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ONE HYDE PARK

David Blackman  
101 Clyde St  
Box Hill North  
Australia 3129  
61 0438 201 731

(MORE)

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

McKenzie.....A seasoned war correspondent, 55-65 years old

Russell.....A former soldier and bodyguard, 30-35 years old

Time: 2011-2012

Place: One Hyde Park in London

Setting: The study of a penthouse. There is a large window in the back with a view of Hyde Park. The set can be minimal or extravagant, as long as it does not look cheap. There is a cabinet structure to one side of the set which, when opened, reveals a desk. A mini bar is also concealed somewhere in the study. There are book shelves displaying what appears to be very expensive editions which have never been opened. A couch or reading chair could be offset by a desk chair and coffee table.

## ACT ONE

## VOICEOVER

A short walk from One Hyde Park is Mayfair, centre of the world for the super-elite. The plush serviced offices in Berkeley Square, the restaurants and clubs in Mt St, the hotels in Brick St, the boutiques in Bond St have attracted so many globocrats that the area might as well be a separate state. In a town which now boast 50 billionaires compared to what now seems a meagre 19 back in 2006, it would be a safe bet that the majority of them live in the SW1 postcode. One Hyde Park, the 1.6 billion dollar brainchild of the Prime Minister of Qatar and London based developer Candy and Candy, is without doubt the jewel in the crown. And despite the recent credit crunch, the four penthouses have already been sold while over half of the 86 apartments have changed hands...

LIGHTS on a luxurious study done in an Edwardian style. MCKENZIE walks into the room, holding his jacket in his hands, taking it all in but appearing to give it scant attention. He is followed by RUSSELL.

RUSSELL

That just about finishes the grand tour...

MCKENZIE

Ah, so that's what we were doing.

RUSSELL

The view. Unbeatable.

MCKENZIE takes in the expanse of the room and the view. He says nothing and places the jacket on the couch.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Most visitors are lost for words when they see all this...

Pause.

MCKENZIE

So how wealthy is your employer?

RUSSELL

You need to ask...

MCKENZIE

I know this is a penthouse in the most expensive apartment building in London...

RUSSELL

225 million.

MCKENZIE

The average British salary is around 20,000 quid and going down by the minute. I bet that wouldn't buy a coffee maker in this place.

RUSSELL

At 50,000 quid per square metre, you'd buy just enough room for it.

RUSSELL'S phone rings. He answers it.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

(on his mobile phone)

Yes sir...arrived on time. I've shown him around the place. Rather tight lipped. I have but he won't drink on the job. Yes I offered him the best stuff...as you instructed. Yes I told him this was an informal meeting but he insists. He did bring a tape recorder but kindly handed it over. I've tried to make him feel comfortable. Fine I'll let him know sir.

He hangs up.

MCKENZIE

Rather indiscrete with your comments.

RUSSELL

Object to any of it...

MCKENZIE

No. Rather astute.

RUSSELL

He might be a bit late.

MCKENZIE

I would have thought given the circumstances...

SSELL

20...maybe 30 minutes.

MCKENZIE

When did he fly in?

RUSSELL

Just got out of the terminal.

MCKENZIE

There's somewhere I have to be.

RUSSELL

Cancel it.

MCKENZIE

I can't.

RUSSELL

They're already waiting for you..?

MCKENZIE

Yes...

RUSSELL

Surely you can push it back.

MCKENZIE

Maybe.

RUSSELL

Fine then. Sure I can't get you that drink...

MCKENZIE shakes his head.

MCKENZIE

Didn't notice any staff...maids, servants.

RUSSELL

He hasