with, hopefully, a job at the end of their endeavours. This was not really the time for reflection, but Tim's discovery had pulled him above the normal routine of his usual academic life. He knew that High Tension was both literally and metaphorically a powerful material. Handled correctly, the discovery could be of great benefit to everyone, indeed, all mankind but equally there was considerable scope for things to go wrong.

He lingered in the garden and wondered whether he should cancel the meeting with Sir Alec. Should he just publish the findings in the open literature and not worry

about patent cover? There were also dangers with this route as the paper would be reviewed by referees who might 'use' some of the ideas for their own purposes. In addition, both he and the university would not then be able to benefit financially from the invention, as once the idea is available in the open literature, it is then impossible to take out a patent on the topic. Whilst an academic at heart, the prospect of financial security, independence from government whims and fancies was not something Tim would choose to throw away and so with renewed determination, he boldly walked into the rather impressive foyer of the University Senate House.

* * *

Ms Judy Halford was most men's idea of what a personal secretary should look like. Judy had been the Vice Chancellor's Secretary for a few more years than she would possibly like to admit but she had worn well and she certainly knew how to make the most of her stunning appearance. Judy was stylish, sophisticated and very relaxed. Some also said that it was she that ran the University.

"Ah, Dr. Naylor I presume," welcomed Judy as Tim approached Ms Halford's desk. "I saw you walking over from the Physics Department through the garden. Beautiful day, isn't it? "

"Yes, you're quite right," replied Tim, totally overwhelmed by the warm introduction, her sensual appearance and her ability to read his own mind.

"I'm afraid you will have to wait a while to see Sir Alec, he has had an advance delegation from the University Grants Committee to entertain over lunch. I notice that you're also down on the list to see them next week. I'm sure you will be able to impress them".

Ms Halford was certainly on the ball and Tim was not sure that he had the necessary defensive armament to protect himself from such a creature.

Judy Halford continued: "You were rather vague on the phone concerning what you wanted to see the VC about. I hope it isn't that Jenny Mathews affair, you really didn't do any of us much good on that one, you know. Alec was hopping mad about it for a long time afterwards and I had great difficulty smoothing his furrowed brow". At this point, Judy made a theatrical gesture with her hands wiping her own brow and in the process exposing her more than ample figure to Tim's amazed and lingering eyes.

"No it's not the Jenny Mathews affair," replied Tim "It concerns a discovery and a patent application we wish to apply for." Before the words were out, Tim was wishing he had said nothing but then it was common knowledge that there were no secrets at Winchester University as far as Judy Halford was concerned. Judy was the eyes, ears, data bank and mistress of the university.

"How interesting!" said Judy. "You lot in Physics are so clever. I should say handsome too. You really ought to come down to the badminton club sometime and I could check out your full credentials."

The broad smile on her face cleverly left Tim uncertain as to whether this was an open invitation or a joke. He decided that life at present was complicated enough without Ms Halford muddying the waters and he elected not to pursue the point.

A half-hour wait in the proximity of Ms Halford is no easy matter for a normal male and Tim Naylor found the experience both pleasurable and distracting. Judy Halford would glide around the room in a quiet yet tantalising way and this, together with her Chanel perfume, created an intoxicating atmosphere. The acceptance of a cup of coffee by Tim also brought Judy over to his chair and her suggestive proximity led Tim to accept two spoonfuls of

sugar, which, for a man who had not had sugar in his coffee for the last ten years, was a most strange action.

It came as some relief when Sir Alec Taylor finally arrived from his luncheon engagement. He took one look at Tim and indicated where he should sit.

"Right Naylor, state your business as briefly and as clearly as possible. You should know that the normal channel of command here is student to lecturer, to head of Department, to vice chancellor. For some reason you have chosen to bypass Professor Kramner and of course both of us are aware of that stupid Jenny Mathews affair. You are not currently my favourite member of staff".

In a way, Sir Alec's blunt comments were of some relief to Tim. At least matters were out in the open and it meant that neither of them had to waste time testing the temperature and making detours which was so often the case amongst academics.

"Sir Alec. I have discovered a new material which I propose to call High Tension. Its properties are superior to all known engineering materials and the material can be readily formed to make components such as turbine blades. The manufacturing cost would only be marginally greater than existing materials".

"If this is true," replied Sir Alec, "I am impressed. Who knows about this?"

Tim explained the involvement of his research group and also his reservations about saying anything to Professor Kramner. "Before I publish the work," he continued, "I would like to take out a patent in my own name but with any possible future royalty from the patent being shared on a 50/50 basis between inventor and university. That, I understand, is the agreed position in my terms of contract with Winchester University."

"You are a legal eagle, aren't you, Naylor?" responded Sir Alec. "You are quite right of course but I would want you to talk the matter over with Richard Wainwright. Yes,

we're interested. The whole operation could cost us a lot of money but if what you say is true it could be in the interests of us all to follow this one up. That nutcase, Professor Williams in Biochemistry cost this University nearly a million pounds with his crazy patents on a cure for balding. Made us look bloody stupid too and I will not have that happen again."

After a pause where Sir Alec leant back on his impressive chair which was fronted by his even more impressive desk, he said: "Before I give you the go-ahead I will need to see all the written details on the supposed discovery. Arrange to pass this on to my secretary, Miss Halford, and I will look over the papers during the weekend."

Tim hesitated for a moment and then after a short pause said: "Of course, everything that I am telling you is confidential and I trust you will honour that confidence."

Sir Alec turned on Tim and in a flash of rage retorted, "Look laddy, I am the Vice Chancellor of this University, you trust me and that's that. Send me those papers by seven pm before I go home tonight and now, bugger off."

Tim was astounded. He knew that the conversation was over and there would be no point in continuing. He had certainly seen a new side to Sir Alec Taylor. A side few knew existed and one that gave Tim Naylor no pleasure at all.

* * *

At six forty five that evening, Tim took the complete computer printout that Brains had prepared on High Tension over to the Vice Chancellor's office.

"Hi, Dr. Naylor," said Judy Halford, as he walked into the office. "I was just off to the Senior Common Room bar for a drink would you like to join me?"

Tim was in an agonised state of mind. His meeting with the Vice Chancellor had left him very depressed. "That's a

good idea, I think I need a drink after this afternoon's meeting with Sir Alec."

"Fine," replied Judy. "Let me have those papers that Sir Alec said you would be bringing over. I'll put them in his file for collection tomorrow and we can then go and have a nice cosy drink for two."

The bar was very quiet at this time of the evening and Tim, with his Whisky Mac, and Judy, with her gin and tonic, easily found an alcove away from the centre of the bar. Although outside, it was now a cold and wintry February evening, Judy was wearing a light V-neck pullover and was looking her best. Tim suddenly realised that he was intoxicated by her presence and sophistication. He was in a dream. His world had changed completely and he felt himself on a roller coaster that he could not stop. What was he doing here with this woman? What had happened to reality?

"Relax," said Judy. "Whatever you said to the VC this afternoon has certainly hyped you both up. You are both behaving like cats on hot bricks. Alec has been a real bitch to me all afternoon".

"You are quite a lady, " replied Tim, as he looked directly into Judy's eyes.

* * *

Ruth Naylor and the children, Jonathon and Laura, found the weekend very difficult. Previously Tim had been on a high with the discovery of High Tension but now he seemed preoccupied with his own thoughts and unable to communicate with the rest of the family. He spent most of his time away at the University or in his study writing papers on High Tension. Ruth was unable to get him to talk about anything of significance and it was Laura who partially broke the ice during Sunday dinner.

"Dad, I find that you've been like a bear with a sore head all weekend. I thought this High Tension thing was

the greatest discovery since sliced bread. How come you're behaving as though England had just been beaten in cricket by the Isle of Wight?"

"I'm sorry, Laura. Things seem to have suddenly got pretty complicated. The stakes are very high in relation to High Tension and I've got a nasty feeling that I may be getting out of my depth. At university, I was taught to be an academic, not a business man."

The conversation then drifted onto other subjects and Ruth Naylor reflected on whether she thought her husband could or couldn't cope with the pressure of a major discovery. She had a chilling feeling that High Tension was in fact going to be bad news for the Naylor family.

Chapter 2

Euro Chemicals

The following week was an extremely busy one for the Naylor team at the University. Tim's first meeting was with Richard Wainwright the university's Chief Administrator. Richard was a sophisticated gentleman of impeccable breeding. He had seen colonial service in the Far East and he was a highly accomplished administrator.

"Come in Dr. Naylor, do have a seat," boomed Wainwright. "I have just received copies of your papers from the VC. He is impressed, very impressed indeed and that's good enough for me. I propose we go ahead and prepare a patent application on the basis of this excellent report. I will sign on behalf of the university and of course you will sign as the inventor. The terms of revenue sharing between University and yourself are laid down in your contract. This is certainly a step in the right direction for you. Pity about that senior lectureship business. However, this might help next time around."

The meeting had taken just a few minutes and afterwards Tim felt greatly relieved. It was as though a great weight had been lifted from his mind. He was also relieved not to see Judy Halford at her desk and being told that she was on holiday for two days seemed to make life that little bit simpler.

The two other meetings in the week were more complex affairs. They involved the separate visits of Euro Chemicals and the University Grants Committee. Vicky, Brains and Roger had been briefed on the Euro Chemicals visit. Tim explained that he, Professor Kramner and in-

deed most of the University had been courting Euro Chemicals for sometime. The objective was to obtain some of the huge sums of money that they had promised to distribute to European universities. In the last five years, Euro Chemicals had developed into the strongest, largest and certainly richest chemical company in Europe. By concentrating on a few strategic chemical products, it had widened its power base from France and Germany to include most European countries and now, it was actively trying to strengthen its position in the U.K.

For Tim, the visit couldn't have come at a more difficult time. With the prospect of High Tension he was now unsure whether he would need the support of Euro Chemicals but, of greater importance, it was essential that none of the delegates from the company got wind of the High Tension story. Vicky, Brains and Roger reassured Tim that they had plenty of material not directly related to High Tension that they could show the visitors. However, Tim was a very worried man as the previous agreement had been that the Euro Chemicals team would spend two days each with both Tim Naylor's and Ilga Kramner's research groups.

To make matters more complicated, the University Grants delegation were also coming to the University on a fact-finding mission. Again both Kramner's and Naylor's groups had been earmarked to show off their latest findings. The Vice Chancellor had previously written to all concerned explaining how crucial this visit was for the University of Winchester. He went as far as to say that he had recently heard anti-Winchester rumblings in Whitehall and that there appeared to be strong political forces active in trying to close down some of the 'newer and trendy' universities. These were difficult times and all members of staff should ensure a tiptop performance, if only to secure their own survival.

The Euro Chemicals delegation arrived first on campus and their entry was impressive by any standard. The groundsman had been forewarned and his beloved cricket pitch was commandeered as a helicopter landing pad. The Euro Chemical helicopter arrived on the strike of nine and the Vice Chancellor made sure that he was there to meet them. The team consisted of Dr. Mark Lawrence who was the head of Euro Chemicals' research department. Dr. Lawrence had a seat on the board of Euro Chemicals and it was common knowledge that he was being groomed as the next managing director of the entire company. Hans Van den Berg was senior scientist at the Amsterdam Laboratory. Although only thirty five, he held the number two spot in the research hierarchy. A brilliant chemist and an outstanding tennis player, most of his contemporaries considered him bionic. Finally, the team was completed by Sabina Meyer. Sabina was young, beautiful and bright. It suited both Lawrence and Van den Berg to have an attractive female in the party as the company was trying hard to give an image of a young cosmopolitan organisation rather than the male dominated chauvinistic organisation that it certainly had been in the past.

After leaving their bags at the University Lodge where they would stay overnight, the Vice Chancellor introduced them to both the University and some of the leading figures from various departments. Judy Halford appearing fresh from her two day holiday had rounded up Professor Williams from Biochemistry, Professor Kramner from Physics, Professor Richards from the newly-formed business school and Richard Wainwright from the university administration. The grouping proved to be excellent and the presence of both Judy Halford and Sabina Meyer gave the gathering a sparkle on the cold February morning.

"Our strategy at Winchester, ladies and gentlemen is to develop a modern and forward-thinking university which keeps pace with both the developing political and com-

mercial world. We see Euro Chemicals as a perfect partner for such a venture and we very much hope that you will also feel that way at the end of your stay here". Sir Alec was very good at these sorts of occasions. There was no doubt that Euro Chemicals were taking him seriously and it was clear from the outset that here were two organisations that could do business with each other.

During coffee, Professor Ilja Kramner monopolised Sabina Meyer. Kramner was naturally drawn to females. For sometime, he had fancied Judy Halford but he was not clear of the exact relationship between her and the VC and he certainly did not want to destroy his cordial relationship with him. However, he found Sabina to be most pleasant and informative; in particular, he was delighted to find out from her what Hans Van den Berg's current pet research topics were. This was valuable information to Kramner, information that he could use in subsequent conversations with Hans. Ilja's motto had always been 'when you pot the red, have your eye on the black'.

Judy was feeling disconsolate. Both Mark Lawrence and Van den Berg were fine men but they were being entertained by the university bores, Professor Williams and Richards. The VC was in deep conversation with Wainwright which left her circulating with the coffee jug. She had had a ghastly weekend and only her radiant smile disguised the fact that she was feeling quite browned off.

The Euro Chemicals tour of the university took in a number of departments but it was the research groups of Professor Kramner and Dr. Naylor that most interested them. Both Kramner and Naylor were working on the development of new materials which was the topic of central interest to Euro Chemicals. The original idea had been that Naylor and Kramner would work as a joint team. However, the personalities of them both were such that this became impossible. Academic rivalry is as strong a motivation as love and wealth generation and the chemistry

between Kramner and Naylor was such that neither could enjoy their mutual trust.

Euro Chemicals recognised the talents of both groups and they planned to spend time with each of them. One of the stars of the Kramner empire was Ronald Dick. In spite of his unfortunate name, Ronald was a bright chap. His work on diamond synthesis was outstanding and Professor Kramner was gracious in his praise of Ronald's work.

"As you can see," Kramner explained to the Euro Chemicals delegation, "Dick's results indicate a possible process route to the manufacture of large industrial diamonds. Of course, for us to show that this is viable, we would need equipment and researchers. I would estimate that a budget of five million pounds would cover the work".

Han Van den Berg looked across to Dr. Mark Lawrence, "What do you think, Mark?"

"Maybe," replied Lawrence. "The idea's good, although, of course, we too have been working on similar lines. I propose that both Hans and Sabina spend the day with Ronald Dick to get a full appraisal of the project and we can talk money and the politics of a possible deal tonight, over dinner."

"Okay," agreed Kramner reluctantly, knowing that this would mean Euro Chemicals obtaining most of their information without even the guarantee of a research contract at the end.

Euro Chemicals followed a similar pattern with Tim Naylor's group although of course Tim, Vicky, Brains and Roger held back totally on any hint of High Tension. Van den Berg was particularly interested in the expert system that Brains had developed on the computer. "This," he said to Naylor, "is brilliant." I could see the use in Euro Chemicals for this system in a number of our application areas, it is just what our customers want. Can you arrange

for Mark and me to spend the afternoon getting hands-on experience of the system?"

"Sure," replied Tim, somewhat relieved that they had not shown prime interest in either Vicky's or Roger's work which was much more closely related to High Tension.

* * *

Late in the afternoon the telephone rang in Tim Naylor's office.

"Hi, its me," came the smooth voice from the phone.

At first, Tim was not sure who 'me' was, then, rather belatedly, he realised it was Judy Halford.

"Oh, hello," replied Tim rather tamely.

"I might have expected a bit more enthusiasm than that, particularly after Friday but never mind we can meet again soon. You appear to be a bit of a star with Euro Chemicals and they have asked that you come along to the dinner tonight that the VC is holding in their honour."

"Oh," replied Tim. "Is that a good idea? My last meeting with Sir Alec was hardly a pleasant occasion."

"Don't worry about him." Judy reassured, "His bark is worse than his bite. Join us in the senior common room private dinning suite at eight o'clock sharp. Bye."

With that, she rang off, leaving Tim feeling decidedly confused again.

The party that gathered for dinner in the evening consisted of the Euro Chemicals delegation and the same university contingent that had welcomed them in the morning together with Tim Naylor.

"Glad you could join us at such short notice, Dr. Naylor," said Sir Alec as Tim rather cautiously entered the candle-lit room. "I guess you know most people here. Have you met Professor Williams from Biochemistry?"

Tim was duly introduced to Professor Williams who then spent the next fifteen minutes explaining in some

detail the biochemical pathway he had discovered to stop hair loss and balding in men. Professor Williams was himself decidedly thin on top.

After some twenty minutes of informal chatter, Sir Alec brought the party to order by placing his guests around a splendid mahogany dining table. Sir Alec sat at the head of the table with Mark Lawrence at the opposite end. Tim Naylor found himself sitting between Sabina Meyer and Hans Van den Berg. Judy Halford was opposite him but out of range for any serious discussion.

Sabina had obviously been forewarned that there was to be a formal dinner as she was wearing a most elegant evening dress. As soon as they had sat down Tim said to Sabina "I hope you don't mind my saying so but you do look very beautiful this evening; your dress is exquisite."

Sabina blushed and said, "Thank you so much, Dr. Naylor, you are very kind."

Judy Halford had followed the encounter from a distance, not knowing what had been said. She had to admit that Miss Meyer certainly represented serious competition but she knew that she had experience on her side.

Sir Alec and Richard Wainwright were excellent at steering the general conversation during dinner parties as they were both past masters at this delicate art. Hans Van den Berg, however, was particularly keen to talk science to Tim Naylor and he took every possible chance to probe Tim on his latest ideas relating to new materials. In addition, he took a great interest in Brains' expert system.

"We are particularly interested in your computer expert system. I spent the afternoon using Brains' programme and I think that it's got a great future at Euro Chemicals. Would it be okay if my colleague Gert Fieldman came over to try the system too? You met him at your last visit to our laboratory in Amsterdam in January."

"No problem." replied Tim. He was now feeling relaxed as James the butler had ensured that the excellent wine flowed freely.

Judy Halford's evening improved considerably during the main course and dessert. She managed with no difficulty to achieve the full attention of Dr. Mark Lawrence. They were a well-matched pair and their common interest in skiing provided a natural initial topic of conversation. As the evening progressed, Judy enjoyed seeing rather anxious looks coming from both Sir Alec Taylor and Tim Naylor as it became clear to all that Mark Lawrence and her were getting on very well indeed.

The most amusing collective moment of the evening concerned the condom story which was brought up by Professor Kramner. Whilst the port wine was being circulated with the chocolate mints at the end of the meal, Professor Kramner, in a voice loud enough for all to hear, said: "Have any of your Euro Chemicals visitors seen any condoms during their visit around the laboratories?"

The Vice Chancellor looked at Kramner in amazement and reflected on whether the learned Professor had drunk too much wine this time.

Mark Lawrence was very amused by the comment, he replied: "No, I don't think we have but we have certainly seen some pretty girls around the campus".

Kramner felt he had to explain further: "There were rumours in the Physics Department that one of Naylor's people was making a high-tech condom."

"Oh, I see," replied a slightly embarrassed Lawrence. Judy Halford was enjoying every moment of this dialogue.

Tim Naylor felt that some explanation was necessary. "As some of you probably know, one of my research students is a bit of a laugh and he gets up to all sorts of things. He is, I should add, one of my most able students. Have you met any of our research students, Vice Chancellor?"

It was a nasty little question for the VC as of course he hadn't met many of his staff, let alone students. The question did have the desired effect of steering the discussion away from condoms but Tim felt he may have paid a heavy price, his personal relationship with the VC.

"Well, ladies and gentlemen we've all had a long day and there's more work to be done tomorrow," announced Sir Alec at the end of the meal. "I would like to say that even at this stage I get the impression that Winchester University and Euro Chemicals can work very effectively together in the future. Thank you all for coming tonight."

With that, the party was over. Sir Alec said that he and Judy would escort his guests to the University Lodge and cars awaited the others to take them home.

Tim Naylor found himself in the back seat of a taxi with Professor Williams who immediately proceeded to explain in some detail his further plans for the genetic manipulation of hair growth. By the time Tim arrived home, he was feeling both very drunk and totally fed up with Williams' ideas on hair restoration

* * *

The following day was spent with Hans Van den Berg working with Brains' expert computer system. Sabina Meyer divided her time between Vicky Hurst's work and that carried out by Roger, Dick and Professor Kramer. Mark Lawrence spent time with both the VC and Tim Naylor.

Before leaving Mark Lawrence said to Tim:

"Tim, Hans is very impressed with this expert system your group has developed. We will be recommending that Euro Chemicals supports the work."

Tim was pleased in principle to hear Mark Lawrence's statement but concerned that it might lead to complications in the future, in relation to High Tension.

After the Euro Chemicals delegation had left, Tim had a debriefing session with Brains, Vicky and Roger.

"Well, do you think any of them suspected anything about High Tension?" asked Tim.

"I don't think so," replied Vicky, "but they asked Roger a few penetrating questions about condoms." Tim was able to laugh in relief and he retold the dinner party conversation to them.

In sharp contrast to the intense interaction with the Euro Chemicals visitors, the University Grant Committee was short and moderately sweet. The party led by Sir Malcolm Lucas spent precisely four and a half minutes with Tim Naylor. During that time they wanted a summary of the work being done within the group and an explanation of the work's relevance to the U.K.'s economy. Tim felt he presented the work reasonably well and cited the recent visit by Euro Chemicals in relation to economic relevance. This latter aspect seemed to go down particularly well with Sir Malcolm Lucas and for the first time in several days, Tim Naylor returned home feeling pleased with life. At last, he was beginning to see things clearly again.

When Tim got home, Ruth Naylor was preparing the evening meal. "Well how are things today, honey?" she said.

"Looking better," replied Tim. "Euro Chemicals don't seem to be the problem that they could have been. The University Grants Committee weren't a problem either and I even feel that the University administration is beginning to play ball with High Tension."

"Great," replied Ruth. "So perhaps we can look forward to a quiet family weekend?"

Tim said nothing as he looked across the kitchen at Ruth with thoughts of High Tension, Sabina Meyer and Judy Halford all racing through his mind.

Chapter 3

Patent Pending

For those involved with High Tension the weeks following the visit from Euro Chemicals and the Government Grant Committee were very hectic. Both research students, Vicky Hurst and Roger White carried out further tests and their findings reinforced the belief that High Tension was a wonder material. Roger was able to mould more complex shapes and he found that these shapes could withstand considerable mechanical loading, even to temperatures exceeding 900°C. Roger had formulated the idea that the material could be readily used for both the cylinder block and pistons of a car engine. He was one of the few students in the department who had followed the useful learning curve of completely dismantling his own car engine and rebuilding it. From this experience he had a good practical feel for the mechanical requirements of engines and after less than a month of working with High Tension he had manufactured a set of High Tension piston rings to go into his vintage Morris 1000.

"My Morris 1000 may not look fast," he boasted to Vicky and Tim Naylor, "but the engine has the world's most high-tech piston rings and they actually work!"

Roger's Morris 1000 was his pride and joy. He had immaculately restored the car which was twenty years old when he took ownership and had a recorded mileage of over two hundred thousand miles on the clock. The car was now in prime condition and he was proposing to drive it to the Bordeaux Conference on Exotic materials which Vicky, Tim and he were going to attend in April.

"I really hope those rings will be okay for the Bordeaux trip," Tim replied to Roger. "Vicky, I think you are very brave going with Roger in that car all the way through France".

Vicky and Roger were planning to use the scientific conference at Bordeaux as an excuse to take a short break, driving down the coast of France from St. Malo to Bordeaux. In addition to Roger's enthusiasm for cars, he was also something of a wine buff and he wanted to visit a couple of vineyards en route, one to the North and one to the South of the river Gironde.

* * *

Much of Tim's time had been tied up with the preparation of his paper for the Bordeaux conference together with the writing of the patent specification. Tim had planned to give a presentation at Bordeaux some months before the discovery of High Tension. However, with the unfolding of recent events he had decided to abandon the work on which he was going to report and instead use the event to announce the discovery of High Tension. The meeting had attracted over five hundred delegates from throughout the world and it offered an ideal opportunity to make a public declaration concerning the discovery and properties of the new material.

Before he could speak in public it would be necessary to ensure that the patent had been filed. In this respect the university had been reasonably efficient and helpful although the inevitable delay in filing the patent specification was a concern in relation to the priority date for the invention. The patent agent that acted for the university was a close school friend of Richard Wainwright, the university's Chief Administrator and this seemed to hinder rather than help. Tim wanted to move forward in a professional and prompt way, whereas Wainwright and the patent agent seemed to treat the whole thing rather like an old boys' reunion.

"What we need to do," said the patent agent to Tim, "is to ensure that we can describe an invention. This means that you have discovered something that has not existed before or would not be considered obvious from what is already known."

The patent agent was soon convinced that High Tension was an invention and one that even he could see would have considerable commercial potential. He then worried about how the claims of the patent could be made sufficiently broad in order that competitors were prevented from making use of the discovery.

"You see," he continued to Tim. "We must be very careful indeed to ensure that no-one comes along, reads the patent and then goes off and does something similar but not exactly the same. This is a classic way of getting round patent cover and, in many ways, you could say that by revealing the patent specification you are inviting people to do just that. Of course, you have a full year from filing the patent before the specification is available for inspection by the general public and that of course also means your competitors."

After a number of drafts, the patent specification was agreed between all parties. The patent agent was cautiously optimistic that most contingencies had been considered but he insisted on a meeting with Richard Wainwright, Sir Alec Taylor and Tim Naylor where he explained his position.

"Gentlemen, today I have filed the patent specification and I must say that this is one of the most interesting applications that I have had to deal with. However, I must warn you that because the idea is so new and the possible potential so great, the patent may be vulnerable to predators. By that, I mean competitors may try to infringe any patent rights that we may claim. No invention stands totally on its own. High Tension is in an area of intense current commercial activity and the big American, Japanese and European companies will probably not stand by

idly when they hear about this new 'wonder material'. I have done my best in protecting your interests but I am flying a flag that says beware."

Sir Alec's views on Tim Naylor had mellowed somewhat since their last meeting and he was feeling in a generous mood.

"I am sure you have done everything possible." replied Sir Alec, "Richard has total confidence in your work and we know we have been very fortunate to have such an excellent patent agent on this interesting project. I must say that my enthusiasm for this High Tension is considerably greater than it was for Professor William's cure for balding! Naylor, I may have misjudged you, Winchester University could yet benefit from this. Thank you all for your help."

The final sentence was said in a way that made it clear that the gathering was over. As they left the room Richard Wainwright then thanked the patent agent for his help and took Tim into his office.

"You have now signed the patent specification and I would be grateful if you would sign this agreement drawn up by our lawyers to cover the University revenue sharing if the patent makes a profit."

Tim spent sometime reading the document and then duly signed.

"Well Dr. Naylor, today, 13th March, may be an important day for you. Both the patent application and the revenue sharing agreement signed on the same day. I hope the 13th is your lucky day."

With that thought lingering in Tim's mind, he left Richard Wainwright's office and nearly walked straight into Judy Halford's arms.

"And I didn't think you really cared," exclaimed Judy as they untangled themselves from each other after the collision.

"I am very sorry," mumbled Tim. "How are you?"

"Missing you desperately," replied Judy with a very mischievous smile. Judy knew how to put men on the spot and she certainly had succeeded with Tim.

"Look," she continued, "Don't take life so seriously; I am not going to eat you. I think you're wonderful and even the VC no longer thinks that you're the arrogant trouble making idiot that he initially thought you were. Surely that can't be bad."

"You're very kind, Judy." After a slight pause Tim said: "I must go now, I'm afraid I'm expected at home this evening, perhaps we can meet again for a drink later in the week."

"Sure," said Judy. "You know where to find me."

As Tim walked back from the Vice Chancellors office, he pondered on Judy Halford; a sophisticated lady that could eat men such as him for supper without batting an eyelid. She could be fun, but also very dangerous and he wondered whether he really wanted to make his life more complicated than it presently was. High Tension should be his current priority as pieces of the jigsaw were now beginning to fit nicely into place. The time gap between the invention of High Tension and the filing of the patent was nearly three months and these had been worrying times. Any leak of information during this period could have resulted in others working on his invention and even filing themselves. This now looked like a very remote possibility and he could now start thinking about the future. What was the future? The Bordeaux conference would be the high spot of his career. High Tension had the potential to make him both famous and rich; something that he hadn't dared think about seriously before. High Tension had also brought him into a new world of high powered academics, industrialists, scientists and also beautiful women. Surely life was taking a turn for the better?

Chapter 4

Bordeaux

The Bordeaux conference on Exotic materials was set to be one of the most important conferences on the topic for a decade. Bordeaux is, of course, a beautiful location and this had assured an even larger attendance than might have normally been expected. Spring was in the air and although the vines would not be in full bloom, the countryside was waking up from the previously unseasonably cold winter months. The conference attracted both university scientists and leading industrial companies from throughout the world. In particular, there were strong contingents from the USA, Japan and China all wanting to know what the leading European researchers in exotic materials had been up to. Conferences served the purpose of learning what was new in the field and also helped scientists discover what everybody else did or did not know.

Tim Naylor's journey to Bordeaux was more complicated than expected. By the time he got round to reserving a flight from Heathrow to Bordeaux, he found that all the seats had been booked, which left him catching an air shuttle to Paris and then taking a train from the Gare de Montparnasse in Paris to Bordeaux.

The train was packed with French people returning to their homes for the Easter break, together with a large, loud-mouthed contingent of English football supporters who were on their way to do battle with a Basque team in a European Cup Tie. The train was in a state of semi-chaos and Tim was greatly relieved to find that his reserved seat was in a compartment that didn't contain any football sup-

porters. As the train swept through the undulating French countryside, the chances of him getting any sleep steadily receded. The Boys from Britain were in full song and steadily getting drunker. When the train pulled into the different stations, groups of supporters would hang out of the windows of the train and sing.

‘Here we go, here we go, here we go.’

‘Brits are best in our vests, off we go.’

Tim shrank into his seat and pretended to be as non-British as he possibly could be. He even went to the extent of picking up a French paper and tried reading what he found to be a difficult language. With darkness falling the crescendo of noise from the football mob increased. Tim was beginning to feel decidedly uneasy.

As the train pulled out of Tours station, he noticed several passengers walking along the corridor. Moments later there was a loud shriek from a female crying: ‘Help! Lay off you brute.’ A further shriek followed. The occupants of Tim’s compartment rapidly looked at each other but no one moved.

Yet another shriek came from the compartment next door and without thinking further, Tim rose to his feet and dashed to the scene of the disturbance. To his amazement, he immediately recognised the face of the girl who was by now surrounded by five very drunk football supporters.

"Okay lads, that’s enough, lay off or you’re in trouble and I mean trouble." There was an immediate silence. The English accent and Tim’s authoritative manner brought an instant reaction and they all momentarily withdrew.

"I think you’d better come with me young lady," said Tim as he gave Sabina Meyer his hand to help her from the floor. He picked up her suitcase and swiftly led her away to his own compartment.

Everything had happened in a few seconds. He picked up his own case and they both retreated to the back of the train and relative tranquillity.

Sabina said almost in tears, "Thank you so much for coming to my rescue, Dr. Naylor. You have saved me from the most terrible ordeal."

Tim could feel his heart beating and blood pumping round his body; academics did not usually have to act like knights in shining white armour and he was very unpractised in rescuing damsels in distress. He was also in a state of shock himself and very surprised at recognising Sabina, but an explanation rapidly dawned on him.

"Of course, you are coming to the Bordeaux meeting too, as a Euro Chemicals representative!"

"Yes that's right." replied Sabina "I missed my connection and had been waiting for half an hour at Tours station and when I got onto the train I was manhandled by those beastly people. Thank you so much for saving me."

They were both quite overwhelmed by the emotion of the last couple of minutes. It had almost seemed like a ghastly dream, but both were aware that it wasn't a dream and events could have been very nasty indeed.

Sabina said nothing for a few minutes and then burst into tears. "Oh Tim that was terrible, I have never been manhandled like that before, they were animals."

"I am so sorry," replied Tim, unsure what to say. "Yes, they are drunken louts who have no idea how to behave, I am so sorry for you."

Tim wanted to put his arms around Sabina, but held back. She was a very beautiful woman and strangely Sabina looked even more beautiful in her dishevelled and distraught state.

He said, "It's over now and its very lucky that I was there, what a coincidence."

"Thank god you were there Tim, I cannot believe that happened and so quickly too."

At this point, Tim put his arms around Sabina in a way he would have done for his own children. "You're safe

now, it was just an unfortunate incident. Do you want me to alert the police?"

"No, don't do that! I couldn't bear to see those horrible men again. I want to put it into the past."

"Okay," said Tim, "it's your decision."

Tim and Sabina were quiet for the rest of journey. The football mob's noise seemed to have become somewhat subdued as the monotony of the journey and quantity of alcohol appeared to take effect. Sabina spent some time in the wash-room, restoring her clothing and face to their original stylish form and both she and Tim were immensely relieved to arrive intact at Bordeaux station. The station itself resembled something of a battleground, not because of the football supporters but because many of the homeless citizens of Bordeaux seemed to be sleeping rough on the station platforms. Sabina and Tim stepped carefully over sleeping bodies and made their way to a waiting taxi that would take them to their respective hotels. Sabina as a delegate of the Euro Chemicals team was staying at the 'Palace' while Tim and the other Winchester University colleagues were staying at the more modest 'Hotel Jeanne d'Arc'.

Tim saw Sabina safely to a taxi and before she got into the car, he gently kissed her cheek and said, "Take care."

"Thank you so much for saving me. I won't forget your kindness. Goodbye."

* * *

The attendance at the opening ceremony of the conference on Exotic Materials was impressive. Over seven hundred delegates from throughout the world had converged on Bordeaux to hear the latest developments on the science and technology of new materials. There was a large contingency from Winchester University. Tim Naylor's group was represented by Tim and his three students Roger White, Vicky Hurst and Brains Blunt. Vicky and

Roger had arrived early at Bordeaux and were already fully conversant with some of the more interesting restaurants of the City. Their journey in the Morris 1000 with High Tension piston rings had been a great success. Professor Ilja Kramner and his research student Ronald Dick were also at the meeting as Professor Kramner had been invited by the conference organisers to give a lecture on their diamond work.

The Euro Chemical delegation was very well represented. No less than twenty scientists had come from their main Dutch Laboratory. Dr. Mark Lawrence, Dr. Hans Van den Berg and Sabina Meyer were included in the party and even before the meeting got under way there appeared to be a buzz of excitement centred around the Euro Chemicals team.

Tim was also feeling pretty high. He had sworn Brains, Vicky and Roger to secrecy over High Tension until after his talk. He had found the last few weeks difficult, having to say nothing to outsiders about High Tension. The pressure had become nearly intolerable, but within twenty four hours the secret would be out and he could announce to the world the discovery of a new and important material.

The Mayor of Bordeaux opened the Conference with a half hour dialogue welcoming the delegates to this, the finest wine growing area of France. The speech might have been interesting; but in true French style he chose to speak in French, only breaking into fluent English for the final two minutes. As is the case for most international meetings, the conference then continued in English. Ilja Kramner presented one of the early papers and he did an excellent job of describing Ronald Dick's work. Tim's paper was not until the following day which meant he could try and relax until then.

With so many delegates, it was very easy to miss friends or colleagues. However, Tim did bump into Sabina Meyer during the lunch break.

"Oh, hello, Dr. Naylor," called Sabina. "I am so glad to see you. I must thank you again for coming to my rescue last night. You were very brave."

Tim blushed a little and reassured her that anyone else would have done the same, the incident was best forgotten and he moved the conversation onto science. "There seems to be quite a buzz about at the conference and the gossip is that Euro Chemicals have something up their sleeve, any clues?"

"Well I am not sure," replied Sabina. "It seems that Dr. Mark Lawrence is going to make an important speech on something when he gives his paper which I think follows yours tomorrow. Rumour has it that Euro Chemicals had made a breakthrough and that's why there's such a large delegation down here."

"Sounds very interesting," ruminated Tim. "Tomorrow should prove to be an important day all round."

After a few further words about good restaurants that could be found in the city, they parted and went off to different lecture sessions.

In the evening, the Winchester University contingency joined up at the Hotel Jeanne d'Arc and went into the city, in search of a good French meal. Roger White took command of the party and directed them to a small restaurant in the Rue Vauban. The ambiance was superb and Tim soon found himself drinking a fine red wine with Vicky Hurst seated to one side of him and Ilja Kramner to the other. Tim started the conversation by talking to Kramner.

"That was a very good presentation that you gave today, Ilja".

"Thank you," he replied. "I was rather pleased. I thought that the Japanese and French papers that followed me were very poor. Several people congratulated me afterwards and, of course, Euro Chemicals are very interested in my work."

Tim took a large gulp of red wine and decided that talking with Vicky for the rest of the evening would be much more fun.

The meal was superb and even Professor Kramner became somewhat human after he had sampled a few glasses of wine. Spirits were high by the end of the meal and two taxis had to be summoned to get the party back to the hotel. As the group virtually fell into the lobby of the Jeanne d'Arc, Vicky leant across to Tim and whispered into his ear "Good luck for tomorrow, we are all behind you and the success of High Tension." Kramner saw them together and lurched over. "Come on Tim you're too old for that sort of thing. You've got the wife and children to think about."

Both Tim and Vicky blushed, parted company and went their separate ways. Kramner continued his journey staggering to the bar.

* * *

The dawn of the following morning was cloudless and blue. Tim had not slept well and he found himself walking along the river Garonne at six o'clock. He knew today would perhaps be the most memorable day of his life. All the pressure of the past weeks had built up to this climax. It was a beautiful day, a beautiful city and a beautiful dream. High Tension was going to be brought into the world.

The urgent ringing of a bicycle bell rapidly awakened him out of his morning trance and a few choice French words from the workman on the bike whose path had converged with Tim's restored reality to the day. A brisk walk back to the hotel, followed by croissants and coffee put him in good shape and he arrived at the conference centre feeling confident and ready to go.

Professor Navard was the chairman of the morning session and by the time Tim's paper was due, some six

hundred delegates were in the massive Palais des Congrès lecture hall. Following a short introduction by the chairman, Tim got up to give his address.

"Ladies and gentleman, it is a pleasure for me to be in Bordeaux and it is a particularly special occasion for me as I wish to announce the discovery of a new material which I have called 'High Tension'." He then went straight into technical details on the chemical composition of the material and followed this by some aspects of the method of manufacture. There was no noticeable response from the audience until he described some of the properties of the material and it was then that excited whispers could be heard around the hall.

As the lecture developed, people's attention increased. The industrial delegates were making rapid notes on the revelations that were being given on High Tension. In the half hour talk, Tim covered much of the work that Brains, Vicky and Roger had accumulated over the past few months. The story was told effortlessly and Tim felt relaxed in the knowledge that the invention had been fully patented.

"And finally," he concluded, "I can assure you that this material is no academic dream. One of my students has driven to Bordeaux from Winchester University in a car that has piston rings made from High Tension. I am told that the only problem he encountered was a force eight gale crossing what we call the English Channel".

With that he sat down to receive enthusiastic applause from the floor. Immediately there was a rush of hands raised to ask questions but the chairman interjected.

"We have just heard a remarkable story and I am sure there are many questions, but sadly we must stay with the scheduled programme, which means we will break for a fifteen minute coffee break and then re-convene to hear the Euro Chemical lecture".

Tim was momentarily deflated at not being given the chance to answer questions. However, he was soon sur-

rounded by at least forty people wanting to know more about High Tension.

"Hey mister, I'm from the New York Times," shouted an eager reporter. "Does this discovery have military implications?"

"You bet it does!" shouted someone from the crowd before Tim could respond.

"Have you taken out a patent?" asked a besuited Japanese delegate.

"He would be crazy if he hadn't!" shouted someone else.

After the initial excitement, Tim was finally able to respond to a number of technical questions. Ilja Kramner also pushed his way to the front of the crowd and shook Tim's hand.

"You sneaky creep. I knew something was going on at the laboratory back home. Well done! I am annoyed that my team missed this one but congratulate you." Praise indeed, thought Tim as he tried to force his way to the coffee bar.

Dr. Mark Lawrence from Euro Chemicals swept past Tim in the coffee bar and said:

"I think you better come to my lecture, it looks as though trouble's brewing."

Tim was puzzled by the comments and had little chance to reflect on it as he was still being bombarded with questions.

Roger, Brains and Vicky turned up on the scene and Vicky immediately jumped up and put her arms round Tim and gave him a kiss.

"Well done!" she exclaimed. "You were brilliant."

Word had travelled fast down the grapevine and the press had arrived in force and were ready to catch the moment of celebration. Electronic photo flashes were already firing off with great frequency.

Roger shook Tim's hand and also congratulated him on a fine performance, he also added: "You caused a real stir with the Euro Chemicals lot. They were not amused, some even rushed out during your lecture."

"Their problem," declared Tim who was really enjoying the occasion now that the great secret had been divulged to the world.

Gradually people moved back to the lecture hall in order to hear the Euro Chemicals talk. Tim's initial reaction was not to go as he was still surrounded by a group of people bombarding him with questions. However, particularly in view of Mark Lawrence's passing comment, he thought he ought to attend.

As Tim was entering the hall, the chairman was introducing the next presentation.

"And now, ladies and gentlemen, we are privileged to have Dr. Mark Lawrence, the research director of Euro Chemicals, to give the next lecture on future developments in exotic materials."

"Thank you Mr. Chairman," replied Lawrence. "I am afraid I have been placed in a very difficult position by the last speaker," continued Lawrence. "The position is quite simple. Euro Chemicals have made the discovery of a new material that we are calling Thermal Strong. The material is indeed very similar to that described by Dr. Naylor, but I am very sorry to say that he is lying when he declares that it is his discovery. Thermal Strong was discovered in our Central European Laboratories. Patents have been filed and Dr. Naylor is quite wrong to claim the material as his discovery. Most of the audience will know that Euro Chemicals has been working in this field for some time and I can only assume that Dr. Naylor obtained information about Thermal Strong on one of his visits to our laboratory."

There followed a deathly silence in the hall. Even Lawrence seemed momentarily unsure on how to continue.

Tim Naylor was devastated. He almost fainted and felt quite sick.

The hall was electric with emotion. Very rarely if ever, had such an event occurred at a scientific gathering and all concerned did not appear to know how to handle the situation. Lawrence allowed the silent pause to last long enough for the impact of what he was saying to sink into everyone present. He then continued: "What I propose to do is describe our findings, which I must admit are similar to that of Dr. Naylor's and then invite questions. If Dr. Naylor would like to make a statement then he is free to do so."

Lawrence then went into his account of the discovery at Euro Chemicals. It was clear that the essential elements of their invention were exactly the same as Naylor's. Indeed, the similarities were quite obvious to everyone present. Only in the application area of Thermal Strong did the Euro Chemicals presentation differ substantially from that of Tim Naylor's.

The chemical giant had obviously put a very big team onto the project and Lawrence was able to give examples of how the material had been used to manufacture turbine blades, golf clubs, tennis rackets and missile casings.

At the end of his talk, the applause was generous but hesitant. Most people were left unsure who to believe in this most public dispute.

The chairman, Professor Navard, tried to gain control of the situation.

"I suggest that we invite scientific questions first and then perhaps Dr. Naylor would like to make a statement."

Several technical questions followed and Dr. Lawrence was not able to answer all of them as his detailed knowledge of Thermal Strong did not extend to the practicalities of the material's manufacture.

To a quietened room, Monsieur Navard then invited Dr. Naylor to make a statement.

Tim rose up from his seat near the front of the platform and picked up a microphone. Those sitting near him could see him visibly shaking. "Ladies and gentlemen," he said in a quiet voice, "I am stunned by what I have just heard. I invented High Tension and I too have filed a patent. I totally deny the accusation that I obtained information from Euro Chemicals. In fact, it appears clear to me that they have obtained information from me."

With that he sat down, too emotionally drained to say any more. Monsieur Navard quickly interjected and said, "I think we should now move onto the next paper."

When the lecture session ended, there was an immediate burst of activity. Reporters from various papers and journals converged on both Naylor and Lawrence asking deep and probing questions. There was more than a whiff of gun smoke and media interest in the air in what, for them, would normally have been a rather tedious assignment.

Tim was totally deflated and unable to respond coherently to any of the barrage of questions. Roger White fought his way over to Tim and called: "He can't do that! We all know you discovered High Tension, he's a bloody liar!"

"Can I quote you on that?" yelled a reporter.

"Yes you bloody well can! My name is Roger White and I'm one of Dr. Naylor's students."

Tim could not bear the onslaught and he fought his way out of the Lecture Hall and went back to the hotel. As he went into the foyer of the Jeanne d'Arc, he was met by Ilja Kramner.

"Take back everything I said an hour ago. You are a damn fool. Winchester University will not come out well from this affair. You know that you don't meddle with companies like Euro Chemicals. I would say you are definitely in big trouble and you only have yourself to blame."

With that, Kramner left, both annoyed and pleased. Annoyed because he saw the possible implications for Winchester and pleased because Naylor hadn't scored a decisive triumph over him, after all.

Tim went to his room, sat on the bed and started to cry. Some minutes later he picked up the phone and rang his wife Ruth in England.

Ruth's opening words were: "Hello darling, it's super to hear you. How did your lecture go?"

Tim explained the saga and both of them were in tears.

"Come home darling, and let's sort it out from here," she said comforting him.

"I can't possibly do that," said Tim. "It would look as though I was guilty of having stolen their ideas."

Ruth replied: "But if you came back, you could get the support of the university. I am sure that the legal situation in a matter such as this could be very complicated. Returning home to get legal advice and support from your Vice Chancellor is both sensible and honourable."

"I suppose you're right," said Tim after some thought. "I will come back. There seems to be little point in staying on here now. I'll try and book a flight out of Bordeaux for tomorrow." With that, they parted, leaving Tim very lonely indeed.

Within half an hour, Tim's phone would not stop ringing and there was an army of press waiting to see him downstairs. He decided to make an exit through the back door but was intercepted by Brains, Vicky and Roger.

"This way, Tim!" called Roger, and they led him out through a side entrance. "Hop in!" They all climbed into Roger's Morris 1000 and sped off, away from Bordeaux.

"What you need, Tim, is a good drink and I know a nice spot where we can have one," said Roger cheerfully.

Forty five minutes later they were all sitting around a café table in the centre of the exquisite village of St. Emilion. The view from the elevated courtyard was superb, and

the complete charm of the place helped put the trials of life into something of a different perspective.

"Don't worry, Tim, we know you discovered High Tension and I am sure we can prove it." declared Vicky, "That Euro Chemicals lot must have got hold of the information somehow." she continued.

"I agree," replied Tim, "but how? Did any of you have any worries that you might have inadvertently leaked information to them when they came to visit Winchester?"

"No," responded Brains "We've talked it over together and each of us is sure that we couldn't have passed on any of the data. Who else knew about High Tension?"

Tim reflected for a while and then said: "My family of course, the Vice Chancellor, the university's Chief Administrator, Richard Wainwright, the patent agent and of course the VC's secretary Judy Halford. I cannot believe any of them would pass on information to Euro Chemicals."

"Are you sure?" pressed Vicky

"Well it's a bit like some parts of science, you can never be absolutely sure but I am pretty sure if you know what I mean."

The group pondered the dilemma they faced. Various suggestions were made but nothing conclusive was decided. Tim finally summed up by saying: "I guess we'll have to wait until we get back to Winchester. The date of the patent filings should make things clear and the VC will certainly support us. I'm really surprised by all this, Van den Berg and Lawrence seemed such nice chaps when they came to visit us."

With that, the day deteriorated into a heavy drinking session. Surrounded by the aroma of local grape juice it is almost inevitable that visitors would leave St. Emilion somewhat less steady than when they arrived.

It was dark when they returned to Bordeaux. Brains and Roger dropped Vicky and Tim off at the hotel and Vicky

helped Tim up the stairs. He had drunk a considerable amount of wine in St. Emilion and the journey back had totally disoriented him. The first flight of stairs proved difficult to negotiate and the second nearly impossible. Vicky was physically lifting him up the final steps when Tim fell on her and they landed in a pile on the floor. They both saw the funny side of events and started laughing.

The bedroom door nearby opened and Ilja Kramner appeared. "Ah, Naylor, it's you is it and Miss Hurst? You make a lovely couple but with the trouble you are in I would suggest that you do not make your life any more complicated than it already is". With that he raised his nose and returned to his room.

Tim was beyond caring and he allowed Vicky to drag him into his own bedroom.

* * *

Tim was in utter despair when he woke up the following morning. His first reaction was that of going directly to the Palace Hotel and confronting Mark Lawrence. He then remembered that he had already booked a seat on the midday flight back to Heathrow and that the most sensible thing to probably do was to let the university sort matters out. But he was not feeling sensible. Euro Chemicals had made him look a fool in front of nearly six hundred people, a group which had included many important professors. His academic career was temporarily in tatters rather than the rightful elevation he had expected with the discovery of High Tension. With his mind now full of anger, Tim Naylor strode purposefully out of the Hotel Jeanne d'Arc and headed towards the Palace.

Dr. Mark Lawrence, Hans Van den Berg and the Euro Chemicals lawyer Claus Pickard were completing their breakfast when Naylor burst into the restaurant. On seeing the group, he strode over to the table and said in a clear and commanding way.

"Lawrence and Van den Berg you are liars, cheats and thieves You and I know that High Tension is my discovery. I don't know how you got the information but I can assure you I will find out. You can also be sure that Winchester University will take legal action against you. This is the most blatant case of commercial corruption that I have ever known."

"Dr. Naylor," responded Claus Pickard, "As a Euro Chemicals lawyer, I would like to give you a little advice." He lowered his voice and continued "Making public statements of that sort can be most dangerous and indeed expensive for you. In future, I suggest you think before you speak. You have already been made to look very foolish indeed at the conference. I would not like to think that you were going to make matters worse."

Tim was enraged and just about to reply when Hans Van den Berg interjected.

"Look Naylor, we beat you to it. So why don't you just run away. If you keep quiet, we might even forget that you tried to steal our material. I must say though that our marketing boys think your name of 'High Tension' is rather good."

"I don't believe this!" exclaimed Tim. "Dr. Lawrence surely you aren't a party to this charade."

"Dr. Naylor," replied Lawrence. "It is not a question of being a party to any charade as you put it. Euro Chemicals is a serious and powerful company. We have made a major discovery and you appear to have obtained privileged information and copied our work. I view that very seriously and I will mount an investigation into how that might have happened. I am personally very sorry that you have been drawn into copying our work and then apparently believing it to be your own discovery. Up until now, we have had great respect for your work but, of course, the events of the last twenty four hours have changed all that."

Tim was lost for words. His inner anger was at breaking level and he couldn't construct a sentence to respond.

Van den Berg broke the silence: "Look Naylor, you are beginning to make a lot of people around here uncomfortable. Why don't you just go away?"

These comments were not well received by Tim. He was now in a state of uncontrolled rage. Spontaneously, he went over to Van den Berg and planted a strong left hook in the face of the unsuspecting Dutchman.

"Gentlemen," declared Lawrence, "this is not the way to settle disputes." Two waiters had rushed to the scene and the other seated guests in the restaurant were now at full attention in eager anticipation of a possible second round.

Van den Berg with a bloodied upper lip turned in his seat to Tim Naylor and smiled. "Naylor, you have made a fool of yourself both yesterday and today, I suggest you go home."

Tim did, in fact, feel very stupid. He immediately regretted having hit Van den Berg. It had not made him feel any better. Indeed, he felt even more confused than before.

The manager of the hotel had been summoned immediately after the first blow had been struck and he now came up alongside Tim and ushered him way. Boxing matches were not encouraged at the Palace.

Outside Tim was left feeling very foolish and at a complete loss. After aimlessly walking around the streets for some twenty minutes he decided it definitely was time for him to leave Bordeaux.

Chapter 5

Welcome Home

The return flight from Bordeaux was a totally miserable affair for Tim. As the plane flew over Cherbourg towards the English coast, he felt he was doing completely the wrong thing by leaving the meeting prematurely. Surely the conference delegates would see his actions as that of a guilty man. Tim's world suddenly seemed to be falling apart rather than reaching new heights.

His journey was not helped by a Jewish Rabbi who was sitting in the seat next to him. The issue of the moment concerned the Rabbi's hat.

"I am so sorry sir, but would you mind holding my hat whilst I eat my meal, I see you do not have any appetite for food and I would be so grateful for your help."

No sooner had Tim acquiesced to this request than the Rabbi caused a rumpus with the stewardess over the meal he had been served. Several things were wrong and the head steward must be called. Then the Rabbi decided that a trip to the cloakroom was required and this involved disruption to all the passengers around him including Tim. Of course, there was much apologising and explanations, but there was no disguising the fact that this Rabbi was being a nuisance and Tim had been unfortunate enough to sit by him.

The patience of the stewardess, Tim and other passengers surrounding the Rabbi was tested to the full for the remainder of the journey and the situation turned into near farce as the Rabbi's hat was passed around to those who were not drinking coffee at the appropriate moment. It

came as a relief to all concerned when the plane touched down on the tarmac of Heathrow airport.

It was a damp and dismal day outside and after trudging along the endless connection corridors to passport control, Tim's mood was not that of a happy man.

The sight of his wife Ruth waiting to meet him as he emerged through the customs exit did, however, raise his spirits and they spent their first moments together, saying nothing but just hugging each other. Ruth then burst into tears and said:

"Oh darling, I'm so sorry. I know that this meant so much to you. It's quite terrible that it all seems to have gone so very wrong. I'm sure you will be able to sort things out in the next few days."

"I feel so humiliated," replied Tim, who was trying desperately but unable to hold back his tears. "Ruth, thank you for your support, darling, I feel terribly alone at the moment."

They slowly walked back to the car and Tim embarked on the full story of events at the Conference including an explanation of the recent fracas at the Palace Hotel. He ended by saying. "Here I am running away from a situation where I'm not guilty. Euro Chemicals are the guilty party and they are still there. Help me Ruth, tell me I'm not going mad."

"Don't worry dear, it will be alright, you know you have my total support." Ruth paused and decided to say no more at this moment, the further bad news would have to wait until later.

* * *

The journey on the M3 motorway was uneventful and they spent most of the time in thoughtful silence. Ruth had sensed that Tim was not in the right state of mind to drive and he sat passively in the passenger seat as she efficiently drove the car at a steady 80mph in the fast lane.

As they took the slip road off the motorway, Tim awoke from his pensive thoughts: "Ruth dear, this is such a mess, I really do not know how to handle the situation. Should I go to the press, our MP or the Vice Chancellor of the University?"

"Don't worry about it Tim," replied Ruth "I'm sure the Vice Chancellor will advise you, his secretary has already rung to try and arrange an appointment for you."

The moment the words were out of Ruth's lips, she knew that she had made a major blunder.

"How the hell does Judy Halford know about all this?" snapped Tim.

"And who's Judy Halford?" responded Ruth, relieved that there was some diversion to the conversation.

"Judy Halford is the Vice Chancellor's secretary and I repeat, what the hell does she want?"

Ruth was cornered and knew that sooner or later Tim would have to be told and this was probably as good a time as any.

Ruth continued: "I am afraid the newspapers have got hold of the story and there's quite a big piece in both the Guardian and the Times."

"Oh no that's all I need. What do they say?"

Ruth explained that both articles were factual in that there was a contested inventorship between an academic at Winchester University and Euro Chemicals. Both papers seemed to think that the material that had been discovered had significant military strategic importance and the article in the Times went into some length about the technical aspects of the invention and its applications.

"What about me? How do I come out of it?" asked Tim.

"Not too bad," responded Ruth, trying to be as cheerful as she could. "It's difficult to know which side they're on, I think they're trying to be fair to both parties."

"Fair. How can they be fair?" Demanded Tim who was now genuinely angry. "Euro Chemicals steal my idea and

then humiliate me in front of my professional colleagues and now I'll be the laughing stock of the whole country. Was there anything else?"

Ruth paused but she knew it would all have to come out at some stage "Well, yes. There was a quote from Ilja Kramner."

"Go on." replied Tim, knowing that he was not going to like what he was about to hear.

"I'm afraid Ilja doesn't seem to be on your side, he thinks you have let the university and the country down."

Tim was now fuming. If he had been driving the car at that moment he would almost certainly have precipitated a major car accident.

"That rat, Kramner, has had it in for me from the day I arrived at Winchester," muttered Tim. "He's jealous of my group. I wouldn't mind betting he alerted the press to this story."

As they drove into the forecourt of the house, both Tim and Ruth were in a tense state. Tim's mind was oscillating from intense anger to despair and Ruth was not sure how she should attempt to handle him.

They were met by the children, Jonathon and Laura. "Hi dad, welcome home," said Jonathon. "What have you been up to in France? We've had the Press on the phone all morning Is it about High Tension?"

"Have the press been phoning here?" interjected Ruth.

"Yes, we've had the Daily Mail and the Express," Jonathon replied proudly. "Laura also took a call from the local Evening News. They want pictures too."

"Look children," explained Ruth, "Your father has had a difficult day and I think you should give him a bit of peace for a while. There are a few problems with High Tension and he needs to sort things out. The best thing you both can do is keep out of the way and certainly don't say anything to any newspaper reporters."

"You'll have to know about the problem at sometime," continued Tim. "Let's go inside and I'll explain the whole story."

The Naylor family sat around the table and whilst eating a meal Ruth had prepared, they discussed the High Tension/Thermal Strong conflict.

"But it's so simple, dad," said Laura. "You invented High Tension and that Euro Chemicals lot have stolen your idea. I think they are quite beastly people."

"I wish it was that simple," replied Tim. "Proving that I made the invention before Euro Chemicals or that they stole my idea may be difficult. Euro Chemicals are a powerful company and they must feel confident that they can get away with it. Clearly they don't view me or Winchester University as much of a threat to their ambitions."

"If they did steal the idea in the first place, how did they get the information from you?" asked Ruth.

"I just don't know," replied Tim. "I talked it over in Bordeaux with my research group and none of them had any idea. I trust Brains, Vicky and Roger totally and I have no reason to doubt their word. I assume you lot haven't said anything about High Tension to anyone."

"Scout's honour," replied Jonathon.

"Me too," said Laura with a smile and Ruth confirmed that her lips had been sealed on the matter from the day he announced the discovery to the family.

At the end of the meal, Tim went to his study and phoned the university to arrange a meeting with the Vice Chancellor.

"Ah, hello Tim," responded Judy Halford as she answered the call. "You have been having fun in Bordeaux, haven't you? I'm afraid Sir Alec is on the war path and you'd better come and see him soon."

Tim's heart sank. Sir Alec Taylor had quite a reputation as an outspoken and ruthless Vice Chancellor and Judy's words were not reassuring.

She continued: "I'm afraid Sir Alec is at a meeting in London for the rest of today but I would suggest nine am tomorrow. Is that okay with you?"

Tim confirmed that it was and before ringing off, Judy asked him to be sure to come and see her when he made his visit to the VC's office.

* * *

The university campus looked rather bleak and forlorn as Tim drove into the grounds on the following morning. Cuts from the University Grants Committee over the past ten years had left Winchester University with no option but to dig in and hope for better times. The building's looked as though they needed attention and the once magnificent gardens had in many places been grassed over to economise on labour.

With some uncertainty, Tim walked into the Vice Chancellor's office and was met with a radiant smile from Judy Halford.

"Hello Tim," she said "My, you do look glum today, I sometimes think academics can be the most miserable people on earth. Is there anything I can do to cheer you up?"

Tim took a long look at Judy, smiled and said: "Just, thank you for being so cheerful. You do seem to be a real tonic for me when I am low. When and if this mess blows over I'll take you out for a super lunch."

"I'll hold you to that," Judy replied with a mischievous smile, "But now to business, your lord and master awaits you and if you want my advice tread carefully."

Judy showed Tim into the Vice Chancellors office and Sir Alec looked up from the work on his desk and said: "Thank you Judy. This meeting is important, no interruptions until we have finished."

"Would you like coffee?" responded Judy. This was immediately countered with an instant "no" from Sir Alec.

As soon as Tim had sat down in front of Sir Alec's desk the Vice Chancellor opened a file and produced the newspaper cuttings on the High Tension/Thermal Strong conflict.

"Dr. Naylor, you are putting me and this university in a very difficult position. Initially, I was persuaded that your purported invention of High Tension could be of useful benefit to us and indeed, I had mentioned it in glowing terms to the Education and Science minister Sir Malcolm Lucas as an example of what could be achieved here. Now, however, these press cuttings throw a very different light on the matter. As you are probably aware, we and the government are at a delicate stage in obtaining major amounts of money from both the European Commission and multinational companies. The sums of money involved are very large indeed and run into several hundred million pounds. This cash is vital for the survival of Winchester University and many other universities in the country. To put it bluntly, without this money you will certainly be out of a job and I might even have to give up my chauffeur."

Sir Alec continued: "We are just on the point of setting up this deal and along comes this bloody stupid bickering over the invention of Thermal Strong or High Tension. This sort of publicity is just what could do without at any time, let alone now. So who is in the right, you or them?"

Tim was somewhat thrown by Sir Alec's unexpected line of attack but after a moments pause he responded.

"Sir Alec, I was not fully aware of the state of play relating to European Grants, however, concerning High Tension, there is absolutely no doubt that I am the inventor of High Tension and it would appear that Euro Chemicals have stolen my invention. As a lecturer at this University, I very much hope that the university will support me in seeing that justice is done".

"I'm afraid justice doesn't come into argument these days, Dr. Naylor," replied Sir Alec. "As academics we are not free to do and say what we please. The situation has gone well past that. It is now a question of economic survival and your High Tension problem is a most unwelcome difficulty. Even if you are in the right, I'm not sure that it is in my interest as Vice Chancellor of the university to support you."

Tim said almost in despair: "But, Sir Alec, there is a matter of principle at stake and also a potentially lucrative patent application."

Sir Alec's response was immediate.

"Principles do not pay salaries but you are right, the patent issue may be important. I suggest you talk to both the patent agent and the university's Chief Administrator, Richard Wainwright and establish a position as to whether your application holds any water."

"But sir," pleaded Tim, "I am concerned about my academic credibility and I was expecting the University to publicly support my position."

"Look Naylor, I am a very busy man who is under a lot of Government pressure. If your patent is worth defending we will defend it, if not, my advice is to forget High Tension before it gets you and this university into further trouble. Goodbye."

Tim left Sir Alec's room stunned by what he had heard. Judy Halford was not at her desk and he walked out of the building feeling totally dejected. High Tension was dominating his mind and the material certainly seemed to be living up to it's name. Tim's tension was very high indeed.

A solitary walk around the lake resolved nothing. The undergraduates were still away for the Easter vacation and the only company Tim had was a group of ducks who waited expectantly to be fed.

As he sat by the water's edge he tried to rationally analyse the position. There was, however, no logical pattern and the Vice Chancellor's lack of interest in his academic welfare had come as a real surprise. The world seemed very much a less friendly place now than before his discovery of High Tension. Even he began to wonder whether the best course of action was to drop the claim for the discovery of the material.

"Ah, there you are Dr. Naylor. I have been looking for you," boomed Richard Wainwright. "The VC has asked me to look into this patent business as soon as possible, he seems pretty hot under the collar about the whole thing."

"Yes, thank you very much." mumbled Tim, not quite sure what to say. Richard Wainwright continued:

"I suggest you come along with me in the Jag and we will drive directly into town to see our patent friend, he is free all morning. He said business is a bit slack at present as everybody seems to have stopped inventing things."

Richard Wainwright was a very careful and precise man. He drove the Jaguar with total concentration between the university and Winchester and barely spoke a word to Tim.

"I will park the car at the Conservative Club," he eventually said to Tim. "It's a bit further to walk to the patent office, but I don't trust that multi-storey car park in the centre."

With no further explanation he positioned his car in the members only section of the club and marched Tim off at a brisk pace towards the centre of the city.

The patent agent's office was a quaint room overlooking the cathedral. It was reached by passing along a complicated labyrinth of corridors but by far the most striking feature of the room was the multitude of devices that surrounded the agents desk. These included at least a decade worth of eccentric inventions which were made out of

wood, metal and cardboard. Some were quite exquisite in design and other outrageously crude.

"Please excuse the mess, gentlemen," said the agent, as he saw both Richard Wainwright and Tim staring at the collection of objects. "Let's get down to business shall we. Now, I recall we filed the High Tension patent on 13th March of this year. What we need to know is when and if Euro Chemicals filed their patent application, obviously we require our patent to be filed before theirs. Now, this is a little out of order but I have a colleague at the European Patent Agency and he may be able to help me with this one, would you like me to proceed?"

Tim was unsure and looked across to Richard Wainwright, who replied:

"Yes please. The Vice Chancellor is very keen to have all the facts in front of him as soon as possible, I presume what you are suggesting is quite legal?"

"Well," replied the agent after a short pause, "legality has a number of interpretations and I would put this particular issue in the grey area. What we will do is, find out whether Euro Chemicals filed anything in the last couple of months, we of course cannot gain access to the contents of any applications. Have you an inventor's name that would help in our search?"

"Yes, the man's name is Dr. Hans Van den Berg," responded Tim. "He is a liar, a cheat and a thief," he added.

"Thank you Dr. Naylor, I'm sure the name is quite enough," said the agent. "Incidentally, I would advise you to be very cautious in everything you say concerning this case. Patent litigation can be bitter and expensive, particularly in a case such as this, where the stakes are potentially so very high."

"My apologies," said Tim. "I will try to be more careful in future as to what I say but I do hope that you can appreciate my anger."

The agent commiserated with Tim and then explained that he would try and make contact with his colleague at the Brussels centre via their computer link. It would probably take some hours to establish details and the agent would phone through the news once it was known

Richard Wainwright and Tim returned to the campus in a sombre mood.

"This is a tricky little problem for the university, Dr. Naylor." said Richard Wainwright. "I'm sure you must appreciate the delicacy involved. The Vice Chancellor and I have spent some time discussing your case but I am afraid it couldn't have happened at a worse moment. The decision on these new European grants is in the balance."

"Yes I'm afraid, I understand only too well Mr. Wainwright. Let's hope that when the patent news comes through, Winchester University can support me on that, at least."

They continued their journey in silence.

* * *

"Daddy, the telephone is for you," called Jonathon as Tim struggled out of the bathroom with a wet towel around his midriff.

"Hello, Tim Naylor here, who am I speaking to?"

"It's Richard Wainwright. I have the report from the patent agent and I'm afraid it's bad news. Patent applications with Hans Van den Berg as co-inventor were filed on the 5th and 25th of March this year, both are entitled a 'New High Performance Material.'"

Tim's heart sunk and he was lost for words.

"Are you still there, Dr. Naylor?" asked Richard Wainwright.

"Yes, yes, I'm still here," replied Tim. "What happens now?"

"Well, I'm afraid the VC is tied up in London with meeting's for the rest of the week but Judy Halford has

arranged for us all to have a meeting with the Vice Chancellor on Monday next week at nine am sharp. I hope that's convenient for you?"

Tim replied "Yes, I suppose so, although I have a lecture at ten. You do realise term has started by then."

"Oh, has it?" chirped Wainwright, "We don't really know much about that sort of thing in administration. We're a bit removed from the front line."

With that comment, Tim was left standing looking very miserable in the hallway with water dripping down onto the carpet.

"More bad news?" asked Ruth as she came round the corner.

"Yes I'm afraid so," responded Tim. "There appears to be two new Euro Chemical patent applications and one of them is dated before our own. If they were dated after ours, there would be less of a problem because the date of filing is used as the priority date for the invention. As it now stands Euro Chemicals look as though they are one step ahead of me. I just don't understand how they could have got our information and filed it before us."

Ruth consoled Tim and said: "If I remember rightly it was January when you first told us about High Tension and your patent wasn't filed until March."

"That's right," replied Tim. "We had to do a wide range of tests after the initial discovery and the patent also took a bit of time to set up with the university. Ruth dear, this latest news is not going to go down well with the VC. I have an appointment to see him next Monday."

"Yes, I know," said Ruth. "That secretary of his, Judy Halford rang asking for you. She left a message for you to phone and confirm the Monday morning's meeting."

* * *

The remainder of the week was not an easy one for the Naylor. The only good news appeared to be that the press

had not pursued the High Tension conflict further, and nothing appeared in the following day's papers. Tim found a mixed reaction from both his neighbours and colleagues at work. For example, Ted Roger's from next door gave a typical response:

"Sorry to read in the paper about your disputed invention with that chemical company. The press do seem to blow things up out of proportion, don't they?"

Tim's academic colleagues were more penetrating and, in addition, they all saw possible implications for their own department. Dr. Gilmour a respected elder statesman of the department engaged Tim in a long and searching investigation of events. At the end of his cross examination he said: "We seem to live in a very rapidly changing world. This sort of thing would not have happened twenty years ago. Gentlemen were gentlemen then and both academics and scientists were honourable people. Well, I suppose there was the odd rogue about, even then, but I don't remember them being vicious like this."

He continued: "If you take my advice, I would stick to science. Forget this patent business and leave that sort of thing to the chemical companies. I'm sure you feel aggrieved about the whole thing but on some occasions it's better not to pursue natural justice."

Tim had not expected this sort of response from Dr. Gilmour and it left him in a very reflective mood for the next few days.

* * *

At the end of the week Vicky, Roger and Brains returned from the Bordeaux meeting.

"Well, how did it go after my departure?" Tim asked them.

"Not bad," replied Roger. "There was a bit of gossip about you punching someone on the nose, but generally people seemed to become pre-occupied with the rest of the

conference. The Euro Chemicals lot seemed to be taking a low profile."

"We did have a number of press people pestering us about High Tension and you," added Vicky, "Ilja Kramner was very unpleasant to us but the good news is that Roger's car got back from Bordeaux with no problems, the High Tension piston rings worked perfectly."

"Well, quite honestly everybody, I'm beginning to wish that I had never invented High Tension." said Tim solemnly to the group.

"Don't be like that," said Brains. "We know you made the invention and we'll do everything possible to make sure that you get the right credit. Surely the patent will prove that you were the true inventor."

Tim then went on to explain the recent findings on the patent dates and how Euro Chemicals could have trumped them on that score. He also described how the university was not going out of it's way to be supportive.

"That's terrible," said Vicky. "I thought universities represented bastions of justice and freedom. Winchester has got to help you prove that High Tension was discovered here."

"I saw it that way too," replied Tim, "but the Vice Chancellor doesn't seem to have the same idea. All he can think about at present, seems to be money and university grants."

"Look Tim, don't give up!" interjected Roger. "We're on your side and involved in this whole thing too. Like it or not, we are part of the invention and if you sink without trace we will sink too. We must pull our resources together and form an action plan."

"Brave words," responded Tim, "but I'm at a loss as to know what to do. My next hurdle is the meeting with the Vice Chancellor on Monday."

"I suggest we have a meeting after that," said Vicky. "Perhaps we can get a University support group going or get the press on our side."

"I'm not sure about that." replied Tim in a cautious tone.

* * *

Sunday was without incident until the door bell rang at ten in the morning. Ruth opened the door to their neighbour, Ted Rogers.

"Sorry to bother you, but is Tim in, I would like to have a quick word."

"Yes of course," replied Ruth, "go on through to the kitchen, he is reading the Sunday papers. I am delighted you have come round, we were beginning to think we had a terrible disease. None of our friends have been round since this High Tension business started."

Ted went into the kitchen and was relieved to see that Tim was alone and Ruth had gone off in another direction.

"Good to see you Ted," called Tim. "Would you like a coffee?"

"Yes, thanks very much, I'm afraid I have some more potentially bad news for you. Do you take the Sunday News?"

"No," said Tim and after a pause continued, "this sounds ominous."

"You have made page four, and there is a picture too." Ted passed the paper across to him.

As he opened the pages, he was met by a half page photograph of Vicky and him in a strong embrace. Above the photograph was the caption 'University Don in French Love and Invention Scandal.'

Tim's heart sank. He instantly recognised the photograph was taken after he had given the High Tension lecture at Bordeaux and Vicky Hurst had come across to embrace and congratulate him. The photograph, however,

gave the impression that the embrace was being made with considerable passion by both parties.

"That's all I need." uttered Tim. He slowly adsorbed the words that went with the picture. The story was angled that University Don Tim Naylor, from Winchester University, was in a mess. His claim to have made a fantastic discovery at a recent scientific meeting in France had been shattered by a Dutchman working for a major chemical company. In addition he was in trouble with his beautiful research student Vicky Hurst and surely the British Government shouldn't be wasting taxpayers money in allowing University Dons to go off to exotic locations with 'some of the countries most beautiful and brainy girls'.

"It's rubbish, total rubbish!" cried Tim.

"I'm sure it is,"reassured Ted, "but she is a cracker isn't she?"

Tim's face went bright red and after a reflective pause he said: "I am not going to enjoy explaining this to Ruth."

* * *

After Ted had left, Tim went up to the bedroom and found Ruth tidying away their clothes.

"I think you better see this," said Tim and placed the paper in front of her.

Ruth read the article in silence and then looked directly at Tim. "I need the truth Tim, is there any substance in these innuendos about you and Vicky?"

"No, there isn't," replied Tim. "Vicky and I have a good working relationship and nothing more, the picture is very unfortunate, it was taken when she came across to congratulate me after my lecture. The whole thing has been taken completely out of context."

Ruth burst into tears and sat down on the side of the bed. "I'm not sure that I can take any more of this High Tension business," she said looking at Tim with tears in

her eyes. "Our life was so nice before all of this and now it's in tatters. How are the children going to explain all this when they go back to school?"

Tim reassured Ruth as best he could: "Dear Ruth, I'm so sorry all of this has happened, I will do everything possible to protect you and the children from my difficulties but surely you must agree that I should fight this one?"

"I don't know," replied Ruth. "The price might be too high and the family and our marriage might be in danger. I do not find it easy seeing a photograph of my husband with an attractive girl in a Sunday newspaper."

They both sat on the bed for some time, comforting each other until they were interrupted by the telephone bell. Tim picked up the phone by the bed and was met by Vicky Hurst's voice.

"Have you seen the Sunday News?" she said.

"Yes I have Vicky and I'm so sorry for you. Would you please have a word with my wife Ruth. I've already explained to her when the picture was taken."

Tim then passed the phone onto Ruth and they both spent some time talking. By the end of the conversation, both were laughing with each other and in fighting mood, fully ready to do battle against the press or any other challenger to High Tension.

After Ruth had put down the telephone, she said to Tim. "It's all right darling, we must fight this one. I'll explain the situation to the children. You must ensure that justice is done not only for us or Vicky, Brains and Roger but also for the country, you cannot allow the university to ignore this."

Tim put his arms round his wife, kissed her and said: "Dear Ruth, I love you and the family so much. Thank you for your support, I won't let you down."

The rest of Sunday had been a nightmare for the Naylor family, though the barrage of phone calls and visits by the press had only strengthened Tim and Ruth's resolve to

fight in defence of High Tension. By the time the Monday morning meeting with the Vice Chancellor approached, Tim knew he would be in for a rough ride but was resolute in his determination to stand up for what he thought was right.

As he walked into the Vice Chancellor's office, his confidence was immediately dented by seeing three very stern faces in front of him. The Vice Chancellor, Sir Alec Taylor was flanked by Richard Wainwright on one side and Professor Ilja Kramner on the other.

"Come in Dr. Naylor," said the Vice Chancellor, "we have several matters to discuss."

The sight of Ilja Kramner was quite unexpected and all the positive thinking and determination that Tim had generated seemed to instantly evaporate. He was facing three very angry men.

"Dr. Naylor, I will not beat about the bush," said Sir Alec. "We have in front of us a number of documents which are extremely serious in relation to your professional career and the prospects of this university. You are probably aware of the outrageously bad publicity that the Sunday News article will generate and this alone would give me cause to take action. However there is even more damaging material in front of me. I have a signed letter from Professor Kramner who has written concerning your behaviour. He has written about the way you brought the university into disrepute concerning the claim to have invented High Tension and he has also written about his concern that you were having an illicit relationship with one of your research students, a certain Miss Vicky Hurst. Of course, this wretched newspaper article also confirms this totally improper behaviour between a member of staff and a student."

Sir Alec paused and then continued: "In addition to all of this, I have a letter from Dr. Mark Lawrence of Euro Chemicals. He has written both to me and the Minister of

Science and Education complaining that you have attempted to steal their invention of Thermal Strong. He also says that you punched one of their leading scientists whilst he was in the restaurant of the top hotel in Bordeaux. I have other documents which I am not prepared to disclose to you except to mention the report from the patent agent which states that a Euro Chemicals patent was filed before your own."

"Dr. Naylor," said Sir Alec, "this is a very serious situation for you. The evidence in front of me is so damning that I feel an attempted explanation by you will only make matters worse. I have decided that the only course of action is dropping any claim for your High Tension material and making an apology for your conduct. If you do this, you might survive with your job. If you do not, the university will have to take immediate action with a charge of improper conduct brought against you. This would then be heard by the university senate and if found guilty, as you clearly are, you will then be sacked by this University."

"In fairness to you, Dr. Naylor," concluded Sir Alec, "I will give you twenty four hours to make your decision."

"But Sir, I wish to protest in the most strongest way," replied Tim.

"There are no buts, Dr. Naylor. We will meet again at nine tomorrow morning," said the Vice Chancellor.

* * *

"Was it really that bad?" said Judy Halford as Tim walked into her office.

"I am afraid so Judy." She looked into his eyes and she could see that he was desperately trying to hold back tears.

"I just hope this is some terrible dream and that tomorrow I will wake up and find everything is alright," said Tim.

Judy softly replied "I hope so too."

* * *

Ruth was expecting a grim post mortem on the meeting but as Tim came into the house she was relieved to see that he appeared to look cheerful.

"You're late home, dear. Did the meeting take long?" she tried to say as causally as possible.

"No the meeting was very short," Tim replied. "The Vice Chancellor didn't give me any time to explain anything. Kramner and Wainwright were there too."

"Oh dear," cautioned Ruth. "Well that still doesn't explain why you are so late and what happened anyway?"

"I am late because I have just driven down to the coast and had a long walk along the beach. The sea was beautiful and the sunset perfect. Ruth dear, I have been given an ultimatum by the Vice Chancellor; either drop High Tension and apologise or he will instigate action to get me sacked for improper conduct over this Vicky Hurst business."

Ruth was lost for words and just looked into the face of her husband.

"It's alright," said Tim. "I was initially devastated but during my walk I worked a few things out in my mind. What I suggest we do, is go and have a jolly good meal out. All I ask is that High Tension is not on the menu for discussion this evening."

Ruth couldn't believe Tim's positive, almost cheerful attitude, but she was lifted by his enthusiasm.

"Okay, lets go," she said. "I suggest we try that new expensive French restaurant that has just opened on the city High Street."

"You're on," replied Tim with a smile.

* * *

Tim arrived early for the meeting the following day with the Vice Chancellor and filled time completing several circuits of the garden and congratulated himself on

bringing some bread to feed the ducks. Their simple uncomplicated existence managed to raise his spirits. Perhaps a duck's life was very much better than an inventor's.

The moment of truth arrived and Tim walked purposefully towards the Vice Chancellor's office.

"Well, Dr. Naylor, I trust you have made the right decision," boomed the Vice Chancellor as soon as Tim had sat down opposite him.

"Yes, I think I have, Vice Chancellor. My decision is to find out how Euro Chemicals stole my invention. I do not intend to withdraw my patent application and I fully hope to clear my name. I realise that these actions are not the actions that you wanted me to take and I regret any inconvenience that they may cause, however, there are a number of issues here which I cannot allow my conscience to ignore."

"Get out of my room!" barked the Vice Chancellor. "I meant everything that I said at our last meeting. I will start improper conduct proceedings against you and file the papers to the senate committee immediately."

With those final words lingering in his mind, Tim left the room in silence and headed back to the garden to finish the uncompleted job of feeding the ducks.

Chapter 6

Dirty Tricks

"Are you sure that you're doing the right thing by challenging the advice of the Vice Chancellor?" said Ruth to Tim as they sat round the kitchen table.

"I have no choice," he replied, "I invented High Tension. It's my discovery and I just can't pretend that I didn't invent it. My whole reputation and credibility in the academic community will be destroyed if I acquiesce to the Vice Chancellor's wishes. It is he who should resign for not supporting me."

"Put that way, of course, you are probably right," said Ruth, "But have you considered the reality of the situation? In a few months time you could be without a job. The senate court of enquiry will be very humiliating and the children and I will go through a terrible time."

"My dear Ruth, I am very sorry and yes I agree with what you just said but you know I invented High Tension and surely we must see this through together, I'm sure you realise how important this is for me. I'm unlikely to make another invention as important as this in my lifetime; this is the culmination of my scientific career."

Ruth sat silently for some time and then said: "Alright, we'll fight this one together but I must say here and now that from everything you have told me, I don't think we are going to win."

* * *

During the next few days there was an ominous silence. Tim continued his duties at the university and heard noth-

ing from the Vice Chancellor. The other members of staff were polite to him and only Professor Ilja Kramner's behaviour was obviously different, in that he carefully planned his movements, so as to avoid Tim.

Most of the students had read the newspaper articles and Tim became something of a hero for them.

"Did you really make a big discovery, sir?" asked one of Tim's pupils after a lecture.

"Yes I did," he replied, "but I'm afraid I had better not say too much about it until I've sorted this dispute out."

"Well done, sir. I hope you bloody well give them a good hiding. This university needs a boost, and an important scientific discovery would cheer us all up. By the way, sir, some of the lads think that was a smashing picture of you and Vicky Hurst. Quite a lot of us fancy her too."

Tim did not know how to respond and he decided a smile followed by rapid retreat was the best action.

The Euro Chemicals challenge to the existence of High Tension had put a serious damper on their enthusiasm to carry out further experiments but Vicky, Brains and Roger were far from inactive. They had been formulating a number of plans which they put forward to Tim and Ruth at the first 'action group' meeting that Vicky arranged at the local pub.

"Well from everything you have told us Tim, its clear that the university administration is not going to help us," said Vicky, who had taken the responsibility of chairing the meeting. "The Vice Chancellor, Secretary General and Professor Kramner could all be put on the enemy list." Vicky continued and then turned to Tim "Where do you think the other members of academic staff would stand on this issue?"

"Difficult to say," replied Tim. "Times are so hard at present that everyone is busy watching their own backs. My guess is that they won't be concerned about one aca-

demic who might have been cheated by a chemicals company."

"That's a bit cynical isn't it?" said Roger. "Surely there are deep matters of principle at stake. We could expose the Vice Chancellor as a total traitor to this University and a traitor to the rights of individuals."

"I wish that you were right," replied Tim "but in the words of the Vice Chancellor 'we have gone past that stage'. Survival is the name of the game and principles seem to have gone out of the window."

"Please stop this gloom and doom," said Ruth. "I thought we were an action group looking for ways to sort this mess out. Let's all have another drink and get down to some positive thinking."

A further round of drinks did raise spirits somewhat but did not lead to an instant solution.

"In my opinion," said Brains, "we've got to find out how Euro Chemicals came to get hold of the information on High Tension. If we can prove that they stole the idea from us, then we're home and dry."

"I'm not so sure about that," replied Tim "It seems to me that the Vice Chancellor doesn't really want to know whether I invented High Tension or not. All he is concerned with is whether he will get his European grants. Bad publicity is what concerns him most."

"Are you sure about that Tim?" responded Brains. "Don't forget there are only a few ways that Euro Chemicals could have got information on High Tension and the Vice Chancellor is in fact one person who had the information."

"That's a crazy idea." said Roger.

"It may be crazy but it's certainly plausible. Richard Wainwright, the patent agent and the Vice Chancellor's secretary also had access to that information," continued Brains.

"You don't suspect any of them do you?" asked Vicky. "What's the Vice Chancellor's secretary like? I've heard a few stories about her. Isn't she very pretty?"

Ruth looked across at Tim and he felt her eyes bearing down on him. Tim replied: "Well, yes, Judy Halford is very pretty but I'm not sure what that has to do with her possibly leaking information. I must say that I find it very unlikely that any of these people could be directly involved."

"And what about Professor Kramner, he's been very nasty to me," said Vicky.

"Yes, I've been thinking a lot about the actions of Ilja Kramner," said Tim. "He and I have never got on, but apart from personal jealousy, I can't see what he would have to gain from telling Euro Chemicals about High Tension. If it is him, how did he get the information on High Tension in the first place?"

Brains responded: "It would have been pretty difficult for him to have got anything from the laboratory. We were all very careful. The only place where we stored the information was on the computer within my expert system filing. Kramner doesn't know anything about computers and there is no way he could have accessed our database on High Tension."

"But what about other people?" queried Ruth.

"No way." snapped Brains immediately "My system is bomb-proof. To get at the data you would have to be really good and I do mean good at the keyboards. In addition, you would have to know the password which is known only to me."

Brains took great pride in his computing ability and was somewhat hurt that anyone could think that his system was not secure. Tim cooled the situation down somewhat by saying:

"Don't worry Brains, we all have total faith in your system. The whole department knows that you are a genius with computers."

The conversation then continued, pursuing different scenarios. Tim brought up a point that had been worrying him for some time. "We mustn't forget that High Tension or Thermal Strong as Euro Chemicals wants to call it, has considerable commercial and military potential. This discovery is worth a lot of money to somebody and could have a significant effect on the military power of a nation, the stakes are very high indeed."

Ruth asked: "You're not suggesting that a foreign country would come and steal the invention, are you? If so, why should it then end up with Euro Chemicals?"

"I just don't know," continued Tim, "and that's the heart of the problem. I just do not understand this whole wretched affair. The only thing I am sure of, is that High Tension was discovered at Winchester and I intend to find out who has set us up in this way."

* * *

Ruth and Tim travelled back from the pub in the car, in a sombre mood. They said little as both of them were pre-occupied with their own thoughts on possible explanations of recent events. The meeting at the pub had ended with a number of suggestions which included going to the Police, seeing the local MP, talking to the press and raising a student demonstration. All had certain attractive features but at the end of the discussion no-one was very clear on what the next best course of action should be. Tim's earlier resolve to get to the truth was resulting in muddled thinking as to what course of action should next be taken.

As they drove into their road, Ruth was the first to notice something was wrong. "Oh heck, what's the problem, Tim? There's a police car outside our house".

"Good evening sir, are you Mr. Naylor?" said a capped policeman as he leant down to the car window.

"Yes I am, what's the problem? Are the children alright?"

"Don't worry about the children they're with your neighbour. I'm afraid you have had a rather nasty burglary sir."

Ruth's mouth was dry. They had never had a burglary before and she felt stricken with guilt that they had left the children in the house when they went for their meeting at the pub.

"I suggest Mrs Naylor, if that is you," said the policeman "that you go round to your children and I will escort Mr. Naylor into the house."

The scene was that of devastation. "Nasty one, this one sir, quite unusual. They seem to have stolen various things, and gone through all your papers too. But they have also made a lot of mess. Nasty job this one sir, make no mistake."

Tim looked around at the devastation which was centred around his study, the lounge and the children's bedrooms. His immediate thoughts were that this was somehow related to High Tension.

"Mindless vandalism, sir. You have been very unfortunate," said the policeman.

In fact it transpired that they might have been somewhat fortunate in that the children, Jonathon and Laura, had decided to go next door to see their friends. It was only when they returned that they found the total chaos of the burglary. They had not seen anyone and it was the children who had called the police.

When Ruth came over to the house, she broke down in tears when she saw the state of the rooms. "Who could do a thing like this?" she cried. "What have we done to deserve it?"

They cleared up superficially and the policeman then took statements from both of them.

"Have you noticed anything suspicious in the last few days?" asked the policeman. Tim paused before he spoke, he did not want to reveal to either Ruth or the police his fear of a High Tension connection.

"No sergeant, I haven't. I'm a university lecturer at Winchester and I have got a few problems over there at the moment but it seems unlikely that they are related to this. Ruth, have you noticed anything?"

"Not directly," she said, "but when I went to the supermarket this morning I had the strangest feeling that I could have been followed."

"You never said anything about this," interjected Tim.

"I know," replied Ruth. "You have enough trouble of your own at the university and I wasn't sure that I was being followed. I think at the time I thought it might have been some man who fancied me or something like that."

"So it was a man who was following you?" asked the policeman.

"No, I can't say that it was because I didn't actually see anybody, it was just a feeling that I had. Call it female intuition, if you like."

When the police had left, Ruth and Tim sat down in their devastated home. "The children are going to stay next door tonight," Ruth said. "They are very frightened. I'm very frightened too, everything seems to be going wrong."

As they lay in bed that night, Tim and Ruth reflected individually on the evening's events. Both had immediately thought that the burglary was in some way related to High Tension but they were unable to talk to each other about their fears. Tim was now a very worried man. If the burglary was connected with the new material, the stakes had obviously dramatically increased. Words were one thing, but outright vandalism of property was another.

Ruth lay beside Tim, she could sense that Tim was tense from his posture and his reluctance to talk was a clear indication that he was preoccupied with something.

* * *

The following day involved Tim and Ruth in a massive clearing up operation. Ornaments, pictures and vases had been broken beyond repair. All Tim's papers had been ransacked and strewn around the study. He had not kept any material on High Tension within the house which at least gave him some relief. The video, television and some other electronic equipment had been taken but surprisingly what little silver they had, remained intact.

The police returned during the day to try and obtain fingerprints from the window that had clearly been forced to gain entry but they soon came to the conclusion that gloves had been worn by the burglars. They were not optimistic that the stolen goods would be recovered or that the culprits would be found. Nobody in the rest of the road had seen anything suspicious and they had little, if nothing, to work on.

By the afternoon, Tim and Ruth had returned the house into some semblance of order. The damaged wallpaper would have to wait until later. The children returned from school and the whole Naylor family tried to put a brave face on what had happened.

"It was just bad luck that we were chosen for this mindless vandalism but it's the last thing that we want at the moment," said Tim.

"Don't worry, dad," replied Laura. "It could have been worse, at least we weren't in the house, my class teacher said there are an awful lot of robbers about these days."

Jonathon added: "If I find out who did this, I'll kick their teeth in."

Ruth looked at him and smiled, "I don't think you should say things like that, Jonathon. We all know what you mean but the law must be left to the police."

As evening approached, the telephone rang and Tim answered it.

"Hello Tim Naylor here, who am I speaking to?"

"It's Judy Halford. I've been trying to contact you all day."

"My apologies but I haven't been into the university today. I did leave a message with the departmental secretary. We were burgled at home last night..

"Oh, I am sorry to hear that," said Judy. "Have you lost many valuable things?"

"No, nothing the insurance company can't handle, that's not really the problem. It's the terrible mess that they've left."

"Tim, the reason I phoned is that I would like to talk to you urgently. It's better that we're alone and it's very important, it concerns your future. Would you like me to take you out to lunch tomorrow?"

Tim was unsure how to respond. He had a feeling of guilt accepting a lunch engagement from a beautiful woman, particularly in the circumstances in which he presently found himself. However, without thinking too much about the possible consequences he said:

"Okay, I'll meet you at the garden lake at twelve thirty tomorrow."

After putting down the phone he walked into the kitchen.

"Who was that?" asked Ruth.

"Oh, just the university about a meeting tomorrow," replied Tim, unable to tell Ruth that it was Judy Halford asking him out on a lunch engagement.

* * *

"Thank you so much for coming," said Judy as Tim approached her by the lake.

"I must admit that I don't normally make a habit of going out for lunch with such attractive company, but I guess these are unusual times," he replied.

They walked over to Judy's car and she expertly drove them to a small hotel restaurant a few miles from the university. Tim could not fail to be impressed with the way that she handled her MG midget sports car. At the hotel, she spun the car into a parking space that most would have considered impossible to reach.

"I'm impressed," said Tim as they came to a halt.

"Thanks," replied Judy. "I'm afraid I've had a fascination for cars since my childhood, my father used to drive an Aston Martin."

After collecting drinks at the bar and ordering their lunch, Judy and Tim sat down in seats arranged in one of the hotel's bay windows.

"I'm so sorry to hear about your burglary, your wife and family must be most upset," said Judy in a serious voice.

"Yes, Ruth and the children were very distressed by it all," replied Tim, "and of course it's happened at the worst possible time with all this trouble concerned with High Tension. I have a horrible feeling that the burglary and High Tension may be connected."

"Surely that's most unlikely?" replied Judy, "The Vice Chancellor has been talking to me about ..."

Before she could say another word Tim sat up sharply from his seat and looked directly at Judy.

"Has the Vice Chancellor been talking to you about me and High Tension?"

"Yes, he has," replied Judy "and I was about to explain."

"Look here Judy, this is entirely out of order. You may be his personal secretary but I do not see how he should be allowed to confide matters such as this in you."

"He is trying to do you a favour," continued Judy. "He thought if I had a chat with you, I could try to make you see sense. He knows that you and I get on well together and Alec was hoping that I could help."

"Oh, it's Alec now is it. I feel that I have been tricked into this. I'm beginning to wonder if I can trust anybody now and that includes you."

"Calm down, Tim, let me try to explain. Sir Alec is very concerned about this whole affair and he desperately wants you to drop this High Tension business and leave it to Euro Chemicals. He does not want to have to take your case to the University Senate Committee and he's prepared to help avoid this, providing you will drop the patent claim."

"And he thought you could charm me into agreeing to this?" said Tim.

"It's not like that at all," continued Judy who was trying desperately to keep herself calm. "He even thinks if you drop the patent now, there's a good chance that you'll get a Professorship in a couple of years' time."

"He what!" exclaimed Tim. "I didn't realise that bribery was on the agenda too. Judy, just how much are you involved in all this?"

"I am not involved except that I want to help you and the university. This may sound strange, but I like you."

Tim was at a loss as to know what to think. He was full of anger that the Vice Chancellor should attempt to bribe him into capitulating and he was quite unsure of his position with Judy Halford.

"Judy," said Tim, "I don't like what I am hearing at all. Firstly I feel tricked into this meeting by you and the Vice Chancellor and secondly the veiled promise of a Professorship is about the most underhand thing I have ever

heard. Promotion in universities is not the gift of the Vice Chancellor. It is decided by a committee and goes on academic merit. Can't you see that is one of the reasons why High Tension is so important to me."

"My dear Tim," replied Judy "If only life was as black and white as you paint it. We were only trying to help you but I can see that you have seen it all in a quite different light."

Judy sensed Tim's anguished state and said: "I'm very sorry that I brought all this up, Tim. It would probably have come better from Alec but at the time both he and I thought it would be better for me to try first. What I suggest we do now is try and forget High Tension for a while and have a couple of drinks and enjoy our lunch. I'll then run you back to the university in the car or alternatively I could drop you off at your home."

The thought of Judy Halford arriving with Tim in her red sports car and being met by Ruth did not appeal to him.

"Okay," said Tim "I'll settle for lunch and university. Then I think I had better see Sir Alec and speak my mind to him."

Although the conversation was somewhat strained, lunch at the hotel was in fact excellent. The roast beef was at it's best and the Yorkshire pudding superb. The meal was balanced by a fine red wine and the whole thing completed by authentic coffee.

Tim was having great difficulty, however, in assessing Judy. Her charm and appearance were fatally attractive features and although she had angered him greatly over this apparent clandestine association with the Vice Chancellor, Tim, like many other men in the past, could not fail to be caught up in Judy's sophistication.

As she drove him back to the university, his mind momentarily slipped away from their current traumas and

returned to his student days where the world had been so carefree and fun.

The realities of the situation soon returned with their arrival back at the University.

"I'm going to leave it down to you to talk to Sir Alec," said Judy "I've taken the afternoon off and am going to do some shopping in Winchester. Good luck."

With that she leant over to Tim, gave him a kiss on the cheek and pushed him out of the car.

The Vice Chancellor was working alone at his desk when Tim marched in. Fortified by the lunchtime drinks, Tim was feeling bold and directly confronted Sir Alec.

"I've just returned from having lunch with Judy Halford," he said, "and I'm very angry that you have confided in her over my affairs and I am outraged that you appear to offer me a bribe via a third party to try and induce me to give up this patent."

"Calm down Dr. Naylor, sit down and let's talk this through." The Vice Chancellor took off his reading glasses and gestured to the appropriate seat. "Dr. Naylor," he continued, "I am not sure what Judy has said to you but my main concern is to get this matter resolved as painlessly as possible. If you were to drop this High Tension claim we can all get on with our lives again. Your last attempt at promotion was a near thing, if everything returns to normal, I see no reason why you shouldn't get your Chair soon. That is not a bribe, it is a statement of fact. All that is required is that you drop this High Tension business."

"Vice Chancellor, I cannot just relinquish all interests in High Tension. I invented it! The material is part of me," said Tim forcefully.

"That sounds rather melodramatic if you don't mind my saying so." soothed the Vice Chancellor. "Look, you seem a bit excited at the moment. I also hear that you were burgled last night, the police were on to us about that. Why don't you go and talk it over with your wife. I think that I

met her at one of my receptions, she was most charming and sensible too."

Tim was quite deflated and could not think of any further useful line of attack.

"Very well," he said meekly "I will go and talk to her and give you my response tomorrow. However, I should warn you now that I'm unlikely to change my mind."

With that final statement he left the room.

On returning home, Tim felt trapped in terms of what he could and couldn't tell Ruth about the day's events. Although his association with Judy had been purely platonic, he was unable to summon up the courage to tell her that he had dined out with Ms Halford. He did, however, explain to her about the meeting with the Vice Chancellor where Sir Alec had tried to persuade him to change his mind and withdraw the patent and also implied that if he did so, he would get a Professorship in due course.

"That was a bit cheeky of the Vice Chancellor, wasn't it?" said Ruth. "He certainly seems to have changed his tune from your last meeting. What's brought on this change of heart?"

"I wouldn't say he's changed his view." replied Tim, "What does seem to have altered is his tactics. He still wants me to drop High Tension but the approach now seems to be softly, softly rather than his original blunt confrontation. I haven't a clue as to why he has changed tactics. The whole thing seems to become more worrying by the day. If people were consistent, it might help us to understand this sorry situation."

"Does Judy Halford come into this?" asked Ruth.

"Not particularly, why do you ask?" responded Tim with a sudden twinge in his stomach.

"Oh, she phoned this afternoon and wanted to know if you were home."

"Judy has taken an interest in my problems, however, I expect it's about my next meeting with the Vice Chancellor."

"Tim, you should be careful of that woman, I've seen her in action at some university parties. Remember what Vicky Hurst said about her too."

"I will," replied Tim. Much to his relief, he then successfully directed the conversation onto other matters.

In the evening Ruth and Tim were sitting in the lounge of their home. The children had gone to bed and there was peace and quiet throughout the house.

"Ruth, I must make a final decision as to whether I stick with this invention or give it up. What do you think I should do?"

"I really don't know," replied Ruth. "As far as the family is concerned, the easiest decision is for you to forget High Tension and we can return to our previous ways. However, I've seen that High Tension is very important to you and if that's what you want I will support you."

"That's very brave." said Tim, "I think the best thing to do is sleep on it and we can make the final decision tomorrow. At the moment, the issue that is making my blood boil is Sir Alec Taylor's attitude. I still think that what he said to me was a bribe. I never liked the chap but before this I did have some respect for him. That has now completely gone."

Ruth had spent the day worrying about the burglary and she thought this was now probably the time to bring it up.

"Tim," she said. "Do you think last night's break-in was in any way related to High Tension? You did say the invention could be of great national importance."

Initially, he was unsure how to respond and then said: "It is possible. I haven't told the police that they could be connected yet, but I must admit, I spent a lot of last night wondering about it myself. I couldn't get to sleep."

"I thought you were concerned about it too," replied Ruth. "Tim, I don't want anybody hurt over this business."

* * *

Tim woke Ruth in the morning with a cup of tea. "How long have you been up for?" she asked.

"Since four o'clock. I couldn't sleep again and I've used the time to try and decide on the right thing to do."

"And have you come to a final decision?" quizzed Ruth as she sat up in bed to drink her tea.

"Yes," responded Tim. "As long as you agree, we'll fight for High Tension."

Ruth looked into Tim's eyes and said, "Whatever I said, it wouldn't have changed you, from the moment you returned from Bordeaux, I knew we had a fight on our hands."

After a breakfast of coffee and toast, Tim drove into the university. He did not fancy a further direct encounter with either Judy Halford or the Vice Chancellor and decided a phone call would be quite sufficient.

"Is that the Vice Chancellor?" said Tim from the phone in his office at the university.

"Yes," came the curt reply.

"This is Tim Naylor speaking. Both my wife and I have thought over my position and what you said, however, my decision is to stick with my original statement; I will not withdraw the High Tension patent application."

There was a pause before the Vice Chancellor replied. "You are being very foolish. I do not give people a third chance and in fact, a second is very rare. You will regret this move in the future Dr. Naylor. I very much regret that I will have to take action against you on this matter of improper conduct with a student. The case will be very damaging for our public relations and your actions could very easily cause the collapse of this university's finances. Don't say that I didn't warn you, because I have."

With that the Vice Chancellor put his phone down and started drafting letters to the University Senate Committee.

* * *

Two days later Tim received a letter written by the chairman of the University Senate Committee. It stated that a formal complaint had been made about his conduct whilst he was on university business and he was required to attend a preliminary hearing on his case in three weeks' time.

"Well at least that should give you a chance to give your version of the affair," said Ruth to Tim. "It might even help in your defence of High Tension."

"I hope you're right," he replied, "Vicky Hurst has also received a letter asking her to attend. I feel so sorry for the poor girl, dragging her through all this."

"Perhaps if she hadn't given you such a big kiss for the photographers to take, she wouldn't be being called at all."

"That's a bit unfair Ruth. I did explain the situation," countered Tim.

"I'm sorry," she replied. "You know we're all on edge at the moment."

Tim went into the University as normal, although he found it very difficult to concentrate on his work. The daily routine of lectures, tutorials and laboratory classes continued but he found it hard to put his mind into developing High Tension any further.

The undercurrent concerning the pending improper conduct hearing seemed to follow him around the campus, although in reality he knew that very few people would have heard about the case yet. The student population had certainly not been told or alerted to the case and Tim's relationship with them seemed unchanged.

He was in the middle of one of his regular student tutorials when the door burst open. "Excuse me sir but there is an urgent message," gasped the secretary who had run up the stairs. "One of your children has been involved in an accident and is at the General Hospital."

Tim suddenly felt very sick and he went quite white. "Are you alright?" added the secretary.

"Yes I will be alright," he replied. "My apologies but we must end this tutorial here. "What happened, which child? And how badly are they hurt."

"I don't know sir. I think you'd better get down there as soon as possible, they said your wife has been sent for too."

Tim rushed down the stairs pushing a number of students out of the way in the process. He jumped into his car and sped off towards the hospital. His mind was racing through all the possibilities of what could have happened. "Why now of all times, why now?" he cried to himself as he drove down the road at reckless speed, his mind switching violently from his children, to Ruth, to High Tension.

He abandoned the car directly outside the casualty department entrance and ran into reception.

"My name is Naylor and I think one of my children has been admitted here."

"Yes sir," replied a nurse, "your child was admitted some twenty minutes ago. I am afraid she was involved in a road accident."

"Is she alright?" whispered Tim.

"The doctors are with her at the moment in the operating theatre. The best thing you can do is sit down there and wait for them to come out. Can I get you a cup of tea or coffee?"

"No, thank you," said Tim, unable to hide the tears rolling down his cheeks.

He sat down, totally devastated by the news. A few moments later Ruth came into the area and saw Tim.

"What's happened? Which one is it?"

"It's Laura," cried Tim. "She's been involved in a road accident. The doctors are with her at the moment."

"Oh Tim, pray for her please, pray for her. I'm so scared at the moment. This is all due to High Tension, I'm sure of it."

They stood together embracing each other for some time until they were disturbed by a pat on the shoulder.

"Excuse me, my name is Constable Williams, may I please have a few details on your daughter."

"What happened, what's going on?" asked Tim.

"I'm afraid your daughter appears to have been hit by a motorbike whilst riding back from school. We have a witness to the incident, but the motorcyclist doesn't appear to have stopped."

"But what about my daughter?" pleaded Tim.

"It's her head I'm afraid sir but I will have to leave the doctors to explain about that. I'm sorry to have to bother you, but I must have a few details now."

Tim managed to give the policeman all the information he required and some minutes after he had left, two doctors and the nurse approached them along the corridor.

"Is she alright?" cried Ruth.

"Madam, we have just performed minor surgery on the skull of your daughter. She is unconscious at the moment and we will not know how successful we have been for at least twenty four hours or perhaps longer."

"Can we see her?" whispered Tim, as he grasped his wife's hand.

"Yes, you can," replied one of the doctors. "She's sleeping quite peacefully."

As Tim and Ruth entered the recovery room, their hands were shaking with fear. Laura lay peacefully on the bed with a beautiful smile on her face. Her head was swathed in a massive bandage with various tubes and wires connected to her body.

"My poor Laura," wept Ruth as she knelt by the bedside and kissed her daughter. "Please get better, don't leave us."

She turned to Tim and said: "Please drop this High Tension thing dear. If you don't someone's going to die."

Chapter 7

Serious Business

Tim, Ruth and Jonathon got no sleep that night. They all insisted on staying at the hospital although they knew that their presence was not going to alter the chances of Laura's recovery. Jonathon was in fact a tower of strength to his parents and kept trying to bolster up their flagging spirits. Ruth was in a severe state of shock for most of the time and kept saying. "I knew something like this was going to happen, she's going to die."

Dawn broke and slowly the level of activity in the hospital increased. The doctors returned and examined Laura. "Progress seems steady," they reported. "She has not had any setbacks during the night."

They also suggested that Ruth and Tim share a rota for sitting with her in case she recovered consciousness.

It was at lunchtime on the day following the accident that Ruth noticed a movement in her daughter's eyes. This was followed by a twitch in her hand.

Ruth immediately pressed the emergency buzzer to summon the duty nurse but before she had arrived Laura had opened both her eyes and said:

"Hello Mummy, where am I?"

The tears of joy from Ruth said everything as she met Tim who was returning for his shift.

"She's alright!" Ruth wept. "Her brain is functioning normally and she can remember everything except the accident."

* * *

At home, the Naylor's sat and reflected on events.

"This just cannot go on Tim," said Ruth, "I am the wife of an academic not part of what appears to be a ruthless witch hunt to frighten you into giving up your interest in High Tension".

"We don't know for sure that these two incidents are related to High Tension. The police certainly don't think they are. You saw the level of disinterest on the detective's face when we went down to the police station." "But, I think that this is out of our local constabulary's league," continued Ruth. "Don't you realise that Laura could have been killed by that motorbike?"

"I agree," said Tim, putting his hands on his head. After a long silence he said: "What I suggest we do is go off to Roger's cottage in Southwold, Suffolk for a couple of weeks. It would give Laura a chance to recover quietly and it would give me a chance to think this one out. It will also mean that we are out of the house and out of any possible firing line."

"It's quite a good idea." replied Ruth cautiously, "But I do wish you would give up High Tension, surely the family must come first?"

* * *

The journey to Southwold on the eastern coast of England took the Naylor family through London and then out towards the rural county of Suffolk. Laura had made a good recovery and was in reasonable spirits some forty eight hours after being released from hospital. Both Tim and Ruth were very tense. Little was said in the car and it was left to Jonathon to try and raise some spirits.

"Look everybody," he said, "I know this High Tension business seems to have caused some problems, but let's remember that Dad has made a great discovery and everything should work out fine. We love Southwold and it's up to us all to make sure that we all enjoy ourselves there."

Jonathon's words had the ruthless simplicity of a child and they did cheer everyone up a little. With every mile distancing them from Winchester and bringing them closer to Southwold, conversation within the car seemed less strained.

As they approached the coast, the journey became progressively more picturesque. Spring had arrived in Norfolk and the trees were looking magnificently green. The cottage gardens that they passed were bursting into life and the beautiful Norfolk stone buildings were at their best.

Southwold is a small coastal town which was brought to prominence in the advent of railways. In Victorian times it enjoyed great popularity but now it is something of a backwater in terms of current holiday taste. It still however enjoys the rare charms of character, peace and tranquillity and the local inhabitants are fiercely loyal to the joys of the town. The cottage where the Naylor's were staying was positioned overlooking the market place and the cottage itself was a classic two up, two down terraced building which was built in the early nineteenth century. It had recently been somewhat modernised but the unique charm of the stone-faced building had been retained.

As Ruth opened the wooden gate leading to the small front garden of 'Rose Cottage', she immediately felt aware of the relief that they had reached a safe haven. "This is it," she said. "Let's hope our troubles are over from now on."

During their first afternoon at Southwold, Laura rested in the cottage while Tim, Ruth and Jonathon took a walk to the river estuary and bought some fresh fish from the fisherman's stalls at the side of the harbour. The weather was beautiful and it was a tonic for them all to enjoy the crisp afternoon east coast air.

In the evening, Tim was feeling restless and decided to go and drink a beer at the Crown Hotel which was strategically positioned in the market place. Southwold was famous for its beer because it was home to the Adnams

brewery. Many considered Adnams to be one of the finest English beers in the land. Tim propped himself at the bar and was just starting his second pint when a person who was also at the bar engaged him in conversation.

"Haven't seen you here before," said the stranger. "Are you just visiting Southwold?"

"Yes," replied Tim, "we're staying at Rose Cottage for a couple of weeks."

Having established Tim's credentials, the man introduced himself as "Jeremy Hurst, ex-civil servant and now gloriously retired in one of the few remaining tranquil spots on this planet." The two of them easily engaged each other in conversation and they soon discovered a common interest for both cricket and sailing. This necessarily required buying each other a round of drinks and within an hour Tim was definitely feeling the tension reducing effect of several pints of aromatic Adnams ale.

"And what brings you to Southwold at this time of the year?" asked Jeremy. "I thought you said you were an academic at Winchester University. Surely you're in the middle of term?"

Early in the conversation with Jeremy, Tim had realised that he was talking to a very shrewd man, typically Oxbridge and typically civil servant. Jeremy had had a lifetime of intellectual verbal intercourse and he missed very little, even in his retirement.

The question prompted Tim to tell Jeremy the whole sorry tale of the High Tension saga. As events unfolded during the conversation, Tim sensed relief that he was able to share the story with someone else, albeit, a complete stranger.

Jeremy Hurst made very few interjections as Tim told the full story of events. At the end Tim paused and looked at his companion.

"That is quite a tale," responded Jeremy. "I suppose I shouldn't be surprised at anything at my stage of life but, I

must admit, that was as good a yarn as I have ever heard." He paused and then continued.

"You know this reminds me of a rather messy business that I was involved with some years ago. I can't tell you about it because it's classified information. However, what I can say is that my guess would be that Pro Systems will somehow know about this."

"Who on earth are Pro Systems?"

Jeremy replied: "They are a curious organisation that operate from Wardour St. in London. I can't tell you too much about them but they may be able to help with this one. It's difficult for me or anybody I suspect to explain their exact role in life but you wouldn't be far wrong from thinking that they were a European version of MI5."

"Are they government funded?" asked Tim.

"Yes and no, I have already probably said more than I should. I suggest you make contact with them, they may be able to help and from what you have said of recent events, you certainly seem to need help."

After further words of genuine commiseration with Tim over his difficulties, Jeremy steered the conversation away from High Tension and started a debate on the merits and failings of the current England cricket team. They both had strong views on this issue and ended up in a near unanimous agreement that the present team was something of a lost cause.

Jeremy and Tim continued their conversation until the bar closed at 11.00 pm By this time, they had both consumed more Adnams beer than was perhaps wise and they staggered out of the 'Crown', parted company and eventually found their respective ways home.

* * *

Ruth woke Tim from his deep sleep in the morning with the comforting words:

"You look awful."

"Thanks," replied Tim as he tried to hide under the bedclothes.

An hour later, he emerged from the bedroom and staggered down to the kitchen.

"Hi Ruth, sorry about last night. I met a chap at the Crown and we probably had too much to drink but he did give me a possible useful tip. I am going to London today to see if I can get some help."

Tim explained the conversation with the stranger and his suggestion that he contact Pro Systems.

"Please do be careful, Tim," responded Ruth. "This all sounds very irregular and most dubious. I have never heard of this organisation."

"Me neither, but as I see it I have nothing to lose and Jeremy certainly seemed to drop a heavy hint that they could help. These civil servant types never give a direct answer and I definitely got the impression that he was saying my journey would be worthwhile."

* * *

Wardour St. in London is sandwiched between the red light area of Soho and Chinatown. The streets are very tight, busy and colourful. Tim had not made many steps along the street when he was approached by a woman.

"Hello luv, are you looking for anyone in particular or would you be interested in some fun with me?"

Tim looked into the heavily made up and attractive eyes of the woman and smiled. "Thank you but no. I am looking for a company called Pro Systems, would you know where they are?"

"The woman gave Tim a radiant smile and said: "I am definitely more fun than they are. You will find them on the left along the street." With that she turned and directed her attention to another potential client who had appeared from around the corner.

Pro Systems was barely detectable but for a small brass plate adjacent to their glass door. Tim entered and went up

to the rather cramped reception desk. The secretary looked cautiously at him and asked.

"Have you got the right place sir?"

"I hope so," replied Tim, "I was told by a colleague that your company might be able to help me."

"Can I have your name please and the name of your friend."

Tim gave the names and saw the girl key them into her computer. She looked at her monitor, glanced up at Tim in an anxious way and said:

"Would you be kind enough to wait a moment, I must get a colleague to see you."

As she left the reception area, Tim's eyes were attracted to the receptionist's monitor. It was difficult to see from his side of the counter but he was aware of flashing on the screen. His curiosity got the better of him and he leant over to read the screen.

To his amazement, he read.

Dr. Tim Naylor

UK Resident

Passport Number E648290

University Lecturer, Winchester University

Beware: Security Category 3, high risk. If contact made, immediately notify E/F section.

Recent movements. Bordeaux, Euro Chemicals, Winchester.

Tim's face suddenly went white, his stomach churned and he felt weak at the knees. How did they know about him? What did 'Category 3, high risk' mean? The whole thing looked very ominous. He panicked and ran out into the street. Once out of the building he continued running down the street and didn't stop until he was back at his car which was parked near Leicester Square.

* * *

It took him nearly half an hour to recover from the shock of the few words that he had seen on the monitor

screen. Pro Systems clearly knew of his existence and had been following his movements over the last few months. Were they friend or foe? Tim tried to reconstruct in his mind the exact words that he had read but it had all happened so fast that he was unable to remember the complete wording and sequence. However, he was left with the definite impression that Pro Systems were bad news.

Tim went to a phone box and called the operator, "Can you please give me the number of a Jeremy Hurst who lives in Southwold." There was a short silence followed by a response, "I am afraid the number is ex-directory and I am unable to give it to you."

"Thank you," replied Tim and then hung up. He then called Winchester University.

"Would you please put me through to extension 468, I wish to speak to Brains Blunt."

Tim's research student promptly answered the call.

"Brains, it's me, Tim. I'm in London and I've got a problem, can you come up and meet me here today?"

"What sort of problem?" replied Brains cautiously.

"I can't explain over the telephone but I need your advice on a computing matter."

Brains immediately became very attentive. "Sure, of course I can come, where do you want to meet?"

"I suggest you catch the next train into Waterloo Station and that we meet at 4.30p.m. this afternoon outside the National Gallery overlooking Trafalgar Square."

"No problem," replied Brains. "See you there."

* * *

The meeting took place as planned and they walked across Trafalgar Square and into St James' Park. Tim explained the recent events including his visit to Southwold and Pro Systems. He also described what he had seen on the monitor at the Pro Systems office.

"Wow, How do they know about you and what's all this Security Category 3 business about? I don't like the sound of all that," declared Brains.

"Nor me," replied Tim. "I feel that I am being drawn into something very nasty. Nothing seems to fit together at the moment. Euro Chemicals stealing our invention was one thing, but the Vice Chancellor's actions and our two domestic incidents are another. Now Pro Systems comes into the picture and the situation looks even worse."

"Why don't you go to the police?" asked Brains.

"I don't know whether I can trust them. From what this chap said at Southwold, Pro Systems might even be the police! Brains, what I had in mind was gaining access to the Pro Systems computer bank and finding out what information they hold on me."

"Oh dear, Tim, you are asking me to do something very naughty and definitely not in the normal duties of a university research student. However, as you know I have never turned down a computing challenge and I have a certain reputation to maintain." Brains turned and looked straight at Tim: "You're on, thanks for asking me."

The two of them walked on in silence for a while and then lingered to watch the ducks on the lake.

"Of course, you could march in and demand under the data protection act to see their records but I fear that will get you nowhere," said Brains. "This is a real tricky one. Firstly, we need their computer telephone number. They are surely connected with the outside world. Then, of course, we need to know their system and the password. On the assumption that we can get into the computer, we have then got to get around safety and detection traps that they have laid and finally we have got to find your data."

"Sounds formidable," said Tim. "Can it be done?"

Brains replied: "I remember in a lecture you gave that you said that all technical things are possible if you have a strong enough will. I must say, however, that this is a big

challenge. To be quite honest my forte is not breaking into computer systems."

They walked on through St James' Park, deep in thought. On occasions such as these, shared silences can be effective at generating ideas. They had used the method before in their scientific work at the university when generating ideas on High Tension and they were now subconsciously employing the procedure to try and unravel the Pro Systems problem.

Eventually they emerged from the park and found themselves facing Buckingham Palace.

"She's not in," said Tim looking to see if the Royal Standard was flying, indicating that the Queen was in residence.

"You have given me an idea," said Brains in a slow and thoughtful way. "There's no way that we are going to get into the front door of this computer. It's going to have to be via an open side door. Can you explain to me the exact layout of the Pro Systems buildings and its immediate surroundings."

Tim described the street and the office as best he could remember. "It just might just work," said Brains as his mind ticked into overdrive planning a strategy. "First of all, I think we should take a look at the building, just driving down the street should be enough."

"I think you'd better explain your plan first." said Tim, "I'm not keen on going anywhere near Wardour St. unless its absolutely necessary."

"It's very simple really," replied Brains, "We just need a bit of luck and various things to work. Do you remember that acoustic work that Vicky was doing in the laboratory before you invented High Tension. Well we discovered by accident that her equipment interfered with my computer. I looked into the problem and found that in fact it was possible for her system to communicate with my keyboard and monitor. Now, provided the Pro Systems monitor isn't protected by a so called 'Faraday cage', it may be possible

to read the monitor in the reception of Pro Systems using Vicky's equipment from outside the building and in addition, it may also be possible to drive the keyboard from outside."

"That's incredible, do other people know about this?" exclaimed Tim.

"Sure, some computer buffs do and the major manufacturers are taking measures to protect against it but it was only chance that we found Vicky's equipment could do the job. The beauty of this idea is that we don't have to know the security code. All we need is for the monitor to be left on and unattended for a short while and we can then 'borrow' it for that period."

"How close do you need to be to the Pro Systems building?" asked Tim.

"That could be a problem," replied Brains. "It might work if the equipment was parked in a car outside the office or if we could find somewhere to work from on the opposite side of the road."

"The whole idea sounds amazing but if it will gain us access to their computer, it must be worth a try. Brains, you do realise that what I am asking you to do is probably illegal and almost certainly dangerous. Please do not feel duty bound to have to do all this."

Brains put his arm on Tim's shoulder and replied, "Vicky, Roger and I are on the side of justice and we are one hundred percent behind you on this High Tension business. It's part of us, as well as you and we will do all we can to make sure that High Tension is our discovery."

"Well said and thank you from the bottom of my heart," said Tim.

* * *

The car surveillance of Pro Systems showed that there might be two possibilities. There was meter parking immediately outside the office and in addition, opposite, there were rather dilapidated offices with rooms above.

Brains suggested they return to Winchester and set up the acoustic system before working on the details of where it needed to be placed. Tim made a difficult phone call to Ruth, explaining that he was going to stay in Winchester and London for a few days in order to try and sort the whole High Tension business out. Ruth was both sceptical and concerned. She was now convinced that Laura's accident was not an accident and that the whole family was in danger. She also knew that when Tim's mind was made up to do something, little or nothing would change his attitude and she was certainly not able to steer him away from what she felt was a course of self destruction.

When Tim and Brains arrived at Winchester, they were met by both Vicky Hurst and Roger White.

"Hi," said Vicky. "We were working late trying to get a research paper together on High Tension. What are you two up to?"

Tim explained the whole story again ending with their plan to use Vicky's acoustic equipment to try and lock into the Pro Systems monitor.

"I think it will work," said Vicky. "Brains had a lot of fun using it to put all sorts of silly messages on other people's computers. I seem to remember you put rather a rude note on Ronald Dick's computer regarding his supervisor Professor Kramer."

* * *

Tim went back to the family home and when he opened the door he was met by an intense feeling of fear. Ruth and the children were at Southwold and the house was totally silent. The memory of Laura's accident and the burglary came flooding back to him as he cautiously walked from room to room. He thought to himself, was the house being watched by Pro Systems? Were they even in the house now?

After going into every room he decided that he was alone, certainly within the house. Tim then made himself

some coffee and sat down in the lounge to contemplate the events of the day. Things were certainly moving fast, too fast perhaps but he felt an inner confidence that what he was doing was right. He was, however, beginning to feel very afraid.

The silence and isolation of the house pressed into his inner thoughts. His mind was racing in terms of the different explanations of events and he found his whole body sweating and slightly shaking. After a half hour period of acute anxiety, he fell asleep in his chair, both mentally and physically exhausted.

Some two hours later, he was woken by a shrill sound close to his head. The telephone rang for a second time as he grabbed the receiver from the hook.

"It's me," said Vicky in her silken voice.

"Oh, hi!" replied Tim, as he drew himself away from the nightmare dream he was having.

"Sorry to wake you at this late hour," continued Vicky, "but I thought you would like to know that it works! Brains has fixed it so that my experimental rig can read a computer screen and also remotely drive the keyboard. He really is a genius."

"I know that," said Tim. "This really is great news. I suggest that we meet tomorrow morning to discuss our next move."

"That's fine. Sleep well, Tim."

He put down the receiver, turned around and nearly shrieked when he saw a mouse run across the living room floor.

Chapter 8

Offensive Action

It took only a few minutes the following morning for Brains to convince Tim that the computing bugging system could work.

"I stayed up all night," said Brains, "and wrote the necessary computer code. Look, at the touch of this button I can access the monitor screen next door. Now I'm in total control of that machine."

He then demonstrated that he could remotely drive the keyboard. "With the touch of this button," he continued, "the screen automatically reverts to it's original form and no one could know that we have been visiting them."

"It's brilliant," declared Vicky. "Let's go and try it out for real against Pro Systems."

"I'm getting very nervous about this," replied Tim. "Vicky, I really think you should stay behind. Roger and Brains, it's up to you if you want to come."

"We're all behind you," said Brains. "Count us both in."

Vicky did not like the idea of being left behind but in the end conceded that too many people could cause problems. The equipment was piled into the back of Roger's Morris 1000 and the three men prepared to leave.

"Good luck," cried Vicky as she gave Tim an embrace and a kiss. "Don't forget that High Tension is our invention and we must get it back."

* * *

"How are those High Tension piston rings getting on?" asked Tim as they sped along the motorway.

"Fine," replied Roger. "They seem to be self lubricating and there is absolutely no wear on them at all. High Tension is indeed a wonder material. I only hope that we can get this material back to it's rightful owner."

"Have we got a plan?" interjected Brains.

"Not really," responded Tim, "I have been trying to work out whether we would be better off working from the car outside Pro Systems or whether there is any prospect of getting a room opposite."

"The car sounds easier," said Brains.

"Yes I agree, but we could be very exposed. I think that these people can be very nasty. In my opinion my daughter's motorcycle accident was, in fact, no accident. We must be careful and, if possible, protect ourselves as much as possible."

After the inevitable traffic jams as they approached the centre of London, they drove down Wardour St. and passed the Pro Systems office.

"All looks quiet there," said Roger, "but I can't see any place to park the car."

"Yes, it's pretty crowded. The chances of us finding a parking meter nearby look slim and once we have found one I don't know how long we can hope to hold onto it." Tim continued: "I suggest we find an underground car park and then you two had better scout around. I do not want to unnecessarily show my face near Pro Systems for fear of being recognised."

"Good thinking," exclaimed Roger. "You're not just an academic and scientist. Clearly, you have all the survival qualities of a great detective!"

* * *

Roger and Brains walked down Wardour St. taking in the geography of the street.

"There doesn't seem to be much scope for setting up our gear near Pro Systems," said Roger. As they walked past the office, they could see the receptionist working behind her computer monitor and, in addition, a burly man was sitting in a chair by the front door.

Once they had walked past on the side of the road nearest the Pro Systems buildings they returned to the opposite side of the road.

"It really doesn't look very promising," said Roger. "The whole place looks too tight. I guess our only hope might be to operate from the buildings opposite the office."

They walked past a number of seedy buildings but could see no obvious candidate to suit their purposes. They walked on a few paces and looked down a rather dark alleyway.

"Hello sailors, looking for a bit of fun?"

At first Roger could not see where the voice came from but as his eyes adjusted to the dim light, he saw the figure of a woman silhouetted against the contour of the wall.

Brains was about to say something but Roger interjected: "Maybe," he replied.

The woman came out of the shadow and looked at them.

"I am not sure that I can handle both of you at the same time but I have got a friend upstairs who might be able to help." The woman smiled at them and moved closer. She was in fact quite stunning and she had the appearance of a very attractive and sophisticated young woman. Her suggestive manner left no doubt in anyone's mind as to her profession.

"That sounds very interesting," continued Roger. "Have you got a room with a view?"

"You'll have plenty to view. If you two lads would like to come upstairs, I can give you a preview."

"Fine," replied Roger with a big grin on his face.

"I'm afraid that I do insist on a little cash up front, you can't trust anyone these days," said the woman.

Roger delved into his pocket and passed over a bunch of notes. "Thanks," said the woman and led them upstairs.

When they entered the room both Roger and Brains were surprised to see a most tastefully decorated bedroom suite with exquisite furniture. The lighting was subdued and the curtains drawn.

"If you will excuse me gentlemen, I will go and get my friend Diane. By the way, my name is Suzie".

She left the room and Roger and Brains looked at each other, laughed and rushed to the window. As they opened the curtains they could see the office of Pro Systems opposite.

"Perfect," exclaimed Brains. "This could be fun."

The girls returned and Brains decided that Diane was every bit as attractive as Suzie.

"Well boys, how would you like to play this one?" enquired Suzie.

"This may sound rather strange but we would really just like to hire the room for the day! I should say that we both think that you two are very beautiful ladies but we have some important work to do and if possible we would like to have the use of the room for say twelve hours. I hope we can make it financially worthwhile."

Suzie looked at Diane; shrugged her shoulders and said, "Well that's a bit of an odd one. Are you two kinky or something?"

Roger explained again that he only wanted to use the room for twelve hours and that there would be no problems. He suggested a generous figure for the room which the girls immediately agreed to. "That's fine by me," said Suzie. "I can use the time to go and see my daughter who is with my mum in Slough. You will have to pay a deposit too. This is a very nice and expensive room."

"I agree, no problem," said Roger.

* * *

"Magnificent," declared Tim. "I don't know how you managed it, but this is a superb room. What luxury, I can't imagine what the room is used for!"

Brains was busy setting up the computing system by the side of the massive bed and Roger arranged the direction aerial by the side of the window.

"This could all be rather difficult," cautioned Brains. "I am not sure what security systems they might have on their computer and there will always be a danger that we might trip on one of their electronic or computer alarms. If that happens, a quick exit from the side door may be necessary."

Brains busied himself with the computer console that lay across the bed and then spoke to Roger.

"Okay, let's give it a try. Roger, I suggest you ease the aerial between the curtains and direct it towards the front window of Pro Systems."

Nothing appeared on Brains' monitor except white noise. "Lower the RF volts Roger, down by 50%," said Brains. "Easy now, up a bit. Stop!"

There was an expectant pause.

"Blast; we're just getting noise from somewhere, something is wrong. Ah, it could be poor earthing. Tim, run a wire to that lead pipe under the sink. Let's try that."

The three of them connected both Vicky's apparatus and the computer to the common earth of the pipe. "Let's have another go," continued Brains.

"Got you!" exclaimed Brains. After a moment's flickering, the monitor in the bedroom was showing the full information that was being displayed on the Pro Systems screen.

"Incredible!" exclaimed Tim. "It all seems so easy."

"Not so fast, Tim," said Brains. "Let's just hold on for a bit and make sure that we haven't triggered any automatic

alarms. If we have, that big burly fellow in the office might just pay us a visit."

The three of them sat fascinated as they looked at the monitor. All it displayed was Pro Systems Security Software with a menu selection below which included options. Visitors, Security, Alarm and Red, Green and Blue sections.

They waited for half an hour and nothing happened. No-one entered or left the office and the monitor didn't change.

"I guess we're safely in," said Brains. "I daren't try anything until that secretary leaves the console. She's got to go for lunch or need a pee at some stage."

They waited patiently and Roger kept a look out on the office from the partially drawn window.

"Something's happening." whispered Roger, "Two people have just gone in. They're talking to the big fellow. Now they're going to the reception".

The monitor burst into action.

The receptionist moved the cursor to visitors, typed in two names and within seconds information came flooding onto the screens.

"That's impressive," said Brains. "My guess is that they are working on a computer cluster. Not many computers systems in the world can work that fast."

Within seconds the screen reverted to it's original format and the visitors went into the building.

"It's looking good," continued Brains. "Now all we need is our dear receptionist to go and bugger off for a bit."

The tension was steadily mounting in the room and Tim found himself sweating profusely. Brains' eyes were glued to the monitor and Roger surveyed the office with a pair of binoculars.

* * *

Two hours passed before anything happened.

"She's getting up," whispered Roger from his observation post.

"Great," returned Brains. "She's left the monitor on."

"She's going to the main door," continued Roger, "opening it, going through, locking up and now walking south. Brilliant! Brains go for it now!"

Brains did just that. He switched across to intercept and within seconds the keyboard on his lap came alive. Tim had seen Brains at work before but on every occasion he marvelled at both the speed and confidence with which he worked the keyboard.

"It looks okay," said Brains in a cool and controlled voice. "There are no traps or alarms so far, in fact, it's bloody easy. These buggers haven't got any serious protection."

For the next five minutes Brains worked in total concentration. He moved from filespace to filespace, saying nothing as his fingers danced over the keyboards.

"She's coming back," said Roger urgently.

"How long have I got?" countered Brains.

"Thirty seconds at the most. I'll count you down. She is at the door...the keys out...it's in the lock...the doors open...she's moving across. For Christ sake switch across!"

"Got it," said Brains. He looked up and smiled at the anguished faces of Tim and Roger. "We've got it and I left in time. Look the screen is exactly as she left it."

"What about the information, what did you find out?" said Tim.

"Don't worry," replied Brains. "It's all on my disc and we can print it out. Any chance of a nice cup of tea?"

* * *

"This is dynamite," said Tim as the three of them poured over the computer printouts.

"It certainly looks like hot stuff," replied Roger. "Look Tim, I suggest you take these printouts and high tail it back to Winchester. Brains and I will hang on here for a while and wait for Suzie and Diane to come back. We'll join you later." There was a big smile on Roger's face and Brains was looking perky too.

"Okay lads, I'll be off. Don't do anything I wouldn't do."

"Sure," replied Roger.

The information that Tim had briefly read on the computer printouts was quite unexpected, though it confirmed some of his worst fears. He was unsure how to react and his immediate impulse was to phone his wife Ruth.

He walked to a phonebox but as he approached it, he held back thinking that she might be safer not knowing what he had learnt and Pro Systems may even be bugging the phone at the Southwold cottage. He decided on a different course of action and picked up the phone and rang Winchester University.

"This is the Vice Chancellor's secretary, can I help you?"

The familiar tones of Judy Halford came over the line and Tim said:

"Hello Judy, this is Tim Naylor speaking from London, may I speak to Sir Alec Taylor?"

"Hi Tim, how are you getting on? I'm missing you so much. Just when I thought we were getting on you went and left us. How's your daughter? That was a nasty accident."

"She's fine now, thanks," replied Tim. "I really do need to speak to Sir Alec. Is he about?"

"Sure I'll put you through, don't forget to come and see me."

With that there was a click and the line went silent. There was a pause of several seconds and Sir Alec came on the phone.

"Naylor what do you want? I can't formally talk to you before your meeting with the disciplinary committee comes up, you should know that."

"I have information that we must discuss." said Tim, "This won't keep and, in my opinion, it is imperative that we both meet. The university is probably not the right place, can we please meet somewhere else?"

The urgency and authority with which Tim had spoken was picked up by the Vice Chancellor.

"Very well, where do you suggest?"

"I am in London at the moment can we meet at the members' room of the Academy of Science. It's central and relatively private."

"Very well," replied Sir Alec. "I can meet you there in three hours time." With that the Vice Chancellor put down the phone, sat back in his chair and took a long and measured puff from his cigar.

* * *

The private members' room of the Academy of Science is one of the few civilised meeting places left in London. The opulent seats, subtle lighting and surrounding impressionist paintings make the room a pleasure place to be in. However, on this occasion, Tim's mind was working overtime and he was unable to enjoy the full ambiance of the room.

The Vice Chancellor arrived. Collected a cup of coffee from the buffet and came over to Tim.

"This had better be good," he said as he sat down. "I'm a busy man and I do not take kindly to having my work pattern disrupted in this way."

"Sir Alec," replied Tim, "what I have to say is somewhat complicated and I would be grateful if you would hear me through."

Tim then explained the events to Sir Alec, starting with his daughter's accident, their visit to Southwold and his subsequent adventure in London.

"The end result of all this detective work is contained in my briefcase," continued Tim, "We have a number of crucial Pro Systems files and I am afraid that your name appears on some of them."

Sir Alec Taylor looked at Tim and paused before he said anything. "Perhaps I'd better explain but first of all, I would like to know what Pro Systems has on my file."

"I'm sorry Vice Chancellor, but it's your move now, I've been manipulated by enough people already and I think you'd better tell me your side of the story. This whole business is getting very unpleasant."

Sir Alec sat back in his chair and composed his thoughts.

"Well Naylor, I guess you'll have to know my side of the story now. However, I will say that right from the outset I have been working in what I have thought to be the university's best interests."

"The position is this," he continued. "As you should well know, Winchester University along with several other universities are in a serious financial position. The present government is unlikely to help us and one of our only hopes is to attract large sums of European money. As you may also know, I am presently at the delicate stage of negotiating a major grant from the EEC and then along comes this bloody High Tension business."

"Initially, I was pleased to see the invention and I used it as an example of the sort of work that we could accomplish at Winchester. However, just after your Bordeaux meeting I had a phone call from Sir Malcolm Lucas who is the head of the University Grant Committee. He advised me that I should not encourage you to pursue your patent. He went so far as to say that your patent application was in

danger of making Winchester University lose all prospects of any European money."

"How on earth could he make such a claim?" declared Tim.

"I don't know," said Sir Alec, "but Sir Malcolm is not a man to be trifled with. He holds the purse strings and he calls the shots. Because of this, I tried to discourage you from pursuing the High Tension patent. I have to admit that when someone is threatening to withhold a eighty million pound grant, there are strong pressures on a Vice Chancellor. I know I was wrong to do it but in my own mind, I had no choice."

"It seems remarkable that Sir Malcolm Lucas could say such a thing. How did he know?" asked Tim.

"I can't answer that one, I just don't know myself."

"But how did Pro Systems come into all this?" asked Tim.

"I think they came later. After you refused to withdraw the patent application, I received a phone call at home. A voice said that he was very disappointed that I had been unable to persuade you to give up the patent and his agency had been engaged by the highest authority to ensure that you did give it up."

"He said that a Professional System would be activated to ensure that you complied with the wishes of Her Majesty's Government and that I was not to interfere with events in any way at all. I now assume he was talking about this Pro Systems outfit that you have discovered."

"Good Lord," exclaimed Tim. "This is incredible."

"I agree," replied Sir Alec. "However, I had no choice. Winchester University will die unless we get this EEC grant."

"What happened then?" ask Tim.

"You were first burgled and then your daughter was knocked off her bicycle. I must say your phone call this afternoon has come as something of a relief because if

there had been a death, I would have found it quite impossible to have kept silent any more."

"I just don't believe what I am hearing," whispered Tim. "Who are this Pro Systems lot, anyway?"

"They are as much of a mystery to me as they are to you," continued the Vice Chancellor. "Clearly we are both tied up in something very serious and it centres around your apparent invention. I must say that I wanted to believe you right from the beginning, that the invention was yours. However if Sir Malcolm is saying back off, then I have to back off. I couldn't bear to think that I was the Vice Chancellor that sunk Winchester University, it's too precious for that."

"I'm lost for words," said Tim. "What on earth should we do next? As I see it, if I spill the beans on Pro Systems, the University will certainly lose its money but equally we now all seem vulnerable. These bloody files show that Pro Systems planned both the burglary and the hit and run. They are clearly ruthless people who seem to respond to authorities above that of the police. How can such an organisation exist in what we call a democracy? I am becoming very frightened."

"You have every right to be," said Sir Alec. "High Tension is a powerful material and you have clearly seriously upset someone by inventing it or claiming to have invented it yourself."

They both sat back and digested what each other had said. The possibilities and consequent complications were numerous. Finally, Sir Alec spoke.

"Naylor, I have to say that my loyalty must lie with the university. We are at a crossroads. If I lose this European grant, the university is finished and I will be the one who killed Winchester. In my opinion, it is imperative that we get this grant. The information that you have is clearly most disturbing but I am afraid that it is only making matters worse for all of us. I can, of course, hint to Sir

Malcolm Lucas that I know of the existence of Pro Systems but that on its own may be enough for us to lose our grant. You see, at the end of the day, decisions such as these rest on the shoulders of very few people."

"But where does this leave me?" replied Tim. "I'm losing my invention, I may lose my job and there appears to be a government sponsored professional hit squad making my life a misery. My family and I are in great danger."

"I totally agree with you Naylor. However, perhaps you ought to realise that sometimes sacrifices should be made in the nation's interest."

"That, Sir Alec, is a complete load of rubbish. You are asking me to sacrifice everything in order to save Winchester and your own face."

"You do not have any choice, Naylor. Pro Systems is a force that is very much greater than you or I. They seem to respond to the highest authority in the land. If you challenge them, you and your family might last for days at the most. Any attempt to go to the press or police will be doomed. I'm sorry to have to say this, but it's true. You are dealing with matters quite out of your depth."

"This all seems like a very bad dream," said Tim. "I think I need some time to sort things out, Vice Chancellor. Can I have your word that you will not go back to Sir Malcolm Lucas or Pro Systems and let them know that I am aware of their involvement in High Tension? I just need some time to think things through."

"You have my word," replied Sir Alec.

Chapter 9

Reflections

The River Thames is both beautiful and at times disturbing. Tim Naylor looked across the water from Westminster Bridge and saw the violent eddies swirling around the bridge supports. The tide was in full flood with the water sweeping past.

The surrounding area was relatively quiet. The evening rush hour had passed and there were few pedestrians about. Tim was alone in the centre of London, unsure what to do and frightened by the future. He turned and looked across to Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament. "This," he said to himself, "is the world centre of democracy, and here I am caught in an appalling trap. Something is very wrong with my world and I don't seem to know what direction to take."

He contemplated walking into the House of Commons and telling his story to any member of parliament who would listen to him. On reflection, he rejected the idea as he remembered the sincerity of Sir Alec Taylor's fears on the possibility of Winchester University losing its European grant if High Tension became a public issue.

"Are you alright?" asked an eager looking woman.

Tim swung round in astonishment and faced the person who had spoken to him.

"I'm sorry to surprise you," continued the woman, "but I thought you might need some help. You have been looking over the bridge for some time and I have to say you don't appear too happy."

Tim took a long glance at the woman and suddenly became nervous. Was this person from Pro Systems?

"I'm only trying to help," said the woman. "Here is my card. I'm a voluntary worker for London Helpline. We regularly patrol the bridges and I have to say that at one stage I thought you were contemplating jumping off the bridge."

"That's very kind of you," said Tim. "Yes, I have problems but no, I wasn't going to jump."

"Well, here's my card anyway, if you do want help. My apologies for bothering you." With that the woman walked briskly away. Tim was left confused but reassured that someone at least seemed to care.

In order not to become the centre of curiosity again, he moved away from the bridge and walked towards the Houses of Parliament contemplating again whether or not he should go in. 'Perhaps I could get an audience with Sir Malcolm Lucas and demand an explanation,' he thought.

The idea didn't seem like a good one and he slowly walked up the Mall. Just as he passed the Horse Guard's Parade, he felt a very sudden colossal pain in his back.

"Sorry mate, didn't see you there," said a very large youth on a skateboard.

Tim was left holding his back in agony as the skateboarder glided away. As the stabbing pain was emanating from his back, his mind was racing, 'Was that an accident or a message from Pro Systems?' he thought.

After the incident on the bridge and the skateboard, Tim suddenly came out in a cold sweat. He was very frightened and became nervous of anybody that approached him. He found a telephone box and phoned Winchester.

"Hello Vicky, is that you?"

"Yes," replied the cool and confident voice of Vicky Hurst.

"Tim here. I'm in London and I'm going to catch the next train from Waterloo to Winchester can you meet me at the station?"

"Sure," replied Vicky. "If I am not there in two hours please contact both the police and Sir Alec Taylor. Have you got that?"

"Yes I have. Are you in trouble?" said Vicky.

"I'll explain when I see you."

* * *

The train journey was a tense affair as Tim viewed all the other passengers in his compartment with suspicion. Eventually, to his great relief, the train pulled up in Winchester station and he could see Vicky waiting on the platform to meet him.

They briefly embraced and Vicky said: "I'm very relieved to see you. Your phone call had me worried."

As they drove back to her flat, Tim explained the day's events including the successful bugging of the Pro Systems computer, the discussion with the Vice Chancellor Sir Alec Taylor and the two recent incidents in London.

"You have had a busy day, haven't you?" said Vicky, "I think we'd better have a cup of tea and await the return of our adventurers, Roger and Brains."

"I agree." replied Tim.

* * *

At ten in the evening, Roger and Brains arrived back at Vicky's flat.

"Now that was what I would call an interesting day," said Roger. "Tim, how did you get on with the VC?"

Tim duly explained the main points of the meeting.

"Let's go and have a drink at the Feathers," said Roger. "My brain always works better after a pint of beer."

The group sat around a table in the pub and pondered the options that were open to them all and to Tim in particular.

"I think we have to step back a bit," said Brains. "This Pro Systems business is all very fascinating but in my opinion it's not at the heart of the problem. Tim invented High Tension and then Euro Chemicals somehow stole the idea and invented Thermal Strong for themselves. From what you have just told us, I'm inclined to think that our Vice Chancellor Sir Alec Taylor is not guilty of leaking information. Whilst he may not be on our side, I certainly don't think he is prime opposition."

"I think you're right on that point," said Tim. "Sir Alec is clear and I would like to think that no-one else at Winchester University is involved."

"I'm not so sure about that," said Vicky. "That Judy Halford woman seems a bit too sharp for me and what about our friend Professor Ilja Kramner? He would sell his own mother if the price was right."

"You're being somewhat unfair on both of them," said Tim, "but I take your point and we should be careful."

"There's got to be a Euro Chemicals link," said Brains. "We must find out how they came to know about High Tension. Who are the key players in that organisation?"

Tim replied, "Well of course we had the Euro Chemicals delegation from Amsterdam visit us before the patent was filed and before we went to the Bordeaux Conference. Dr. Mark Lawrence, the group research director came together with Hans Van den Berg and Sabina Meyer."

"It's got to be one of them,..." said Brains.

"Or at least one of them must know something," Vicky replied.

"It's all very well saying that but how can we find any evidence and how does Pro Systems fit into all this?"

"The answer must be in Amsterdam and I suggest we go there tomorrow and find it," declared Roger. "We all need a jolly good holiday."

"This is no holiday," said Tim bitterly, "and I feel that I'm getting deeper into something that is getting further and further out of my grasp. To be honest I'm frightened. Lives are at stake."

"Look, Tim," said Roger seriously, "we're all in this and we are all behind you. Our generation believes in justice, even if you don't."

Tim looked directly into Roger's eyes and saw the sincerity of what he had just said, "Thank you," replied Tim. "I appreciate your faith but I can't allow you or my family to be drawn into this mess any further."

"We're all in it already," said Vicky.

"What I have in mind," said Roger, "is that we go over to Amsterdam and see if we can make contact with some Euro Chemicals people and try and find out how they got to know about High Tension. If we can achieve this, we should have all the pieces of the jigsaw and hopefully we can then fit them together. Tim we have got to see this through, otherwise you are ruined and all our dreams are shattered."

There was a long silence.

"I just don't see what it will achieve." said Tim.

Brains responded: "We didn't know what the Pro Systems caper would tell us but we did get useful information. You now know who caused the burglary and your daughter's accident and you now know why the VC acted in the way he did. Roger's right, we should go to Amsterdam and get to the bottom of Euro Chemicals."

Tim felt weak, he was being swept along the river at a tremendous rate. The brief tranquil spots were placed between raging torrents and he felt he was moving inexorably towards the rapids.

"Very well," he finally said. "I will go but I cannot let Vicky come. It all seems too dangerous for such a beautiful girl."

Vicky looked across at Tim and wanted to kiss him, "Very well," she said. "If my staying here means that you will go with Roger and Brains, then I am prepared to stay".

* * *

As Tim lay on the sofa in Vicky's flat, he reflected on the day's events. The information contained in the Pro Systems database had appalled but fascinated him. He could not conceive how such an organisation could exist and when he thought of the clinical details that had been filed under his name relating to Laura's accident and the burglary, he shuddered.

In a curious way, the meeting with Sir Alec Taylor was reassuring, in that he could now go some way to explaining his initially strange and hostile actions.

Brains' and Roger's idea to go to Amsterdam seemed crazy but inevitable. He felt so alone and unable to trust anyone except them.

It was well past one in the morning before Tim got any sleep at all. He stayed at Vicky's flat as he was scared that Pro Systems might be watching his own home. The room was strange to him and he was still tormented by the day's events.

He awoke with sweat pouring from his body and opened his eyes to see Vicky above him looking into his eyes.

"Don't worry," she said. "You were having a nightmare and I heard your screams. Everything will be alright."

Chapter 10

Amsterdam

The following morning, Tim awoke feeling decidedly unsure that he was making the right decision to go to Amsterdam and he was feeling very guilty at the full realisation that he had stayed the night with Vicky Hurst at her flat.

"I think I'd better phone my wife," said Tim as he and Vicky sat round the breakfast table. "Ruth will have to know that I plan to go to Amsterdam."

"Sure," said Vicky, "the telephone is just over there."

Tim rang the number of Rose Cottage at Southwold.

"Hello, who's speaking?" answered Ruth very cautiously.

"It's me, Tim. Look, I can't say too much on the phone but everything's okay and I'm going to take a short trip to where we had the first day of our honeymoon. Don't worry about anything. Is everything alright at your end?"

"Apart from the fact that I think you're totally crazy. Yes, everything is alright. Where are you now?"

"I would rather not say. Trust me dear, everything will be alright."

"I find that very difficult to believe. The children are also finding this a great strain."

"I'll be in touch again soon. Take care and goodbye." Tim put the telephone down and Vicky looked at Tim.

"That was all very short and cryptic," said Vicky. "It must be no joke being married to you."

"I agree," said Tim.

* * *

The underground train from the centre of London to Heathrow Airport seemed to take forever. Tim though on several occasions during the journey that he must be mad. Roger and Brains sat beside him and tried to reassure him that he wasn't.

"Look at it this way," said Roger. "We now know what Pro Systems have been up to but we don't know why they have become involved and it is this information that we really need. Euro Chemicals have got to be linked up in this business somehow and it is admirably sensible that we go to Amsterdam and find out how."

"That's all very well," replied Tim sceptically, "but High Tension is getting me into deeper and deeper water. I feel I'm about to sink and there's a real chance that you and my family are in danger too. The whole thing is getting out of hand."

Brains looked directly across at Tim and said: "This business isn't just important for you and us, I sense it goes very deep in relation to the so-called freedom of individuals. If you as a scientist working at a university can't rightfully claim your own invention, then something has gone seriously wrong with our society. This European so-called democracy is paper thin and the actions of Euro Chemicals and Pro Systems are examples of the development of something that is quite dangerous. We are losing control of our freedom, big brother is taking over."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Roger and then, in a more serious tone, he said: "Brains, is quite right, you know. If you don't stand up for what is right, who is going to?"

Tim sighed and replied: "Of course, put like that, we have no option but to sort this mess out. However, I have to say that I'm getting bloody scared."

"Don't worry," said Roger. "We've done the difficult bit, it will be downhill all the way from now on."

* * *

The train eventually arrived at Heathrow and the three of them battled their way to Terminal 3. None of them had any suitcases and the small amount of clothes that they were taking was easily stowed in hand luggage that they would take on the plane. The KLM flight was due in fifty minutes time and so they went directly to passport control.

Roger and Brains went through first and Tim followed. As he approached the officer at the desk, Tim suddenly felt weak at the knees. He had an instant and terrible fear that the officials might be on the look out for him trying to leave the country.

"May I see your passport, please?" asked the controller.

Tim looked blankly at the man, unaware of what to do. He felt sweat appearing on his brow and he thought that he was going to faint.

"Your passport, please," demanded the controller; now clearly annoyed at the developing situation.

Tim froze and looked blankly at the controller.

"Would you please mind stepping this way?" said the controller who was now taking the situation seriously. The man also pressed a button to summon assistance from other passport control officers.

Brains looked back and saw that there was a problem with Tim. He immediately went back to him and asked:

"Tim what's the matter? Our plane leaves shortly," turning to the controller, he continued: "I am so sorry officer, my supervisor seems to have had one of his attacks."

"Attacks?" asked the offer suspiciously.

"Yes, Doctor Naylor is a very distinguished scientist but he is prone to lapses in memory and awareness." replied Brains. He turned to Tim and said in a loud voice.

"Dr. Naylor are you alright now?"

The familiar voice of Brains was sufficient for Tim to recover a little but it wasn't in time before both police and

other passport officers arrived in response to the alarm bell.

"What's the problem?" said the police officer who was brandishing a lethal looking machine pistol over his shoulder.

"There isn't a problem," countered Brains before anyone could say anything. "Dr. Naylor has just had a slight attack, his passport is of course in order."

Brains took the passport from Tim's hand and passed it to the officer.

The officer checked through the passport carefully, punched details into his keyboard and waited for a response.

Brains felt the tension running through his body as everyone waited in limbo before the computer would respond. Finally, the screen lit up with information. The passport officer read the message, and then looked across at Brains.

"Everything seems to be in order sir. I suggest you take care of Dr. Naylor. He doesn't look very well to me."

"Thank you officer, I will," replied Brains. "Come on Doctor, we mustn't miss our plane."

The two of them moved away from the group of officers and police who had gathered at the control desk.

"That was a close one," said Brains. "Are you alright?"

"I'm not sure," said Tim. "I feel very weak."

Roger, Tim and Brains sat down in the departure lounge and slowly Tim recovered some colour in his face. A double brandy also revived his spirits.

"I'm sorry about that lads but I really froze when I approached that desk. I'm very frightened about this whole thing."

"Don't worry," said Roger. "Everything will be alright. Think of the trip as a hard earned rest in Amsterdam. You never know, it could be fun."

* * *

The flight across the English Channel was uneventful although Tim became suspicious of a number of passengers who seemed to be taking an interest in him. The passport incident had made him nervous and he was now even more on edge.

"Roger," said Tim, "have you noticed that chap, two rows behind us? He seems to keep looking at us."

"No, I haven't and I suggest you just keep on eating your meal," replied Roger. "There isn't a problem, we are in the EU now and we're all free to travel around Europe without being spied on."

"What about Pro Systems?" countered Tim. "They are capable of anything and are quite likely to be tailing us, particularly if they think we're heading towards Euro Chemicals."

"Look Tim, the last entry that Brains found in the Pro Systems data bank under your name concerned your daughter's accident and your visit to the Pro Systems office, there was nothing later. Brains is ninety percent sure that they didn't twig that we had raided their computer which means that the trail is cold."

Tim was unconvinced and when the plane arrived at Schipol airport he deliberately waited in his seat until the suspicious man had left the plane.

As they walked out of the airport and headed for the railway, Tim was continually looking around at passing people. After buying their rail tickets they took the elevator down to the underground railway platform to catch the express train into the centre of Amsterdam.

"Look, there he is," said Tim to Roger. "He's seen us, what shall we do?"

"Don't panic," reassured Roger. "The chap's just acknowledging a fellow passenger, lets go to the other end of the platform."

With typical Dutch promptness, the train arrived on time and swept them into the heart of Amsterdam. When

they arrived at Amsterdam LC station, once again Tim insisted on waiting in the train compartment for some time in order to ensure that the suspicious man had left the train. Tim then took them out of the station by a side route before plunging them into the busy city life.

They headed for the Hotel Victoria where reservations had been made.

"Excuse me but would you like to buy something to cheer you up?" said a young man who was escorted by an attractive girl. "It's very good stuff and not expensive."

"No, thank you," said Brains somewhat shocked at being propositioned for drugs within a few minutes of arriving in Amsterdam.

"Suit yourself," replied the man, "You look like pretty boring people anyway. Monique said we wouldn't make a sale from you." He slouched away with Monique in tow.

"Nice place Amsterdam," said Roger. "The natives seem really friendly."

* * *

The Hotel Victoria was only a short distance from the Central Station and Tim, Roger and Brains were soon settled in their rooms. Tim had a room to himself and Roger and Brains shared what amounted to an attic cupboard sized room. They met up in the lounge bar to formulate a plan.

"I have looked in the local telephone directory and obtained the address we need," said Roger, taking command of the situation. "The Euro Chemicals Laboratory is in the Sloten district of Amsterdam which is a few kilometres south west of here."

"The home address of Mark Lawrence is in Zandvoort which must mean that he drives to work. Zandvoort is on the coast and at least twenty five kilometres away. Sabina Meyer and Hans Van den Berg both have home addresses in Amsterdam and my guess would be that they travel to

the research laboratory either by bus, tram, cycle or on foot."

Roger continued, "I think we should hire a car and maybe some bicycles so we can follow our suspects. Do you all agree?"

"Yes you're right," said Tim who now seemed in a very much more positive frame of mind, "The sooner we resolve this affair the better. Who are we going to go for first?"

"Sabina Meyer, has to be the prettiest. I suggest we have a go at her," said Roger.

At that point the waiter brought the three coffees that they had ordered. Tim took a sip and said, "I think it's worth coming to the continent just for the coffee. Why the English don't know how to make a decent cup completely confounds me."

"It's now three o'clock," said Brains, "Why don't we get down to the laboratory and see if we can intercept Miss Meyer when she leaves. We can then follow her and hope something interesting happens."

"Okay," replied Tim, "You and Roger do that and I'll see if I can fix up a hire car. My money is on Doctors Lawrence and/or Van den Berg. I find it very difficult to believe Sabina Meyer is directly involved in this."

"You may be right," said Roger, "but we must apply our scientific training to this problem and cover all possibilities in a systematic way!"

"Roger, I'm impressed that you're thinking so clearly," said Tim. They laughed and set about their various tasks.

* * *

Roger and Brains positioned themselves at a discreet distance from the main entrance of the Euro Chemicals laboratory and waited for people to leave work.

"She might be on holiday for all we know," said Roger.

"She might have a three litre sports car which our bikes certainly won't keep up with," countered Brains. "We must be patient and wait and see."

Security at the Euro Chemicals laboratory was very noticeable. There was a substantial perimeter fence and all workers and visitors had to check-in at the main gate. This gate was patrolled by a number of security guards who seemed to be very conscientious in their work.

After watching the gate for some time, Roger said to Brains:

"I wouldn't fancy our chances of getting in there unnoticed."

"Yes, I've been thinking about that too," replied Brains. "It's like Fort Knox, those guys have checked everyone's pass as they go through, both in and out!"

The two of them continued to wait quietly as an increasing number of Euro Chemicals employees came out of the gate.

"Looks to me as though they work flexible time in there," said Roger, "There's no clear pattern to the movements."

It was gone six o'clock before they saw anything of interest.

"There's Van den Berg," whispered Brains, "He's on foot and seems to be heading for a tram. Shall I follow him?"

"No, leave him. We're working to a plan and we should stick to it."

They waited a further hour and were at the point of giving up when Sabina Meyer emerged from the laboratory.

"There she is and doesn't she look beautiful on that bike. Those Dutch bicycles have such style." said Roger.

The two of them set off in pursuit of Sabina who was cycling at a leisurely pace. She took them along a rather complicated route that went alongside a number of canals and past elegant waterside houses.

She stopped outside a small grocery shop and bought some provisions and then continued to the address that Roger had found in the phone book. After locking her bike she went inside a terraced house which had the appearance of being several apartments.

"Well, we've certainly learnt a lot from that," said Brains. "We now know she is a very careful cyclist and where she shops."

"Don't be so negative," said Roger. "We'll wait here a while and see if anything happens."

They had to wait a further hour before anything did happen and then Sabina emerged from the house and went to her bicycle.

"You follow her," said Roger. "I'll stay and look around here."

"Be careful," replied Brains. "For goodness sake, don't break into her apartment."

With these final words of caution, he sped off in hot pursuit of Sabina leaving Roger looking thoughtfully at the house.

Roger lingered in the area of the house for about half an hour and then went up to the front door and rang the bell labelled Meyer. There was no reply, as he had expected but he continued to ring several times.

There were three other bell buttons and he chose the one below Meyer and pressed it. After a few moments, an elderly but rather distinguished lady answered the door.

"Good evening, madam, do you by any chance speak English?"

"Indeed I do," replied the lady with an impeccable accent. She looked suspiciously at Roger and said: "What do you want? Who are you?"

"My apologies," said Roger with one of his radiant smiles. "I am a colleague of Miss Meyer. I was passing through Amsterdam on my way back to England and hoped that I might see her."

"I am afraid she has gone out," said the woman in a more friendly tone. "She usually goes out on Tuesday evenings. She goes to visit her mother in Guezen-Veld so she won't be back until late."

"That's such a pity! I had so much news to catch up on with her. I last saw her at Bordeaux."

"Oh yes, I remember," said the woman now clearly enjoying her conversation with Roger. "I looked after her cat while she was away. Her fiancé piet usually feeds the cat but he was away too."

"How kind of you to do that," continued Roger. "Sabina must be very lucky to have such a helpful neighbour."

The lady was not used to being praised and she blushed slightly.

"How is Piet?" said Roger.

"Oh, he seems well enough. The wedding is now only six months away; they both still seem very happy with it."

"Yes, of course," said Roger, "that should be a super occasion. I think I'd better be off now. I'm so sorry to have bothered you."

"Can I take a message for you and say that you came round? What's your name?" asked the lady.

"No, that's alright," replied Roger. "I'll come around again I would like it to be a surprise Many thanks for your help."

With that, Roger made a hasty retreat and cycled back to the Hotel Victoria.

As he approached the city centre and the hotel, the streets seemed to come alive with people. It was ten o'clock in the evening and the street lights were on. He turned into the road leading to the hotel and immediately noticed that the shop fronts on either side of the road were subtly illuminated with mainly red lights. Inside each window a woman was sitting with generally very few clothes on.

‘Ah,’ thought Roger, ‘so this is the red light district of Amsterdam.’

* * *

On returning to the hotel, Roger met up with Tim.

"You didn't say that our hotel was in the middle of the saucy part of Amsterdam," said Roger to Tim.

"I am afraid it's all red light districts now; you just can't get away from it."

"Well it certainly looks more interesting than Winchester on a cold winter's night. Some of those ladies would catch a terrible cold if they wore as much as they are wearing now."

"Any news?" asked Tim.

"Not a lot," said Roger. "Miss Sabina Meyer looks to me as though she is a perfect angel. I agree with you, Sabina seems a most unlikely prime suspect."

Some two hours later, Brains returned to report that Sabina had cycled at a rather healthy pace to Gauzen-Veld and gone into a small house for nearly two hours. She then cycled back to her own apartment.

"The most unusual part of the journey," said Brains, "was the last bit near the hotel. There are some strange shops around here."

Chapter 11

The Lawrences

At six o'clock the next morning, Tim, Brains and Roger got into their hire car and drove out towards Zandvoort.

"This whole business is very worrying," said Tim. "I have been going over the past sequence of events in my mind. The discovery of High Tension, the Vice Chancellor's reaction, Bordeaux and then Euro Chemicals' involvement. When I got back to the UK from Bordeaux there was the burglary and Laura's so-called accident followed by our discovery of Pro Systems. My meeting with the Vice Chancellor in London also put quite a different light on events. I'm pretty sure he was telling the truth which I guess, at least, means that he was not the source of the information leak."

"Hang on a bit," said Brains. "You're going a bit fast. Why don't you just remember that you discovered High Tension. Euro Chemicals somehow got to know about it and all your troubles came from that."

"True," said Tim, "but who leaked the information?"

"It could have been anyone," chipped in Roger, "even someone that none of us know. Pro Systems might have lifted the information. They seem capable of most things."

"Now, that's an interesting possibility, I hadn't thought of that," mused Tim.

"It could have been the Vice Chancellor. He is a very clever fellow and a double bluff would not be beyond him," continued Roger, "or it could also have been the radiant Miss Judy Halford, she certainly seems to have sized you up."

"That's a bit unfair," said Tim as he thought about the way Judy had in fact manipulated him on a number of occasions.

"And what about our favourite Professor Ilja Kramner? We all know he is a tricky piece of work. Surely he must be a prime suspect."

"Maybe you're right, Roger," continued Tim, "but I thought that we were in Holland to try and identify the guilty party at Euro Chemicals."

"We are and we will," said Brains. "Whilst Sabina Meyer is still a possible candidate, everything we saw yesterday suggests that she's a very unlikely culprit, which leaves Mark Lawrence and Van den Berg as suspects, although, of course, there must be some thousands of other employees of Euro Chemicals who also could be guilty."

"Mark Lawrence must know something. He gave the paper at Bordeaux and as research director, he must be aware of the situation," said Tim. "I think we've got to get a close look at this chap and try and find out what he knows."

"Easier said than done," replied Brains. "At this stage, all we have is his address in Zandvoort. I wonder if he likes motor racing, I seem to remember that there is a race track there."

They carried on in silence as they left the city of Amsterdam, then drove through Haarlem and emerged into Zandvoort, which was a small town surrounded by sand dunes and adjacent to the North Sea.

"Nice place," said Roger. "I can see why research directors live here."

They drove through the town and after asking a postman who spoke a little English, they found the road where Dr. Mark Lawrence lived.

"That's the one," whispered Roger. "He certainly lives in a posh place."

"We'd better park at the bottom of the road, there is only one exit. If we park outside his house, we might attract too much attention. Did anyone see his car on the drive?"

"Yes, there were two," replied Brains, "a Mercedes and a small Peugeot. Without wishing to be sexist, I would suspect the Mercedes is his and the Peugeot, hers. That's of course assuming that there is a wife or maybe even a mistress."

"Don't be so melodramatic, Brains," said Tim. "We're in a very respectable part of Holland. I'm sure he'll have a wife and two adorable children."

They parked the car at the bottom of the road and waited.

* * *

The three sat quietly in the car keeping their thoughts to themselves. Tim pondered Roger's suggestion that Pro Systems might be responsible for obtaining information on High Tension and channelling it to Euro Chemicals. He then remembered that they had seen nothing on his Pro Systems computer file relating to any early activity, although Brains had said that he hadn't time to look at the whole filespace.

"Brains," Tim asked, "do you think you missed anything in the Pro Systems computer that could have linked them with stealing information on High Tension?"

"It's possible," he replied. "We were in such a hurry that I only had time to get your latest entries and that bit on Sir Alec. There could have been loads more. Do you want us to go back? Roger and I got on rather well with those nice girls from Wardour St."

Brains looked across at Roger and smiled.

"No, it's alright," continued Tim. "I was just thinking about what Roger said about Pro Systems and them stealing the High Tension data."

The conversation lapsed again and Tim continued to speculate in his mind how High Tension could possibly have got into Euro Chemicals' hands. As he sat in the car he glanced at Roger and Brains and wondered whether they could have conceivably double crossed him. It seemed impossible and how could they possibly benefit from it? He quickly dismissed the idea as quite impossible and then Vicky Hurst came into his thoughts.

Tim could not think about Vicky without visualising in his mind Vicky's beautiful face and hair. Again, it's impossible, he thought. Vicky has been such a tower of strength.

"He's coming," whispered Roger. "I'm going to stay in Zandvoort. You and Brains follow that man."

"Okay but take care," said Tim. "We'll meet up at the hotel this evening. Don't do anything silly."

Roger slipped out of the car and Tim and Brains followed Mark Lawrence out of the road keeping their car at a discrete distance behind the big Mercedes.

The Lawrence's road was totally silent and at 7.30a.m. Roger felt both exposed and slightly ridiculous standing on the pavement of a suburban street in Zandvoort. He decided that now was not the right time to explore the Lawrence's house and started walking towards the town centre in search of some breakfast.

* * *

It was ten o'clock before Roger returned to the Lawrences' road. During the interval he had found a small café bar in the town and amused himself trying to understand what people were saying in Dutch.

He walked boldly up to the front door of the Lawrences' house and rang the door bell. He waited and there was no reply. After ringing the bell again he stepped back from the porch to look at the front of the house.

"Can I help you?" said a lady in Dutch, who was now standing immediately behind Roger.

He spun round to be faced by an attractive and pleasant woman who was probably in her mid-forties.

"Oh, you surprised me," muttered Roger who had been caught totally off his guard.

"Are you Dutch?" asked the lady.

"No, my name is Roger White and I'm an English student working in Holland. Do you speak English?"

"What do you think?" she replied in impeccable English.

"Yes of course you do, my apologies."

Roger usually prided himself on being in control of most situations but this encounter had totally thrown him. The woman seemed so calm and serene that she had put him off balance and he was saying and doing things that he had not originally intended to do. For example, giving her his correct name seemed to be an obvious blunder.

"How can I help you?" the lady continued. "It's very strange to meet an English student in this part of Zandvoort."

"Yes, I'm sure it is," blustered Roger who was now feeling decidedly uneasy with the encounter. "I am in fact looking for some casual work and hoped that someone in the road could do with a few odd jobs. My college fees are rather high and I need the money."

The woman looked carefully at Roger and asked: "Why this road, we're a long way from any college?"

"I'm going to study in Amsterdam but I am staying with friends at Bloemendaal along the coast. They said that this might be the sort of area where I could get some casual work."

"Indeed," said the woman, not revealing her inner thoughts to Roger.

They both looked at each other, neither one sure of the other. However, the encounter had been a powerful one on

both sides. The woman was curiously amused and intrigued by the meeting and Roger was stunned by the effect that the woman had on him.

"Can you garden?" asked the woman.

"Yes," replied Roger weakly.

"Well then, I suggest you start by cutting those shrubs over there, you will find the shears in the garage."

"Thank you," said Roger and without a further word spoken by either of them, Roger went to the garage, found the shears and started cutting the hedge.

'Bloody hell,' he thought to himself, 'how did I get myself into this situation. That woman is running rings round me.'

* * *

The rest of the morning was spent by Roger shearing what turned out to be a very large hedge. The woman also spent most of her time in the garden working independently from Roger and as the morning progressed, an unspoken rapport developed between the two of them. Roger could not put his finger on just why he found this lady so interesting. She was quite unlike his own mother or indeed any girlfriends he had ever had but he was continually aware of her presence and in particular the way she would occasionally look over towards him from various parts of the garden.

"Would you like some lunch?" the woman said after both of them had spent over two hours in the garden. "You have done a good job, well done!"

"Thank you very much," replied Roger genuinely pleased that he had been praised for his efforts.

They walked together to the house and as they approached the kitchen the woman said:

"My name is Mrs Rita Lawrence. It's nice to meet you Roger. Would you like some beer, it seemed like hard work out there?"

"Yes please," replied Roger who was now totally intoxicated by the woman's friendly sophistication.

They sat down to a simple Dutch lunch of bread, cheese and ham slices.

"You have a very beautiful house and garden," said Roger, who was now somewhat lost for words.

"Yes, it is pleasant. It's very quiet here, of course, which makes your appearance even more surprising." Rita Lawrence looked across the table and fixed her eyes on Roger. "Now tell me why you're really here."

Roger felt like a child being caught eating sweets between meals. This woman had powers of insight that he had never met before and for the first time in his life he felt very much out of his depth.

"As I said, I'm short of money and I'm doing a few odd jobs before I go to college," responded Roger without his usual conviction.

"We'll we shall see," replied Rita. "Would you like another beer?"

The two of them spent some time chatting about a wide range of topics before Rita touched on anything related to her husband.

"You're a very interesting person to talk to," she said. "I thought you would be the moment I saw you. Sadly my husband no longer has time to sit and talk to me in the way that we have been."

At last Roger felt that he had an opening in which to probe about Mark Lawrence and Euro Chemicals but he felt himself trying to hold back. He didn't want to manipulate this woman.

"What's the matter?" she said. "Have I said anything unusual? You look rather ill."

"No, I'm alright, thanks. It's just that I feel strange in your company. I can't explain it at all."

"Well, that's very interesting," she replied.

They sat looking at each other with rather puzzled expressions on their faces.

"When will your husband be back?" Roger finally said, breaking a long silence.

"Oh, not 'til late, he is bringing a colleague back from work." Immediately as she had finished the sentence she threw an anxious look at Roger.

"Please, I didn't mean to frighten you," reassured Roger who was now concerned that Rita might not think that his intentions were entirely honourable.

"Don't worry Roger, I am nearly old enough to be your mother," They both smiled at each other and lapsed back into the silence where they were both enjoying each other's company.

Without knowing what he was doing, Roger put out his hands towards Rita and she took hold of them.

"Our son would have been your age," she whispered. "He would have been so like you."

"I'm sorry," said Roger and after a pause, "would you like me to go?"

"No don't do that. This is a beautiful day for me. Please stay."

Roger, of course, had not expected anything like this to have happened and he was so consumed with the emotions of Rita that he felt unwilling to brooch the subject of Mark Lawrence.

With a hint of tears in her eyes, Rita Lawrence said to Roger, "I am going to lie down upstairs for a while. Would you be kind enough to finish the hedge."

* * *

It took Roger a further hour to complete the hedge and afterwards he returned to the house. Rita was nowhere to be seen and he assumed that she was still upstairs. He rummaged around in the kitchen, found the necessary bits and pieces and duly made a pot of tea.

Placing the tea pot and cups on a tray he climbed the main stairs and knocked on what looked like the master bedroom.

"Come in," said Rita.

Roger entered to see Mrs Rita Lawrence resting in the centre of a large bed. She was sitting up and wearing an exquisite nightgown which matched the silk sheets.

"You look very beautiful," said Roger.

"You're kind," replied Rita. "Come and sit with me and tell me why you're really here."

Roger did just that. He sat on the side of the bed and told her the whole story. Whilst he was telling her the story, the possible dangers he was putting both himself and Tim into never occurred to him. He just poured out the story as though he was talking to his own mother.

"That's incredible," Rita said when Roger had finally paused for breath at the end of the tale, "and do you think my husband could be involved in all this business. I do remember that he said there were a few business problems when he came back from Bordeaux but he says that now when he comes back from nearly every foreign trip. I thought it was just his way of saying sorry but I have to work this weekend."

They both remained silent for a while, Roger exhausted by the emotional trauma of volunteering so much information to someone he had only just met and Rita taking in all the possible implications of what she had been told.

"For what it's worth," she finally said, "Mark and I are going through a difficult patch. Since our son died a year ago, Mark has totally absorbed himself in his work. We have drifted apart in spirit if not in soul."

She looked across at Roger and continued.

"Carl's death was a terrible shock to us both and Mark's only defence to it was to work, work, work. He does nothing else, except play a bit of golf and ski. Euro Chemicals is everything to him now. He is totally con-

sumed by their research. We haven't really talked to each other for months and he locks his thoughts away from me totally. He adored Carl. He is finding it very difficult."

"I'm sorry," said Roger not knowing quite what to say.

"He comes back from work and returns the following day. During the period he is at home, we say little. It's mutual, we have nothing to say. Carl has gone."

There was a long pause and then Rita continued:

"To get back to your problem, during the last twenty years that I have known Mark I can truthfully say that I have known him to be an honest man and that's as true now as it was twenty years ago. I don't think Mark would willingly be involved in anything underhand concerning this High Tension business of yours."

She paused, sat up and sipped her cup of tea. Teardrops started to form on her cheeks. She looked across at Roger and whispered: "Stay with me Roger, just for a short while. Carl would sleep in my arms on this bed."

Roger looked at her, took off all his clothes and slid his body onto the bed and under the sheets.

They lay together for some moments.

"That's beautiful," said Rita. "Thank you."

Roger looked across to her and kissed her tenderly on the cheek. They then embraced and within seconds were locked passionately together. From that moment onwards Rita and Roger were as one. Their passionate lovemaking lasted for several minutes and culminated in a simultaneous climax for them both.

"Incredible!" gasped Roger as he lay on his back.

"I thought it was rather good too," smiled Rita.

* * *

Tim had difficulty in keeping up with Mark Lawrence who was driving his Mercedes at a considerable speed.

"That guy is in a hurry," said Brains to Tim as they lurched around a corner at speed in order to keep the big black car in sight.

"He certainly does seem to be pushing it," replied Tim. "Thank goodness we are near the Euro Chemicals laboratory, I don't fancy much more of this."

A few minutes later Mark Lawrence swept the Mercedes up to the Euro Chemicals security gate. Showed his pass and drove into the grounds of the building.

"Well that's it, I suppose, until he does the same in reverse this evening," said Brains. "I don't think we're going to discover much today."

"You're probably right," replied Tim. "It does seem a rather silly idea now but I guess we just park the car across the road and see if anything develops. You never know, we might be lucky."

Luck, however, did not seem to be on their side. The only highlights of the morning were seeing Sabina Meyer cycle into the laboratory some half an hour after Dr. Lawrence had arrived and then a further hour later Dr. Hans Van den Berg walking through the gate. There were of course many comings and goings at the gate during the day but both Brains and Tim saw nothing that caught their attention.

"I guess we should just wait until he comes out in the evening," said Tim. "This really is beginning to look like a fool's errand. I do hope Roger is getting on better than we are."

The two of them sat in the hire car for the rest of the day. They were parked some distance away from the main gate in order not to attract too much attention. At one point, a Dutch policeman walked by and looked into the car. Tension rose as he looked at the registration and tax marking on the vehicle but evidently satisfied that all was correct, he walked away.

In order to relieve boredom and on occasions their bladder, either Brains or Tim would take a walk or go to a nearby café. After four o'clock, however, they both stayed in the car as their expectations increased that something might happen.

"There's Van den Berg on foot," said Brains who was triumphant that at least something was happening.

"That's interesting," said Tim in reply. "He arrives late and leaves early."

"Ah, he must be guilty then," said Brains with a big grin.

"If only it was that easy to sort out. I really do fear that we are wasting our time here."

Five minutes later both Brains and Tim spotted the black Mercedes of Dr. Mark Lawrence.

"There's someone else in the car. Can you see whether it's a male or female?" said Tim.

"Definitely male. Big build, about fifty, I would say. Good lord, it's Kramner. Professor Ilja Kramner of Winchester University is in that car with Dr. Mark Lawrence!" declared Brains.

"Now that is interesting," said Tim. "The plot is definitely thickening."

* * *

Tim followed the Mercedes out of the suburbs of Amsterdam.

"It looks as though they're heading back to Zandvoort. What do you make of that?" said Brains.

"Interesting, very interesting," replied Tim.

"Is that all you can say," laughed Brains. "This could be our big break."

They followed the Mercedes on the identical route that they had taken in the morning and they soon found themselves back in Zandvoort.

"He's going back to his house. I hope Roger's not there, as Kramner would certainly recognise him," said Brains.

"Yes, that's true," responded Tim, "We'd better park well up the road from the Lawrence house. We don't want to attract any attention."

The Mercedes drove up the gravel drive and Lawrence and Kramner left the car and went into the house. Tim and Brains cruised by in their car just at the moment when Lawrence was showing Kramner in through the front door.

"Well there's not much we can do now, except wait, again," said Tim. "I don't see how we can possibly get close to the building. Kramner would instantly recognise both of us."

"You're right, let's just sit it out at the top of the road and hope none of the other neighbours get suspicious and call the police."

Tim and Brains sat patiently in the car for over an hour.

"I wonder what's going on in there?" mused Brains. "There's no sign of Roger about."

"Let's hope he's already gone," said Tim. After a long pause, Tim continued: "It's possible that Ilja Kramner is over here on one of his consulting trips. He and Lawrence were close colleagues and it's entirely plausible that Kramner is on one of his regular visits to the Euro Chemicals laboratories. There might be nothing in this at all."

"It looks pretty fishy to me." replied Brains. "That chap Kramner has never liked me and everybody knows that he has it in for you. He must be the source of the leak, but I would like to know how he got the information in the first place."

"Don't jump the gun, Brains. Just because Kramner's come back to Lawrence's house, doesn't prove that they are accomplices in stealing High Tension from us. We need more proof than that."

"Let's go and challenge them!" suggested Brains. "Why don't we charge up to the door and demand an explanation?"

"All very dramatic but in my opinion doomed to disaster. Lets just sit this one out."

* * *

They waited a further half hour before there was any activity.

"The Peugeot's on the move," whispered Tim, although they were easily out of earshot of anybody but themselves. "Looks like a woman driving. Is there anyone else in the car?"

"Can't see properly." replied Brains. "Could be, but not sure. Do we follow?"

"No, we should stick with Kramner and Lawrence, although, of course, Kramner could be staying the night here."

"Then we've got a long wait ahead of us," said Brains rather disconsolately.

In fact, they only had to wait a few minutes before the Mercedes swept out of the drive.

"Follow that car!" cried Brains in a somewhat melodramatic tone.

Once again, Tim found himself having great difficulty in keeping up with the Mercedes as it sped along in the fast lane of the dual carriageway. At one stage, they lost sight of the car and had to make a guess as to which way he had gone.

"I think it's the airport," said Brains. "Take a left".

Tim responded by taking the left exit towards Schipol airport.

"I hope you're right," he replied.

Fortunately, he was right and both were greatly relieved to see the Mercedes several cars in front, caught up in a traffic queue as they approached the airport.

"Presumably, Lawrence is taking Kramner to catch his flight back to the UK," said Tim.

Within minutes this was confirmed. The Mercedes drove up to the airport departures gate and Kramner removed his luggage from the boot of the car and waved goodbye to Lawrence. Immediately the Mercedes pulled away and left at high speed.

"He's off again, where to now, I wonder?" thought Tim.

"Don't get too near," said Brains. "Remember, we have been following him for some time now."

Tim tried to keep a respectable distance from the Mercedes and then again found that once on the dual carriageway it was as much as he could do to keep up with Lawrence. The journey was uneventful and they found themselves back at the Lawrences' house.

"The Peugeot's returned," said Brains. "What now?"

"Let's wait for half an hour. If nothing happens we'll go back to the hotel Victoria and see if we can track Roger down. There is no sign of him here."

The half hour passed very slowly and during that period absolutely nothing happened in the road. They waited a further fifteen minutes and then decided to return to Amsterdam.

On arrival at the hotel Victoria they were delighted to see Roger propping up the bar and drinking a long cool beer.

"How did you get on?" said Brains as they approached him.

"Very interesting," said Roger.

"Funny thing that," replied Brains, "ours was interesting too."

* * *

They all sat around a table at the bar and immediately Brains asked Roger: "Were you at the Lawrence house when Kramner turned up?"

"Kramner! What was he doing there?" exclaimed Roger.

"We don't know, but we hoped that you might have some information."

"I do have information," replied Roger, "but it doesn't relate directly to Kramner, it's about Mrs. Lawrence."

"Oh dear, not another conquest," said Brains.

"Mrs Lawrence is a very lovely woman, I think I should explain."

Tim and Brains listened in silence as Roger described most of the day's events. When he got to the part where he had told Rita Lawrence the real reason why he was there, Tim immediately interjected.

"You mean she knows that we're in Amsterdam trying to track down those who leaked High Tension to Euro Chemicals?"

"Yes, that's right." replied Roger.

"I don't believe this. You've blown it, Roger. All she needs to do is to tell her husband and we're in real trouble. We'll have Pro Systems round our neck. How could you do that?" Tim said in despair.

"It's not like that at all," reassured Roger. "I even think that Mrs Lawrence might help us. As I explained, she is devastated by the loss of their son. For some reason she seems to have adopted me and I have to say that we have developed a deep and meaningful relationship. She promised me that she would not say anything about my visit to her husband."

"Well how did you leave things with her?" asked Brains.

"I must have left the house at about four o'clock. She was very kind and drove me to the bus station. She wanted the meeting to be our secret and I'm sure she would not

tell Mark Lawrence about it or High Tension." He paused and then continued. "This was a very special meeting between us. Don't worry Tim, our secrets are safe with Rita."

"I hope you're right!" responded Tim. "If you aren't, we could be in a lot of trouble."

The three of them continued discussing the day's events and the options open to them. The sighting of Kramner was collectively considered to be highly significant, although Roger felt the implied involvement was inconsistent with what Rita Lawrence had said about her husband.

"She doesn't think that Mark Lawrence would get tied up with this business, not if there was anything shady going on and I'm inclined to believe her," said Roger.

"But you also said that he has recently become obsessed with work and Euro Chemicals. If Kramner comes along and gives him a jewel in the crown like High Tension, do you think he could resist the temptation?" countered Tim.

"Put like that, you might be right," said Roger. "What should our next move be?"

They all sat back and pondered. Finally, Tim spoke:

"I suggest we stick with our original plan and track Van den Berg tomorrow, now that we've done Sabina Meyer and Mark Lawrence. Roger, do you really think Rita Lawrence might help us get information that might even incriminate her own husband?"

"I'm not sure of that but I'm prepared to try," he replied.

"Well I don't think we should make any final decisions tonight. We can meet up tomorrow for an early breakfast to discuss matters." Tim then left Roger and Brains in the bar and went up to his room.

The days events were crowded in him and he felt very tired and very lonely. He looked at the phone and decided to ring his wife Ruth at Rose Cottage in Southwold.

"Ruth, is that you?" he said when the connection was made.

"Oh Tim. I'm so glad to hear you, where are you?"

"I'm in Amsterdam." he replied, blowing caution to the wind if the line was being tapped. "Everything's okay. I am here with Roger and Brains and we're making some progress in finding out who leaked the information on High Tension to Euro Chemicals."

"Tim, do be careful," pleaded Ruth. "We're so afraid for you. The children won't even go outside now. Please come back soon."

"It's alright," reassured Tim. "Everything will be OK. Today we discovered that Professor Ilja Kramner was in consultation with the head of Euro Chemicals' research."

"Does that mean that Kramner is the cause of all these problems? I'll kill him when I see him."

Tim continued: "We're not sure yet. Are you and the children okay?"

"No, we're not okay, we're a bundle of nerves. Please come home Tim, I'm frightened something horrible will happen."

"Just give me two days, three at the most and then I will come home. Trust me Ruth. I've got to see this through, we've gone too far to stop now."

"That's what I am afraid of," replied Ruth in tears now. "It's gone far too far."

"Don't cry dear, please be strong." He said, pausing for thought. "I've just had an idea. Why don't you ring Vicky Hurst and ask her to come and stay with you for the next few days. She knows the score and I'm sure she would come. I'll ring you tomorrow and see how things are going."

He gave Ruth the telephone number for Vicky's flat and gave her further reassurances that he would ring again. After, he put down the phone and lay on the bed.

"Things can't go on like this for much longer," he said to himself. "Something will have to happen soon."

Chapter 12

Hans Van Den Berg

Roger, Brains and Tim met for breakfast at six thirty on the following morning.

Tim had spent much of the night mulling over a plan which he outlined to the other two.

"I think Roger should take the car today. You can drop us off near Van den Berg's address and then go and see if you can make contact with Mrs Lawrence."

Roger looked pleased at the suggestion and smiled across at Brains.

"Your objective," continued Tim, "is to see if you can get any information from Mrs Lawrence concerning High Tension. Mark Lawrence may keep some papers at home and you will have to use your skills to try and get hold of something. We really need written evidence to have any hope of exposing the truth, whatever that may be."

"Okay, leave it with me," said Roger. "I'll do my best."

Tim then continued. "I'll follow Van den Berg from his home and presumably he will go to the Euro Chemicals Laboratory. Brains, I would like you to stay around Van den Berg's home and try and find out about his domestic life. We've got to move fast now. I've promised Ruth that I will be back in two days."

"What shall we do about Kramner?" asked Roger.

"There's very little we can do until we return to Winchester," said Tim. "Mrs Lawrence may be able to give us some clues but I wouldn't be optimistic. I have a horrible feeling that what we really need is some inside information."

"How about getting into the Euro Chemicals laboratory?" asked Brains.

"I've thought of that but it would be very difficult and potentially dangerous. We would of course be trespassing if we went in."

"Desperate measures are required for desperate times," said Roger. "I'm game to have a go."

"Let's hope it doesn't come to that," replied Tim.

* * *

They found the road where Van den Berg lived without any difficulty. The address was central and in an area which was riddled with waterways.

"This looks like quite a fashionable part of town," said Roger, "but I'm off to Zandvoort. Good luck!" With that he left Tim and Brains on a small interconnecting bridge and drove the little hire car in the direction of Zandvoort and his new found lover.

Tim located the address of Hans Van den Berg and returned to Brains who had been waiting on the bridge.

"He lives over there," said Tim pointing in the direction of some houses that fronted the waterway. "From the door plaque it looks as though he lives in flat 3. After he leaves, give it half an hour and see if you can find anything out. I assume that there is a Mrs Van den Berg. You might be able to get along with her as well as Roger appeared to get on with Mrs Lawrence yesterday."

"I doubt it," replied Brains with a smile.

They waited on the bridge for over an hour before Van den Berg emerged from the doorway of the house. Tim followed him at a discrete distance and Brains remained alone on the bridge.

Van den Berg seemed to be in no hurry to get to work and it wasn't long before he sauntered into a café bar. Tim was afraid to go in, as he was sure Van den Berg would recognise him. From his observation post across the road,

he could see Van den Berg sitting at a bar stool and taking a coffee. He was chatting to the barman in a way that suggested that they knew each other well.

Twenty minutes passed before Van den Berg was on the move again. This time, his pace seemed to have quickened as he weaved through the early morning pedestrians who were on their way to work.

A tram came into sight and he ran a few steps to join the back of a queue of people who were waiting to get on.

Tim only had a couple of seconds to make a decision and at the last moment he hopped onto the tram immediately behind Van den Berg. At this point, he was only an arms length away from his quarry and at extreme risk of being seen by him.

The critical moment passed as Van den Berg found a seat and Tim merged into the crowd at the back of the tram. Tim however, found himself perspiring profusely and suddenly feeling nervous.

The tram made its way through Amsterdam at a dignified pace although Tim had little chance of enjoying the sights, he was too busy checking his prey.

As they progressed to the suburbs, the number of people leaving it was higher than that of those getting on. Tim again started to feel nervous as his human cover was rapidly thinning out.

With some relief he saw Van den Berg prepare to leave the tram and Tim managed to engineer leaving it without being seen.

Van den Berg crossed the road with Tim in hot pursuit, only to be faced with a bicycle heading straight for him. He had totally forgotten his surroundings because he had been concentrating on following Van den Berg.

The bicycle swept by with its bell ringing and as it moved away he was startled to realise that it was Sabina Meyer.

"Good God!" he said to himself and watched her disappear around a bend and into the Euro Chemicals complex.

Within seconds Van den Berg also walked into the main gate of the Euro Chemicals laboratory leaving Tim Naylor standing on the pavement surprised by the coincidence of events.

* * *

Brains waited patiently outside Van den Berg's apartment. It was a beautiful morning and he was in a very picturesque setting. After an initial surge of people leaving for work, the street became relatively quiet. There seemed to be more bicycle traffic than cars and during his hour wait some half dozen small boats passed under the bridge where he was stationed.

Brains hadn't seen anyone enter or leave the main entrance leading to Van den Berg's apartment. He approached the door rather tentatively and was about to ring the bell above the name Van den Berg when he realised that the main entrance door was open. Cautiously entering, he made his way through the lobby and climbed the stairs to flat three.

He pressed the doorbell and waited for a response from Mrs Van den Berg. He rang several times for several minutes without getting a reply. 'This seems like a dead loss,' he thought to himself and was turning away when an elderly man emerged from the flat opposite Van den Bergs.

"Can I help you?" muttered the man in Dutch.

"I am looking for Mrs Van den Berg," said Brains, hoping his response was consistent with the question.

"Don't you speak Dutch?" asked the man in English.

"No I'm afraid not," replied Brains. "Do you know if Mrs Van den Berg is in?"

"I wasn't aware that there was a Mrs Van den Berg." said the man sarcastically. "If there is, I feel pretty sorry for her."

"Oh, I must apologise." said Brains who now felt he might be getting into deep water. "I was hoping to talk to the lady of the house concerning some interior design for the apartment."

"Which one?" responded the man bitterly. "That fellow has more ladies than you have hot dinners. It's disgraceful how these people go on today and this is meant to be a respectable block of flats."

"Do I gather that there isn't a Mrs Van den Berg?" inquired Brains.

"Well if there is, I haven't met her. That fellow has a different woman every week and if you ask me he is not too fussy about who they are."

"Oh dear," said Brains. "There must have been a mistake somewhere. I'm so sorry to have bothered you." With that, Brains turned and made a hasty retreat. The old man shrugged his shoulders and returned to his room, muttering in Dutch as he went.

Brains was left deflated by the limited information he had obtained. However, he had established that Van den Berg appeared to be a bachelor and also appeared to have a taste for the ladies.

* * *

Meanwhile, Roger had made his way to Zandvoort and had approached the Lawrences' house. The Peugeot was the only car on the drive and he confidently marched up to the front door. He rang the bell and waited.

"Oh, hello Roger, you're early, I have only just got up," said Rita Lawrence as she opened the door to him.

"Any chance of a cup of coffee?" he asked.

"Of course dear boy, do come in."

Rita and Roger were now very comfortable together although their sudden love affair was a curious one which was partly due to their large age difference. Roger had never previously been attracted to older women and Rita

to younger men. But their short liaison had already grown into something special for them both.

Rita was dressed in jeans and a blouse and looked quite different from the previous day's encounter where she had been dressed more formally in a skirt.

"You look great," said Roger.

"Flattery will get you everywhere," smiled Rita. "You have certainly had a wonderful effect on me. Even Mark said I looked radiant last night and asked what I had been up to yesterday."

"Does he suspect anything?" replied Roger in a worried tone.

"I shouldn't think so. His only concern these days is his beloved Euro Chemicals."

"Did you meet Ilja Kramner last night?" asked Roger steering the conversation away from themselves.

"Yes, very briefly. But how did you know about that?"

Roger explained how his colleagues had followed her husband home and then back to the airport.

"My goodness, you are a bunch of detectives, aren't you? I'm not sure that I approve of all this secret surveillance stuff," replied Rita.

"Well I did explain yesterday just how serious the whole affair is and that your husband does seem to be involved in some way. We just have to find the truth out somehow and we are fast running out of time."

"Well how can I help?" said Rita in a more concerned tone.

"Ilja Kramner. Do you know why he was visiting your husband, Mark?"

"Not really." responded Rita. "He seemed a nice enough fellow. Very smooth, but a bit old for me." Rita paused, looked across at Roger and gave him a beaming smile. "He actually made a pass at me when Mark was not in the room; that's most strange, men don't usually do that

to me but then yesterday was a strange day anyway, wasn't it?"

"They didn't say much while they were here. They just talked a bit of business and some idle chit-chat. Mark was very attentive towards him but then he is always like that with business colleagues."

Rita poured out the coffee and they sat around the kitchen table. Roger then came directly to the point of his visit.

"Rita, we need your help. We suspect that Kramner may have passed information onto your husband concerning the discovery of High Tension. However, we need written proof to be sure that Kramner can be nailed. For the moment, we have nothing." He paused and then continued: "I was hoping that you would help us in getting that information."

"I don't really see how I can help," replied Rita. "Firstly, you're asking me to act against my own husband and secondly, I don't know anything that would help you."

"How about papers? Does Mark work from home?"

"Yes, but there aren't any papers, he does everything on computer. He spends hours at the terminal in his study but you won't find anything in writing, it's all stored on the computer."

"May I take a look?" asked Roger as causally as possible.

"Yes, if you wish. I don't know anything about it but please make sure Mark doesn't realise someone has been using it."

Roger went through to the study and found a room that was immaculately organised. The computer console was on the desk and he switched the machine on. The screen came alive and after a few pop art graphic sequences on the screen, the command "enter password" appeared.

Unsure what to type he tried 'Euro Chemicals'. Again the screen chattered and came back with the information:

'Modem connection to Euro Chemicals complete, enter personal password'.

Roger typed in MRL the initials of Dr. Mark Lawrence. Immediately the screen replied.

'Illegal password. This system is protected, authorised users only'.

He tried a few more guesses at the password but after the fifth attempt it came up with the message.

'Illegal entry. System reporting illegal use to security division'.

The words frightened Roger and he immediately switched the machine off. Looked at the blank screen and then returned to Rita.

"Not much luck I'm afraid. I need Mark's computer password to gain entry into the filespace. Do you know it?"

"He wouldn't tell me," replied Rita. "Mark is a very private man."

"I'm afraid I could have caused you a few problems," said Roger. "Your husband's computer is connected via a modem telephone line to the Euro Chemicals Computer and they now know that someone has been trying unsuccessfully to make a connection from this house to the Euro Chemicals computer. They may report it to your husband or even contact you or the police."

"You have been a naughty boy, haven't you, Roger?" said Rita in a mocking scornful way. "Do you know what I do to naughty boys?"

"No?" replied Roger.

"I teach them a lesson," said Rita, "and I suggest you go immediately upstairs to my bedroom where I can give you a full lesson."

With that they both laughed, kissed each other and retired to bed.

Their lovemaking was passionate and fun but interrupted by the shrill tone of the telephone. Rita leaned over the naked body of Roger and picked up the bedside phone.

"It's me, Mark." said the voice. "I have just had a report from security that someone's being trying to enter the Euro Chemicals computer from home. What's going on?"

Rita looked across to Roger who had also heard her husband's words from the phone.

"Well I'm not sure." replied Rita, stalling for time and desperately trying to think of something. "How long ago was this?"

"I don't bloody well know how long ago it was but someone's been using my computer."

"Now don't be so rude." defended Rita.

Mark Lawrence barked in reply: "Look, this is a very serious matter. Are you alone in the house?"

"No, I'm in bed with a gorgeous man and we have just made passionate love."

"Don't piss about with me Rita, what's going on?"

"Ah, I know, it must have been Rachel's son, who came over with her for coffee. We were in the kitchen and he went off around the house. He is very keen on computers, such a bright lad too. He must have found your computer in the study." Rita looked across at Roger as he kissed her breasts in delight.

"Well, next time, make sure that brat doesn't go near my computer. My study is out of bounds to everyone and that includes you."

"Yes dear," whispered Rita as she deliberately put the receiver down on the stand.

"Now, where were we before we were so rudely interrupted?" said Rita as she lay on her back and waited for Roger to move onto her.

* * *

Roger eventually turned up with the car outside the Euro Chemicals laboratory.

"What the hell have you been up to?" said Tim. "We were expecting you a couple of hours ago."

Roger gave Tim and Brains an edited version of his visit to the Lawrence house and concluded, "If we want any quantitative information, we will need to gain access to the Euro Chemicals computer. We need the right password and I don't think we should dare use the terminal at the Lawrence house again. What do you think Brains?"

Brains mulled over the various options in his mind and then replied. "To start with I don't see how we could use Vicky's equipment over here because getting the gear through customs would be very difficult. In addition, there's no way that we could get near enough to the Euro Chemicals building to get within range of their monitors. Mark Lawrence is unlikely to leave his monitor on at his house and so our Pro Systems trick in my opinion won't work here. We will have to get a direct line to their system and we need to know the relevant passwords."

"Presumably the direct line isn't a problem," said Tim. "We could buy a Modem and personal computer and use it from a telephone box or the hotel."

"Yes that's true," said Brains. "The password's the tricky bit."

After a moment of thought, Tim said: "We can't ask Lawrence but I have been wondering about Sabina Meyer or even Van den Berg. Sabina owes me a favour after I rescued her from a bunch of thugs on the train to the Bordeaux conference. She seems a nice girl and we're all agreed that she is almost certainly not involved in stealing High Tension. From what we have seen of Van den Berg, his interests seem to centre around women. It's Kramner and Lawrence that we're after."

"I agree," replied Roger, "but it's high risk if you ask Sabina or Van den Berg and they are, in fact, the guilty party. You've shown your hand."

"It's a risk we'll have to take. Brains, can you go into Amsterdam and buy a modem and computer. Roger and I will stay here and see if anything comes up with Van den Berg or Euro Chemicals. Have you got enough money? Of course, I'll settle up when we get back."

Brains looked at Tim and said: "Don't worry I can put it on my credit card. A slightly bigger overdraft won't make much difference, the bank manager is used to it now."

With that, Brains left Roger and Tim sitting in the car surveying the Euro Chemicals entrance gates from a discrete distance.

Tim and Roger sat in silence as they watched various comings and goings at the main gate of the Euro Chemicals laboratory. After a period of very long silence, Roger spoke to Tim.

"You're a married man Tim. How do you know when you're in love?"

"That's a very strange question," said Tim, totally surprised by Roger's words. "I think I'm better at science than psychology. Love means different things to different people".

"Yes, sure it does but when did you realise you were in love with Ruth?"

"I guess it just gradually happened as we got to know each other."

"Well that's how I thought it would be too," said Roger, "but I've fallen in love with a married woman twice my age and I fell in love with her within five minutes of our first meeting."

"I am impressed. Presumably you're talking about Rita Lawrence. Are you sure it's love?"

"Well, whatever it is, it's a very strong emotion. That woman's terrific. High Tension has brought us together and I suspect my life is never going to be the same again. Isn't it a funny old world?"

Tim lay back in the seat of the car and replied: "It certainly is that."

* * *

"They all seem to be working late tonight," whispered Roger to Tim as they sat patiently in the hire car. It was five thirty and most of the employees of Euro Chemicals had left the laboratory but there was no sight of Van den Berg, Sabina Meyer or Mark Lawrence.

A further half hour passed before Van den Berg came out of the main gate and lit a cigarette as he passed the security office.

"I expect the poor chap was dying for a fag," said Tim. "Most of these chemical companies have a no smoking policy on company property. Let's see if we can follow him in the car. If he goes where we can't take the car, I will leg it and you cover as best you can in the car."

"Okay,." replied Roger, who, slipping the car into second gear, started cruising along behind Van den Berg.

He picked up a tram that was heading towards the centre of Amsterdam and Roger had little difficulty in following it right into the heart of the city and close to the Royal Palace.

"There he goes," exclaimed Roger. "It's your turn now, good luck! See you later at the hotel."

Tim got out of the car and followed Van den Berg down a pedestrianised street. Within a short distance, Van den Berg went into a large café and propped himself up at the bar. Tim also went in and sat at a corner seat where he could just about see Van den Berg at the bar.

As Tim sipped at his single beer, it was clear that Van den Berg was intent on consuming very much more. As

the evening progressed he switched to what were either whiskies or brandies. He ate a small amount of food but was generally content to drink on his own, although occasionally, he would survey the whole room as though he was looking for someone.

Finally, after going to the cloakroom, he staggered out of the bar and made his way into the now darkened streets. Tim followed Van den Berg as he weaved his way down the narrow passages. At one point he walked up to a couple of girls who were passing in the opposite direction. He said something to them and they quickly turned away.

After five minutes, Tim found himself following Van den Berg into the notorious red light district of Amsterdam and Van den Berg started inspecting the multitude of women who were posing in the dimly-lit shop fronts. Eventually, he found the women he fancied and disappeared into the house. The front curtains drew across and Tim was left waiting outside.

Twenty minutes later, Van den Berg emerged from the house and the front curtains duly re-opened. Van den Berg then continued along the street and after one further call at a bar, eventually found his way back to his apartment.

Tim stayed outside the block of flats for a further half hour but after seeing no movement whatsoever, he decided to return to the Hotel Victoria.

* * *

"Our friend Dr. Hans Van den Berg seems to be drinking rather a lot and definitely fancies the ladies," said Tim to Roger and Brains who were seated in the lounge of the Hotel Victoria.

"Well, that's not the normal behaviour of a top scientist, is it Tim?" asked Roger.

"No, I think not," he replied. "Van den Berg seems a troubled man."

"But we're not really any further on than we were this morning," said Brains. "What we really need is access to real Euro Chemicals information. I have the computer system set up in our bedroom. All I need now are a few passwords. Any ideas on how we are going to get them?"

"I'm going to talk to Sabina Meyer," replied Tim. "It's a risk but it seems like one of the only options left. Let's hope that she will be co-operative."

"How about sending Roger round, he appears to have got strange and strong powers with women these days," said Brains.

"I think not," responded Tim. "This one's down to me".

* * *

Sabina Meyer was watching television when the door bell rang. She was not expecting anyone to call at this late hour and she went cautiously to the flat intercom.

"Who is it?" she said from the phone in her room.

"It's Dr. Tim Naylor from Winchester University. I need to speak to you urgently."

"Good gracious!" replied Sabina. "I thought it was you that I saw this morning but I wasn't sure. Do come up, I'll unlock the door."

The front door of the flat clicked open and Tim mounted the stairs to be met on the first floor landing by Sabina.

"This is a real surprise, I was just about to go to bed."

"I'm so sorry to call on you at this hour but I desperately need someone's help and I'm hoping you might be the right person."

"Well, we shall see. Do come in, would you like some coffee?"

"Thanks," replied Tim, grateful that Sabina didn't seem too shocked by his appearance at this late hour.

After pouring the coffee out into two large white china cups, Sabina came and sat crossed legged on the sofa opposite Tim.

"Now what's all this about?" she asked. "Is it the Bordeaux Conference business?"

"Yes, I'm afraid it is. You see Sabina I did make the invention of High Tension and somehow Euro Chemicals got to know about it before our patent was filed. I must find out who stole my idea."

"I'm terribly sorry, Tim, but I don't see how I can help you. I'm not working directly in the Thermal Strong area anymore and, of course, I have signed the company secrecy agreement."

"Yes, I realise that, Sabina, but you must believe me when I say that I discovered High Tension first."

"Well the way Euro Chemicals saw it was that Van den Berg's team made the discovery and either you got the idea from him or it was one of those scientific quirks where two people made nearly simultaneous discoveries but whatever the case the Euro Chemicals patent is clearly first. Dr. Lawrence is adamant about that. Euro Chemicals now have over a hundred development scientists working on our Thermal Strong material. It's certain to become a world leader."

"But Sabina, I discovered that material," pleaded Tim. "The invention is mine. It was made at Winchester University."

"Then why doesn't your University support you and challenge the Euro Chemicals claim?"

"It can't," said Tim. "I mean it won't. The University is in a financial crisis and it is at a delicate stage in negotiating a European grant that would save it from extinction. For some reason, government pressure has been put on the University Vice Chancellor to drop our High Tension patent claim."

Sabina looked astonished and replied: "But governments can't do that, universities are free institutions."

"Not anymore," said Tim. "People in high places have been pulling strings and putting a lot of pressure on me to

give up High Tension. Even my children have been put in danger."

"I don't believe it." said Sabina.

"It's true. We discovered that a secret agency called Pro Systems broke into our house to frighten me off and also knocked my daughter off her bicycle in a motorbike accident. They also put pressure on the Vice Chancellor Sir Alec Taylor to drop High Tension."

"I find this very difficult to believe Tim. What you are telling me is incredible. Surely this is not all true."

"Sabina, I wouldn't be here if it wasn't true. My professional life is in tatters and I am caught up in something that is far bigger than I can handle. I cannot trust anyone except my family and my student colleagues Brains Blunt, Vicky Hurst and Roger White. I can't even go to the police because I fear they are tied up somehow with Pro Systems and I can assure you, that organisation frightens me. I even feel I'm taking a risk talking to you, as at the moment I can't be sure of anyone else. Too much has happened recently."

Sabina looked in astonishment at Tim. "I need a few moments to think about this. We were given no inclination at Euro Chemicals that there was an issue of conflict. I felt very sorry for you at Bordeaux, particularly after you had been so kind to me on the train journey down. I looked for you after your lecture but several people said you had gone home."

They sat in silence for a few moments and then Sabina spoke: "How do you know where I live and was it you this morning at the entrance of the Euro Chemicals laboratory?"

Tim explained how Roger, Brains and he had come over to Amsterdam and followed both her, Lawrence and Van den Berg.

"You mean you have been following me!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, I'm afraid so but please understand that I'm desperate to find out how Euro Chemicals found out about High Tension. We think we may have found the link. We saw Professor Ilja Kramner with Mark Lawrence yesterday."

"But why follow me?" persisted Sabina.

"Because you were a member of the Euro Chemicals delegation to visit Winchester University earlier in the year. We had discovered High Tension before that visit and kept it secret from Euro Chemicals because at that stage, the patent hadn't been filed".

"Oh I see," said Sabina, "and you think one of us might have taken the idea from that visit."

"It's possible," replied Tim, "alternatively a third party might have passed the information on. Someone like Ilja Kramner who we saw with Mark Lawrence yesterday."

"Well he might have done it," said Sabina, "but as far as I know, his visit to Euro Chemicals yesterday was one of his regular consultancy trips. We have seen quite a lot of him over the last few years."

"Sabina, I'm fast running out of time, will you help me?" Tim looked at her earnestly and prayed for a positive response.

"I don't really know how I can help, but I'm prepared to do what I can. You must remember that I am an employee of Euro Chemicals and I have a legally binding loyalty to them."

"I promise that you will not be compromised in any way," said Tim, eager to ensure that she wouldn't change her mind. "What we need is written evidence that Euro Chemicals stole High Tension from us. In order to find that we need access to the Euro Chemicals computer and we also need access to Mark Lawrence's and Van den Berg's filespace."

"Good God! You can't expect me to give you that information!" exclaimed Sabina, "Anyway, I haven't a clue what Dr. Lawrence's password is."

"What about Van den Berg's?" interjected Tim.

"Well he did give me his password about a year ago when we were changing some data from his filespace to mine but he should have changed it by now. Our company policy is to change at least once every six months."

"Sabina, I wouldn't be asking you if this was not desperately important. I give you my word that no-one else will know that you have told me anything."

She took a long look at Tim and smiled. "You were so sweet to me on that train to Bordeaux, how can I refuse but, for goodness sake, don't let anyone else know".

* * *

Roger and Brains were dozing in their room when Tim returned to the Hotel Victoria.

"Any luck?" said Roger.

"I have the Euro Chemicals computer number and an old password for Van den Berg's filespace. It's not everything we want but it's a start."

Brains immediately sprung up from lying on the bed and made for the computer terminal which was positioned on the dressing table. "Well done, we're in business. Let me have the number, there's work to be done."

Brains sat in front of the computer screen whilst Roger and Tim looked over his shoulder. He typed in the Euro Chemicals code and immediately gained access to their master computer.

"We're in," he said "Now this is where the fun begins. Tim, what was Van den Berg's password?"

"Groningen. It's the name of a Dutch town, easy to remember but difficult to guess."

"Well let's give it a try. Here we go."

Brains typed in the words and immediately the screen responded with, 'Dr. Hans Van den Berg filespace. 10 Gigabyte space available.'

"We're in. It works," declared Brains. "Van den Berg is a naughty boy for not changing his password. Now, let's see what we can find."

Brains worked like lightning and quickly found the main directory of Van den Berg's computer space.

"Wow there's lots and lots relating to Thermal Strong, that's going to take ages to work through."

"Look over there!" shouted Roger. "There is a heading 'High Tension'. Have a look at that."

"You're right." replied Brains excitedly. He moved the cursor across to the High Tension listing and entered that area of filespace.

It took a few moments for Brains to realise what they were seeing before he uttered.

"That's my bloody expert system. The bugger has copied my whole expert system on High Tension!"

"What!" declared Tim in disbelief.

"The bugger has got hold of my complete expert system on High Tension. Look, there's even a date on the listing: March 5th."

"That was when Euro Chemicals visited Winchester," said Tim solemnly. "They stole your whole data bank on High Tension."

"Christ, I am so sorry," said Brains turning to Tim. "This is all my bloody fault. The sod's found the High Tension data in my computer base at Winchester."

None of the three said anything as the significance of their discovery sank in. Their minds were all working overtime thinking of the consequences of the find.

Brains was the first to speak again. "I just don't know how he could have got all this information. I gave him everything on a plate. Method of manufacture, properties, applications, even the optimisation of the process. It's all

there, look!" Brains scanned through his expert system on High Tension showing all the neatly tabulated data and pathways through the data. "I don't know how he got through my protection on the Winchester Computer but Tim I am so sorry."

"Don't worry." replied Tim. "It's water under the bridge. The crucial point is that we have found the source of the leak. It had to be something like this."

"What shall we do now?" asked Roger.

Tim immediately replied: "Get my pound of flesh. There are still unanswered questions that I intend to get the answers to. Van den Berg is a nasty piece of work and I'm going to play him at his own game."

"What do you mean?" said Roger. "Surely this is enough evidence to prove that you are the real inventor."

"Possibly it is but I want to nail this man and get the full story. All of us have been taken too far for us to stop here."

"What do you have in mind?" asked Brains, who was surprised at Tim's apparently ruthless attitude.

"To start with let's get hard copies of the information that is in Van den Berg's filespace. If necessary, we can use it but I did make a promise that I would not compromise Sabina Meyer in any way. I have the genesis of a plan that I want to think about."

Brains worked quickly as he became nervous about the Euro Chemicals computer security system and it took a further ten minutes to obtain a print out of the High Tension data in Van den Berg's filespace.

"Do you want me to try and get into Mark Lawrence's filespace?" asked Brains.

"No, that could be dangerous and we're likely to activate the security alarms," replied Tim. "You've done a good night's work. Log off and let's get some sleep. There's a lot to be done tomorrow."

* * *

Tim returned to his room and sat on the bed. For his plan to work, he needed the assistance of a woman. He initially thought of Vicky Hurst but quickly rejected her. He then considered Judy Halford and pondered on her suitability for the task. Tim had never got to know Judy sufficiently well to be sure of her true character. Outwardly she was an extremely extrovert woman but there was the suspicion that it could be something of a front. He was on the point of picking up the phone to contact her when he then thought of his wife, Ruth. 'Surely not,' he pondered to himself. 'It could just work.'

He sat back, looked at the telephone, hesitated and then picked it up and started dialling Ruth at Rose Cottage in Southwold.

"Hi, it's me," he said when the connection was made.

"Are you alright?" asked Ruth who was half asleep. "It's two o'clock in the morning. What's the matter?"

"I'm making progress but I need some help. Tell me whether you are prepared to come over. Here's the plan."

Ruth listened to him explaining the recent events in Amsterdam and his plan for the following day. He concluded by saying: "Well, what do you think, are you prepared to come over?"

She paused momentarily and laughed. "Tim you are crazy but yes, I will come. It sounds more exciting than our planned trip to the supermarket in Norwich. I'll leave the kids with Vicky and drive down to Stansted airport in the morning."

Chapter 13

End Game

Ruth Naylor appeared at the customs exit of Schipol airport and her eyes instantly caught those of Tim's in the waiting crowd.

"Well, here I am," she said as they kissed each other.

"Thank you for coming, darling," said Tim as he gave her a long embrace. "It's going to be alright. I feel that at last the tide has turned in our favour."

"I do hope you're right," replied Ruth. "Your scheme sounds pretty dangerous to me. I can think of a thousand and one ways in which it can go wrong."

"Me too," he confessed, "but I want to get Van den Berg and any of the others involved. Are you sure you're happy to go ahead?"

Ruth looked at Tim and smiled. "Yes I'm sure. It might even be fun. What's this Van den Berg chap like? I hope he's good looking."

"You'll see in due course."

Tim took Ruth's suitcase and they made their way out of the airport and picked up the car in the car park. As they drove into Amsterdam, Ruth quizzed Tim on all the recent events.

"It sounds to me as though you, Brains and Roger have been having a fine time over here." she said.

"It may sound like that now but until we made the breakthrough last night, discovering the High Tension data in the Euro Chemicals computer, things were looking pretty desperate."

"What about Pro Systems?" asked Ruth. "The children and I have been scared stiff in Southwold that they would do something terrible to you or us."

"We haven't seen any sign of them in Amsterdam. Let's hope they don't operate on this side of the English Channel."

There was silence in the car for a short while and then Ruth continued:

"Tim, you do know what you're doing, don't you? High Tension is proving to be a nightmare for us all."

"Ruth dear, I'm only asking you to bear with me for one more day. By then, I hope High Tension will be mine again. For better or worse, we must see this through."

"I really do wish you had stayed just simple Dr. Tim Naylor. Our life was perfectly simple and happy before High Tension came along."

"But I thought you said you were rather looking forward to this," said Tim.

"Well, yes and no," replied Ruth. "After all this is rather unusual for me."

Tim looked across at her and said, "I should hope it is."

* * *

They parked the car and made their way to the hotel. It was lunchtime and the streets were very busy. Outside the hotel, groups of youths had gathered and some were sitting on the pavement.

"It all looks a bit sordid," commented Ruth as she had to step around a couple who were lying on the pavement smoking cigarettes.

"Yes, I'm afraid it is. However, as soon as you get away from the city centre, everywhere is quite smart. For example, Zandvoort is most pleasant."

"Ah, yes, you said the Lawrences lived out there. What's this liaison you talked about between Roger and Rita Lawrence?" asked Ruth.

"Difficult for me to describe. Roger seems quite infatuated by the woman and that's quite unusual for Roger. I think he's even in love with her."

"How sweet," said Ruth, "I hope she's pretty."

"I haven't met her but she's at least twice his age."

Ruth looked at Tim and smiled. "Don't sound so surprised! You men may be past your peak at thirty but us women most certainly aren't!"

They entered the hotel and made their way in the lift up to Tim's room. Roger and Brains were both in the room when they arrived.

"Hi, good to see you, Ruth," said Roger. "How are you keeping?"

"Confused," replied Ruth. "I presume you're a party to this hair brained scheme of Tim's."

"Yes," said Brains. "Wouldn't miss it for anything. Did you have a good flight over?"

They chatted for a while and let Ruth unpack her suitcase.

Tim turned to Brains: "Have you got all the necessary equipment?" he asked.

"Sure, it's all in place and ready to be activated just as we planned this morning."

"Right lads, you know what you have to do. I want a few minutes with Ruth on our own, we'll catch up with you in the lounge in about half an hour's time."

"Okay," replied Brains as he and Roger left Ruth and Tim alone in the room.

"Are you sure you can go through with this?" asked Tim.

"There's no turning back now and anyway, as we said in the car, it could be fun!"

* * *

The party met up in the lounge of the hotel.

"You look great," said Roger to Ruth. "That blouse is a really nice touch."

Ruth blushed and giggled. "Well if I have a job to do, I might as well do it properly."

They sat round and Tim ordered coffee. "Right," he said, "Roger, Ruth and I will go off in the car while Brains stays here. I have given Ruth everything she needs. Lets hope things work out as planned but remember that we have got to be prepared to be flexible and that it's my wife who is at the centre of all this."

"How do you feel?" asked Brains to Ruth.

"Fine, I'm beginning to enjoy the idea. Perhaps I wasn't cut out to be a simple housewife after all. It certainly seems more exciting than shopping at Sainsbury's."

"Now, just remember that we have a job to do," cautioned Tim. "If this comes off, it's going to be a whole lot easier to sort this High Tension business out."

"If you do get High Tension back, what are you going to do then?" asked Brains.

"I'm working on that, but let's just concentrate on Van den Berg today." Tim finished his coffee and continued: "It's time we moved into action."

* * *

They parked the hire car outside the Euro Chemicals laboratory in the same spot that they had used on previous days. It was four o'clock in the afternoon and people were beginning to emerge from the security gate.

"Perhaps we should have followed Van den Berg this morning?" said Roger. "He might not be going into work today."

"We can't cover every possibility," replied Tim who was now beginning to feel very uneasy about the whole position. Perhaps, he should have phoned Judy Halford after all. He probably already had enough evidence to

clear his name. He pondered for a while and became more restless.

"Look," he eventually said, "I think this is a bloody stupid idea, let's go back to the Hotel."

Both Roger and Ruth stared at him in surprise. "But it's your idea," said Ruth.

"I know it is but I've changed my mind, there must be a better way than this."

There was silence in the car as the three were locked in their own thoughts. Roger felt it was not his place to say anything and Ruth having built herself up for the task ahead suddenly felt quite deflated at the prospect of not going through with it.

Finally, Ruth broke the silence: "Well Tim, I wish you would make up your mind. Have you any better suggestions as to how we should proceed?"

"No, but..."

"There are no buts," she snapped before Tim could continue. "You had a good idea, we've all agreed on it and we're going to carry it out. Don't worry about me, I can look after myself. I'm a lot more streetwise than you give me credit for. From now on, I'll do it my way until we've sorted this Van den Berg chap out. After that, it's up to you, but this fellow has caused me every bit as much pain over High Tension as he has to you. Don't forget our daughter could have been killed over this business."

Roger looked at them both. He had never seen Ruth in such a dominant role before and he admired her strength of character. Tim was looking uncertain on how to proceed.

Nothing more was said for several minutes. Tim was brooding on how to respond to his wife. Ruth was clear in her own mind and felt there was nothing else to add. She didn't want to complicate matters with further discussions on other possibilities.

"Have you two made your minds up?" said Roger. "Van den Berg is coming out of the gate now."

Tim looked up, saw Van den Berg in the distance and said in a somewhat reluctant tone: "Okay Roger follow him, let's see this thing through."

Van den Berg followed the same pattern as the previous day by catching a tram into the centre of Amsterdam. Roger followed in the car with both Ruth and Tim following events in the passenger seats.

"If he's a creature of habit, he'll get off at the next stop." said Roger, "Are you two ready to follow?"

"There he goes," continued Roger. "Good luck".

Ruth and Tim followed Van den Berg along a passage and saw him enter the same café as on the day before.

"Right, we're in luck," said Tim. "Let's give him five minutes, then it's over to you."

Those five minutes were a long time for both of them. Ruth felt a twinge of excitement coupled with apprehension. She had seen the world in her time but since her marriage to Tim, she had been totally faithful to him. Tim was even more despondent and for several minutes was on the point of calling the whole thing off.

"Are you going to wish me luck?" said Ruth as she checked her watch.

"Yes of course. Good luck dear, I love you."

"That's a fine thing to say when you are sending me off into the arms of another man." Ruth smiled at Tim and walked towards the café.

* * *

Ruth entered the café and saw Van den Berg at the bar. He glanced at her and then went back to his drink. She sat down at a table nearby, took off her jacket and ordered a drink from the waitress. Several minutes passed by and during that time a few other people came in and some others left the café. At one stage Van den Berg looked around

the bar and Ruth gave him a faint smile. They made eye contact for a second but neither lingered with their attentions.

The situation remained static for several more minutes and Ruth pulled out a packet of cigarettes from her bag. She struck her lighter but couldn't get a flame. She rose and walked over to the bar.

"Excuse me but have you got a light?" she said in a somewhat indifferent way to Van den Berg.

"Sure," he replied and took out a box of matches from his pocket. He lit a match and offered it to Ruth.

Ruth put the cigarette to her mouth and leaned over towards Van den Berg. Her blouse subtly revealed much of her cleavage and Van den Berg was inevitably trapped into staring at it.

"Thanks a lot," Ruth said, "I'm most grateful to you." She knew that the initial body contact had been made and was confident to continue. "Are you Dutch?" she asked.

"Yes born and bred in this beautiful city," replied Van den Berg who was most happy to be receiving the attention of an attractive woman.

"How lucky you are. It does seem a most exciting place."

"Are you visiting Amsterdam?" asked Van den Berg whose interest in the woman was increasing all the time.

"Well, yes, my husband's on business in Germany and we're meeting up here later in the week."

"Oh, I see," mused Van den Berg. "Can I buy you a drink?"

From that moment, Ruth felt the first stage had been successfully achieved. Van den Berg had taken the bait.

They sat together at the bar and had several drinks. Ruth found Van den Berg good company and they quickly got onto first name terms. Tim had led her to believe that he was the lecherous type but Ruth's first impressions

were quite different. He was charming, good looking and indeed, this was turning out to be a most interesting day.

"I was planning to go on a river cruise," said Ruth, "Would you like to come along too?"

"That's an excellent idea," enthused Hans Van den Berg. "I can give you a personal commentary on the sights of Amsterdam. The city is particularly good in the evening."

Ruth got up and collected her jacket. "Let's go then," she said and gripped Hans' hand pulling him towards the door.

Tim was getting progressively more miserable whilst waiting outside the café and the sight of his wife, hand in hand with Hans Van den Berg, did not raise his spirits. In fact, it made him feel rather sick. 'How the hell did she manage that?' he thought as he followed the two of them down the street.

Ruth and Hans arrived on the waterside and promptly got on a water bus. The boat was a very open structure and Tim could not see a way of getting on it without being seen by the couple. 'Damn,' he thought, 'What now?'

He had no real option but to sit at the quayside and watch Van den Berg and Ruth disappear into the distance as the boat moved away.

They were thoroughly enjoying themselves and Ruth was not concerned that Tim had been unable to get onto the boat. In fact, she was rather pleased as his presence might have cramped her style.

"Let me get you a drink from the bar," said Ruth. "Dutch gin okay?"

"Yes thanks," replied Hans, who was now really enjoying his good fortune.

Ruth went to the bar and ordered a double gin for Hans and a tonic water for herself. After receiving the drinks she also slipped the pill that Tim had given her into Hans'

drink. 'That should relax him a bit' thought Ruth putting on a big smile as she approached Hans.

"Now, how about showing me some good sights in Amsterdam?" she said. "I may be able to show you something interesting later too."

They laughed and Hans took a long swig at his drink.

* * *

It was totally dark when the boat returned to the quay. Tim looked anxiously to see whether Ruth and Van den Berg were still on the boat as he feared that they might have got off at one of the various stopping points.

He saw Hans first, wobbling a bit as he walked off the plank between the boat and harbour. Ruth was following and giggling at Hans' antics. When ashore they looked around and then moved off towards the centre of town with Tim in hot pursuit.

At one stage, Tim thought they were heading towards Van den Berg's apartment but he then saw them go into a small corner restaurant. 'Well I hope he pays the bill,' muttered Tim to himself as he settled down on the opposite side of the street and prepared for a long wait.

"What would you like?" asked Hans, as Ruth surveyed the menu.

"Now that's a leading question, but I'll settle for the Lobster and a nice full bottle of white wine." She looked across at Hans and saw a somewhat glazed and dreamy look in his eyes. Tim had bought some pills from youths outside the hotel and the youths had assured him that they would provide him with a most beautiful trip. The one Ruth had given Hans certainly seemed to be doing the trick.

By the time the sweet, arrived Hans was nearly in another world.

"Ruth," he said. "You are gorgeous but please stop moving around."

Hans was unable to cope with the dessert but Ruth insisted on coffee and liquors. At the appropriate moment when Hans was not looking she popped a second pill into Hans' coffee and then said to him. "Drink up, it's time for bed."

With a little help from Ruth, Hans was able to pay the bill, although signing his own signature on the credit card bill proved about as much as he could cope with. They came out of the restaurant with Ruth supporting Hans on her arm.

"Well, I suppose you would like to come to my room at the hotel?" said Ruth enticingly.

"Yes please," he replied with a big grin on his face.

Ruth hailed a taxi and bundled him into the car. The taxi left with Tim looking suddenly concerned. 'Heck, I didn't expect that,' he said to himself and rushed off looking for another taxi.

* * *

Hans literally fell out of the taxi when it had reached the Hotel Victoria. Ruth paid the driver and led Hans into the hotel lobby and then the lift.

They made their way to Ruth's room where she had some difficulty negotiating finding the room key and simultaneously supporting Hans.

"I think I have had rather a lot to drink." Hans slurred as he made a thrust for Ruth.

"Now take it easy," replied Ruth, "there's plenty of time for that."

She went to the mini bar in the room and poured them both a large gin and tonic.

"I think we both need one of these," she said and passed the glass to Hans who was sitting on the bed.

He took the glass, drank the contents in one gulp and undressed to his underpants.

"Now, let's see your tits," he slurred.

"Good gracious you are bold," she teased, "I can't possibly do that until I know a little bit more about you."

She took off her jacket and continued. "You'll have to work for this you know by answering my questions. Now let's start with an easy one. Are you rich?"

"No, but I might be soon," he mumbled.

"Now, that's a very good start," she said kicked off her shoes.

"How do you plan to get rich?"

"I've made an invention."

"Aren't you a clever boy," declared Ruth as she suggestively removed her stockings.

"What's the invention all about?" continued Ruth.

Hans looked bleary eyed and puzzled at her. "You don't want to know about all this," he said as he got up from the bed and made a grab at her.

"Not so quickly," Ruth said stepping back from his outstretched arms.

"Now what's the invention all about?" she teased.

"A new material. I discovered a new material."

"Well done," said Ruth as she unbuttoned and removed her blouse.

Hans' eyes were transfixed on Ruth's breasts as she asked the next question.

"You must be very clever. Was it all your idea?"

"Yes, of course."

Ruth made a move to start removing her skirt and then paused. "Are you sure it was your idea?"

"Yes. Now come on, off with the skirt."

Hans was in a state of great excitement now that he realised each question answered led to the removal of a piece of Ruth's clothing.

"You're not telling me the truth, Hans, and I won't take my skirt off until you tell me the truth."

Hans looked confused and then said. "Well I got the idea from a fellow in England. He was stupid enough to

leave the information lying around. Now come on off with that skirt."

"All in good time," replied Ruth as her skirt fell to the ground.

Hans was now in hopeless ecstasy and he made a further thrust at Ruth, this time catching hold of her.

"Just one more question," she said, trying to hold him off. "What was his name?"

"Naylor, Tim Naylor," was the reply.

Ruth looked him straight in the eyes and pushed him back onto the bed. She stood over him and said.

"Thanks Hans, you've been most helpful."

There was a long pause and Hans looked at Ruth in blank amazement. He realised from the expression on her face that the situation had changed but he was unable to adjust to her new manner.

There was a loud knock on the door and Tim burst in with Roger and Brains in hot pursuit. Tim was looking very stern but at the sight of Hans Van den Berg in his coloured underpants both Roger and Brains burst into spontaneous laughter.

"What's going on?" shouted Van den Berg who was still unable to grasp events.

"We have just recorded the confession that you stole High Tension from me, that's what's going on," said Tim.

Van den Berg looked at Tim and slowly he recognised his face. "Naylor, it's you, isn't it?" he cried.

"Yes, it is me, and you have just been making advances on my wife. You have a lot of explaining to do."

Van den Berg looked across to Ruth and then back to Tim. He moved to get off the bed and found himself unable to do so. He looked at them again and then burst into tears.

After some moments he said with his head bowed: "I feel sick, I feel sick."

Ruth and Tim lifted him up and guided him to the bathroom where he proceeded to be violently sick.

"That should sober him up," called Roger from the bedroom.

"I'll handle this," said Tim. "Well done darling, you'd better put some clothes on."

"Trust you to barge in at the best bit," said Ruth as she passed Tim giving him a kiss on the cheek.

It was some ten minutes before Van den Berg emerged from the bathroom. He looked very pale and sheepish and was still only wearing his underpants.

"Right, sit down there, Hans, you have got some explaining to do."

"I can't, I can't," he pleaded, "I feel too ill. The room's moving about."

"I think we better put him to bed for a while," said Ruth. "He really is in pretty bad shape."

"Okay," conceded Tim, "Roger, get him into bed and stay guard over him."

"That chap's not going anywhere for a while. He's drunk, drugged and in a state of shock. Smashed out, I would say," said Roger.

They all man-handled Van den Berg into bed and then sat around.

"Time for a nice cup of tea," said Brains. "I'll put the kettle on. Does anyone want to hear a blue tape recording?"

"No thanks. I will have that recording right now, hand it over, that's for private listening only."

Tim looked at Ruth and they both gave each other a great hug. "Actually, I quite enjoyed it all," she said.

* * *

Van den Berg dozed for over an hour while the others sat around the room and chatted.

"I think it's time to wake sleeping beauty up," said Tim. "He should have recovered enough by now".

Roger went over to the bed and prodded Van den Berg who responded by quickly sitting up. He looked around the room and saw the faces of Tim, Ruth, Roger and Brains all looking at him.

He said nothing as some of the evening events came back to him. He looked again at Tim and eventually said: "I am very sorry." His head then immediately dropped and he looked like quite a pathetic figure on the bed.

"But why, why did you do it?" said Tim.

"I don't really know," he whispered. There was a pause. "My marriage had broken up. I was under pressure at Euro Chemicals to come up with something and then I found your stuff on High Tension. It was too good a chance to miss." By this time, tears were in his eyes and he was beginning to shake.

"Go easy on him," said Ruth. "He still looks in bad shape."

"But you couldn't have hoped to get away with it, could you?" continued Tim.

"The risk was at the beginning. After a while I came to believe that I had invented the material. Everyone else thought so. I was going to be famous and the company was so pleased with our results."

There was silence. Van den Berg slumped on the bed with his head between his knees.

"Give him some coffee," said Ruth, "He's in a bad way."

Brains brought over some coffee and Van den Berg sipped at it. "How the hell did you get at my expert system?" asked Brains.

"Oh, you know about that do you?" replied Van den Berg, "It was easy, really. I saw you punch in your password when we were working together at Winchester. I

thought something was up and I had a look at your file-space and found High Tension. I wish I hadn't now."

"What about Lawrence and Kramner, how were they involved?" interjected Tim.

"They didn't know anything. It's all down to me." said Van den Berg.

"Leave him for a bit. You're pushing too fast." said Ruth.

"Just one more. How does Pro Systems come into all this?"

"Pro what?" replied Van den Berg. "I don't know anything about them."

Tim drew back and pondered for a few moments on what Van den Berg had said. He then continued, "I think we have heard enough for one night. Roger and Brains would you dress this chap and then get him back to his apartment. We all need some sleep and then I think I had better pay Dr. Mark Lawrence a visit, first thing in the morning".

* * *

The following morning, Tim drove out to Zandvoort alone. Roger had been keen to go with him but Tim had vetoed that option. As he left Amsterdam he reflected on his ever changing position. Last night's events had transformed his fortunes and he felt confident that at last High Tension would return to its rightful owner. He was however troubled that there were still a number of unresolved issues and Euro Chemicals was one of them.

He drove directly onto the Lawrence's drive and parked outside the front door. By the time he had got out of the car, Rita Lawrence appeared.

"I would like to speak to Dr. Lawrence, it concerns him and Euro Chemicals," said Tim.

"It's very early in the morning for that sort of thing, he's only just got up," replied Rita. "Can I have your name?"

Tim gave it to her and she went into the house, leaving him standing at the doorstep. A few moments later Mark Lawrence appeared looking very angry.

"Naylor, what the hell are you doing here? This is my private home. If you have anything to say either to me or to Euro Chemicals I think that it is best said through a lawyer."

"Dr. Lawrence," replied Tim, "I can assure you that what I have to say will almost certainly come better from me than any lawyer. It concerns Hans Van den Berg and his admitted theft of High Tension."

Lawrence looked at Tim and could see from the seriousness of his expression that Tim meant what he said.

"You'd better come in," he said reluctantly and moved aside to let Tim in the house.

"Would you like some coffee?" said Rita as she came out of the kitchen.

"Thanks," said Tim and Mark Lawrence grunted in a way that suggested that he would also like one.

"This way," Lawrence said and led Tim into the study.

"This had better be important. I don't like being disturbed at home," said Lawrence.

"Dr. Lawrence," said Tim, "last night Hans Van den Berg confessed to having stolen all our data on High Tension and then he admitted that he had pretended to discover Thermal Strong. We have the confession on tape. If you speak to him this morning, I am confident he will confirm what I have said."

Tim continued: "When you and Van den Berg visited Winchester earlier this year, Hans stole Brains Blunt's password and discovered our expert system on High Tension. The data files had all the necessary information to manufacture High Tension, or Thermal Strong as your

company prefers to call it. Van den Berg stole the data and brought it back to Holland. He then announced that he had made the discovery and I presume you believed him." At that point Tim stopped talking and waited for a response.

"These are very serious accusations," replied Lawrence after a long pause. "I think that I should make a phone call to Hans before I make any formal comment."

"That's fine by me," said Tim, "although you might find he has a bit of a hangover."

Mark Lawrence left the room at the same moment as Rita Lawrence entered with the coffee.

"I'm going to make a phone call, leave my coffee on the table," he barked at Rita.

"Hello my name's Rita Lawrence. I must apologise, my husband doesn't seem too happy."

"It's nice to meet you," replied Tim. "Roger told me that he meet you and shared a few of our difficulties with you."

Rita smiled: "Of course, you're Tim Naylor, Roger's partner in crime. I do hope my husband's not in big trouble."

"No, I don't think he is." reassured Tim, "It was one of his scientific colleagues in Euro Chemicals. Your husband may take some blame and he'll certainly have to pick up the pieces."

"Oh dear," said Rita, "life is not easy for any of us at the moment."

Tim looked at Rita seriously for the first time. Up to then he had been pre-occupied with his confrontation with Mark Lawrence. He saw an elegant and well-poised woman whose looks clearly belied her age. He could see how Roger had become infatuated by the woman.

Rita looked at Tim and recognised his interest in her.

"Don't worry, Tim," she said, "Roger is quite safe in my hands. He's a lovely chap and I won't break his heart and I hope he won't break mine."

"Thank you," said Tim.

Rita and Tim continued talking for a further five minutes until Mark Lawrence returned to the room. Rita saw the expression on his face and decided it was time to leave. "Don't forget your coffee," she commented to Mark as she left, "it will be getting cold."

Mark Lawrence looked at Tim and said, "It appears you are right. Van den Berg says it was all a dreadful mistake and he regrets everything that has happened. I think I owe you an apology."

Tim's heart leaped when he heard the words. For the first time in months he was really feeling on top of the world.

Mark Lawrence continued: "This is of course highly embarrassing for both me and Euro Chemicals. Thermal Strong, as we call it, is receiving top priority within the company. The commercial potential of the material is immense and now, of course, if we don't have the patent on the material, we may have some serious difficulties. Van den Berg is a bloody fool! He clearly doesn't know what a dangerous game he's been playing. Millions of dollars are involved in this business."

"What do you know about Pro Systems?" asked Tim.

"Nothing. Why, what has that got to do with this?" replied Mark Lawrence.

"I don't know yet, but I would certainly like to know?"

Mark Lawrence walked around the room and then faced Tim. "This is a real mess for both of us. I very much hope we can be sensible about the whole thing and sort this out."

"I very much hope so too," said Tim. "Now tell me about everything that occurred after Van den Berg came to you saying he had discovered a new material."

Mark Lawrence then went into a detailed account of how they had carried out a crash programme to develop the ideas of what they thought were Hans Van den Berg's.

When the material had been made they decided to call it Thermal Strong and patents were taken out. The only problem occurred when there was the confrontation over inventorship at the Bordeaux meeting. Mark Lawrence said that he reported the difficulty to the main board of Euro Chemicals and they said that they would sort it out.

"Did they say how they would sort the matter out?" asked Tim.

"No, I just got a phone call from the chief executive's secretary, saying to leave it with them."

"I see," mused Tim. "Did anything further happen?"

"No, except that I heard through Professor Kramner, that you were in trouble with the University. To be honest, I had put you out of mind."

Mark Lawrence continued with the account of how Thermal Strong had been successfully developed within Euro Chemicals. Hans Van den Berg had played a prominent part but Lawrence added: "On reflection, I was becoming concerned that he seemed to be drinking and smoking a lot but, of course, it's so easy to be wise after the event."

"What authority do you have in Euro Chemicals?" asked Tim.

"Well, as research director I have a seat on the main board," responded Lawrence.

"I may just have a proposition to make to you in a few days time. In the meantime, I suggest you break the news to Euro Chemicals that I would like to set up a meeting next week in London. Is that OK with you?"

"Dr. Naylor, I think I am in your hands, you appear to hold all the ace cards at present."

"Please call me Tim," he replied with a smile.

"Oh, by the way, was Kramner involved in this at all?" asked Tim.

"No, why do you ask? He's been helping us with the synthetic diamond coating work."

"I see." said Tim as he finished his now cold cup of coffee.

* * *

"How did it go?" asked Brains as soon as Tim walked into the lounge of the Hotel Victoria.

Ruth and Roger looked up from reading their magazines and all three stared at Tim with baited breath.

"It went very well indeed," replied Tim, at which point he smiled at Ruth. "I didn't need the recording at all. Mark Lawrence believed me and he phoned Van den Berg who confirmed the situation. It looks as though Euro Chemicals concede that we are the inventors of High Tension."

"That's brilliant," cried Ruth as she stood up and gave Tim an enormous hug.

"Fantastic!" said Brains. "I'm so sorry to have caused all this trouble in the first place."

"Don't worry about that now. In fact it might just work out to our advantage. Next week, I am going to call a meeting for the key players in this game in London."

"Does that mean we can go back to England soon?" said Ruth.

"Yes, of course, we'll book the next flight out. You have all done a wonderful job, thank you so much to each of you."

Roger went quiet for a few moments and then said to Tim. "You won't want me in the UK next week will you Tim?"

"No, of course not, you've done a marvellous job here."

"I was just thinking I might stay on for a few days, make a bit of a holiday out of the whole affair."

Tim smiled at Roger and replied: "You do that my boy. I think it's a very good idea. I suggest a spell near the Dutch coast."

Roger blushed a little and they all laughed together.

* * *

On the Wednesday afternoon of the following week, Tim and Ruth were sitting on a seat overlooking the River Thames at the embankment below Charring Cross.

"Are you sure you want me to come along?" said Ruth.

"Yes please," he replied. "You look most elegant and you will provide me with some moral support".

"You don't need that now," she said, "the battle has been won."

"Not quite yet," Tim replied. "I suspect the real battle is only just beginning."

Ruth looked across at Tim but decided not to pursue the matter further. Since they had returned to England they had enjoyed a few perfect days with the children. Tim had made a number of phone calls but considering the trauma of the previous weeks he was very relaxed. Ruth was glad to be home but had to admit to herself that she had enjoyed the excitement of the Amsterdam trip. Her fears about Pro Systems had disappeared although Tim had said little about them. Vicky and Brains had come round for supper on one evening and during the celebrations Brains had brought the issue of Pro Systems up but Tim didn't seem particularly interested in discussing it. He had, however, helped consume several bottles of champagne by then and was not really capable at that time of holding a coherent conversation on any subject.

Tim looked at his watch and said: "It's three thirty; time for our little rendezvous and tea party."

The two of them walked together away from the River Thames and passed Charring Cross Station. They walked along the Strand and then turned into the Savoy Hotel.

"Good afternoon Sir and Madam, can I help you?" asked the smartly dressed attendant as they entered the main lobby of the Savoy.

"Yes, my name is Naylor and we have a reservation for tea."

"Thank you sir, this way please."

Tim and Ruth were ushered down the stairs towards the magnificent lounge where tea was served at the Hotel. The room could seat perhaps two hundred people. There were already several couples and groups of people being attentively served by the multitude of waiters and waitresses. The chairs were low and comfortable and tea was served on small tables. The room was beautifully decorated and the guests taking tea were equally well dressed. Gentlemen were required to wear suits and the ladies present had clearly pulled out all the stops in terms of fashionable clothes.

"This is really beautiful," said Ruth. "What a stylish but unusual place to hold a meeting."

"I thought it might be useful to have our little gathering in a public place," replied Tim, "and they also do a very good tea here".

"Your table's this way sir," said the waiter beckoning them to a group of seven chairs clustered around a central table. "Would you like to wait for your guests to arrive before taking tea?"

Tim said yes and he and Ruth sat down in the luxurious seats.

Mark Lawrence was the first to arrive and he greeted Tim warmly. "This is my wife Ruth" said Tim and they both shook hands.

"I am glad you have arrived first Mark," said Tim, "as I wanted to ask you what news there was on Van den Berg."

"He has resigned from the company and, of course, we would have sacked him if he had shown any reluctance to go. I think he was talking about going to try and work in Italy and attempting to start a new life there. It's a great pity really, because he was in fact a very talented scientist."

"I agree," said Tim. "He doesn't appear to have had much luck."

The Winchester University deputation were the next to arrive and this consisted of the Vice Chancellor Sir Alec Taylor and Richard Wainwright, the Chief Administrator.

"Ah, Tim, good to see you," bellowed Sir Alec, "and Mrs Naylor too."

Tim introduced Mark Lawrence to them.

"Yes, I remember you, of course," said Sir Alec to Lawrence. "You came with the Euro Chemicals delegation to Winchester earlier in the year."

"Indeed, I did," replied Mark Lawrence.

They had all begun to sit down when Sir Malcolm Lucas and his private secretary appeared.

"That's good," said Tim. "the government delegation has arrived."

As they approached, Tim got up and welcomed them. "Good afternoon Sir Malcolm, my name is Dr. Tim Naylor. We haven't met before but, of course, I have seen you on television many times. May I introduce my colleagues."

Sir Malcolm looked extremely weary of the gathering and did not appear to be showing his usual aggressive fire for which he was renowned.

After the introductions were complete Tim ordered tea and they all sat around together.

"I must say, this is a rather bizarre setting for a meeting," said Sir Malcolm, trying to gain some position at the start of the discussion. "It is most unusual for ministers to conduct business in such a public although admittedly agreeable place."

"Do start on the sandwiches," said Tim. "They're usually quite excellent."

Teas of various varieties were dispensed by the waiters and a vast array of delicately cut sandwiches were placed on the table.

"Now to business," said Tim. "Most of you are aware of certain aspects of this High Tension affair and I do not

propose to linger on either the technical or historical aspects of the case. Suffice to say, that at Winchester we took out a patent on High Tension. The idea was stolen by an employee of Euro Chemicals who has since resigned from the Company. Euro Chemicals have, however, put substantial sums of money into developing what they have called Thermal Strong. The material has major commercial and military potential and I think everyone around this table knows the political implications of that."

"My discovery of High Tension was contested by Euro Chemicals at the Bordeaux scientific meeting and subsequently tremendous pressure was put on my university to have me sacked."

"I must say that's a bit strong," said Richard Wainwright.

"Not in the least," continued Tim. "Worse was to follow. I may be wrong but my impression is that Euro Chemicals put pressure on the British government to silence me because they thought I might jeopardise their chances of developing Thermal Strong. To my utter disgust I suspect that the Government went along with that request and blackmailed Sir Alec into taking action against me with the threat of cutting off European funds if he didn't go along with the idea."

Sir Malcolm shifted uneasily in his seat and his private secretary seeing that Sir Malcolm was not going to say anything, spoke up.

"That's a very serious allegation, I presume you have evidence in writing to support such an unfounded statement?"

"Of course I haven't," said Tim. "You don't think that your department would be as careless as that. We may return to that matter later but what I do have, however, is clear evidence of even more underhand dealings."

Everyone around the table was gripped by the situation and even the gentle playing of a piano in the background could not reduce the tension.

"My daughter could easily have been killed in a so-called accident. I now have firm evidence that an organisation known to me as Pro Systems was responsible both for that accident and the burglary of our house. Pro Systems seems to be answerable to no-one except the very highest of government authorities."

"Look here," boomed Sir Malcolm, "This is outrageous and, of course, nonsense."

"Is it?" said Tim, as he brought out a sheaf of computer paper. "These are listings of some of the activities of Pro Systems taken from their own computers. Authorisation for some of the actions come from government ministers."

Sir Malcolm and his private secretary looked stunned. There was silence.

"Dr. Naylor, you are now dealing with some of the most sensitive and secret areas of high government. I think you are getting out of your depth," said Sir Malcolm.

"And I personally hope, Sir Malcolm, that you sink," replied Tim. "However, I am a pragmatic man and so let's see if we can work out some sort of compromise deal before the real problem can be tackled. Would anyone like a cake?"

By this time, a smile had crossed Sir Alec's face and Ruth was totally adsorbed in the encounter. Mark Lawrence was looking puzzled whilst Sir Malcolm Lucas looked as though he was about to explode.

"My plan is quite simple," said Tim. "Winchester University now holds the master patent on High Tension and I propose that we give Euro Chemicals an exclusive license to develop High Tension. In exchange, they will pay Winchester a handsome royalty which will be sufficient for the University to enjoy financial independence for many years. The government will agree to continue funding

Winchester and the university will of course drop these trumped up charges against me, it's as simple as that."

"But what about you?" asked Mark Lawrence "What do you want out of it?"

"That's a good question," he replied. "Well, firstly I must insist that this material is called High Tension and that my students and I are allowed to publish our work in the scientific press. My agreement with the university will ensure that we are financially rewarded."

There was a long silence before anything was said.

"That all seems remarkably simple and generous," responded Sir Alec. "I see no problems from the university point of view. Do you agree, Richard?"

"Yes, of course, admirable. We will have to agree a financial position with Euro Chemicals, providing they are happy to go along with the proposal," said the Chief Administrator.

"It's okay by Euro Chemicals," replied Mark Lawrence. "I have the full approval of the board to negotiate a figure with you. This plan gets us out of a potentially very embarrassing and costly hole."

"Fine," said Tim, "and how about the government's view?"

Sir Malcolm Lucas looked at his private secretary and then at Tim.

"You are trying to blackmail the government and I will have none of that," said Sir Malcolm. "This is all quite outrageous."

"It is, isn't it?" replied Tim. "That is just how I feel about Pro Systems and your shoddy attempts to put pressure on Winchester University. I suppose if you had your way, there would be no universities at all."

"Look, I'm not prepared to be insulted like this," declared Sir Malcolm and turning to his private secretary, he said: "I think we should leave".

"As you wish," continued Tim, "but remember that I have written information on Pro Systems and their War-dour St. caper and Sir Alec Taylor is here to confirm my allegation concerning government pressure on university business."

Sir Alec looked at Tim in astonishment. He was being put in an exceedingly difficult position as to whether he should side with Sir Malcolm and the government or Tim Naylor.

There was a pause. Tim looked around and turned to the Vice Chancellor. "Sir Alec", he said, "you are prepared to support my allegations in a letter to the Times, aren't you?"

There was a deathly silence as all eyes turned to Sir Alec.

"Well it's a complicated matter," he stuttered, "but yes, I would, in principle, be prepared to support you."

Sir Malcolm looked like thunder as he glared at the Vice Chancellor.

"The choice is yours Sir Malcolm," said Tim. "Agree to the plan or we go public on the whole sordid affair."

"This is treachery of the worst kind, Naylor. You will live to regret this," replied Sir Malcolm.

"That may be, but what is your reply?"

"I must talk to my secretary," he said and they both went off towards the gentlemen's cloakroom. The remaining group were left totally silent, all absorbed in their own thoughts.

Sir Malcolm and the private secretary retired to the gentlemen's cloakroom where an attendant fussed over the wash bowls and ran hot water in each bowl as a prospective user arrived.

"Go and polish some shoes," said Sir Malcolm as he thrust a ten pound note into the man's hands. The attendant took the hint and disappeared.

"I want an immediate security check on Pro Systems when we get back. I need to know how Naylor got that computer data. The Wardour St. office must be closed and cleared by six o'clock tonight. That shit is really going to cause us problems."

"Yes Sir, I'll have all that done by tomorrow," replied the private secretary. "What are you going to do about Naylor, though?"

"That man has marked his card. Tell control that there's been a leak."

"But what are you going to say?" persisted the secretary.

"I'll keep him quiet by making a few vague promises. I'm surprised at Sir Alec though, his tenure as Vice Chancellor at Winchester will have to be looked at. He may just have to retire soon."

Sir Malcolm returned from the cloakroom with his secretary pacing two steps behind. They both sat down and the minister said.

"Well, of course, we may be able to go along with such a scheme but remember there is very strong pressure from many sources to close Winchester."

"You'll have to do better than that Sir Malcolm. We want a firm undertaking to continue funding Winchester at the current level together with an undertaking not to interfere with it's internal affairs."

"You have it," sulked Sir Malcolm.

"Thank you," replied Tim "and now I suggest we all try the scones, jam and cream. They are all quite delicious".

"One minute," said Sir Alec Taylor looking at Tim. "I need to know what you propose to do in the future."

"Now that's another very good question. I think it very unlikely that I'm going to be lucky enough to make another great discovery in my lifetime. However, what the recent events have shown me is that there are some things that are very precious to our society and these are not nec-

essarily material things such as High Tension. I have decided, with, I should say, my wife's approval, to stand as a candidate for a European Parliamentary seat. It is clear to me that if we want freedom, some of us must fight for it and if elected, one of my first objectives will be to route out organisations such as Pro Systems". Tim sat back in his chair and sighed, looked around at his incredulous audience and said: "The scones are very good here, please do have one everybody".

Epilogue

It was 2010 when Ruth Naylor next walked into the Savoy Hotel and suddenly the events of fifteen years ago came sweeping back into her mind. Before checking in at the reception desk, she paused and reflected on how great those life changing months of High Tension had been to many peoples lives; not least her own.

The shock of the whole High Tension affair had resulted in a profound change within her husband. Initially, Tim was full of energy for the invention of High Tension itself and also his desire to save the world from the likes of people such as Sir Malcolm Lucas. However, as the months passed after that meeting at the Savoy, Tim had become introspective and uncertain. The whole business had been so momentous; it was as though his brain could not cope any more with such tense and stressful situations. He found solace in his teaching and progressively dedicated his time to giving lecture courses whilst still tinkering with the science that he had opened up by discovering High Tension. Ruth witnessed this happening to her husband and whatever she said or did, she was unable to change his progressive lack of drive to achieve all that he had set out to do at that Savoy tea party.

Within a year of the “Savoy tea party”, Ruth had realised she had to adapt to the new circumstances and decided that she would champion Tim’s dreams as he now seemed unable to concentrate his mind in the way that he had done in the past. A near complete role reversal developed within the Naylor family as Ruth stood for election as a MEP. Initially, and to her own amazement, she dis-

covered her Amsterdam bedroom performance had acted as a catalyst for her own ability to communicate, articulate and act; all which were basic requirements for a successful contemporary politician. Her knowledge of both the German and French language soon put her in high demand and within eight years she had become the European Minister in Brussels for Scientific and Industrial affairs.

She had witnessed from a distance the fall from power of Sir Malcolm Lucas and she championed hard to expose the likes of government organisations such as Pro Systems. International events had however made it difficult to do much about these clandestine government agencies because the subsequent increase in international terrorism gave governments throughout Europe and the world an excuse to maintain and increase the use of these unaccountable organisations. Ruth's visit to the Savoy was in fact to attend a European meeting on Transparency in Security Services.; something she and Tim were still both passionate about; particularly in view of their now distant High Tension experiences.

Other global events over the fifteen years since the discovery of High Tension had also made their mark. In 2001 Euro Chemicals was taken over by Asia Chemicals and High Tension had come to be known as HT30. The material was a commercial success, but not as big a success as anticipated. The Achilles' heel of HT30 curiously appeared to be water! Roger White's engine pistons had worked perfectly well because they were operating in an oil and fuel environment. Unfortunately, long term exposure of HT30 to a humid atmosphere caused the material to become brittle and this restricted application areas. Tim Naylor had found this both unexpected and curious and continued to work at Winchester University attempting to understand the science behind this unexpected result.

Having picked up her messages from the hotel's reception, Ruth Naylor walked further within the Savoy and

into the room where the “Savoy tea party” had taken place, memories of all those close to Tim during those tumultuous months came sweeping back to her. Vicky had been a superb support to Tim and she had continued to work with him at Winchester for several years. Eventually the right man came along and she then put great energy into bringing up a vast family. Jack “Brains” Blunt formed a computer security company and needless to say thrived. Roger remained the joker in the pack. The last communication the Naylor family had from him was that he was living on a boat in Antigua and was just fine!

Ruth walked into the room where the Euro Security Transparency meeting was going to be held. She realised that this was not the time to reflect on the past and she needed to concentrate on the present and future. She quickly reread the agenda and focused on the issues at hand. Ruth was now ready to go into battle with the assembled Eurocrates and give clarity and direction to the murky world of Euro politics, the way her husband, Tim, had planned to do fifteen years ago.

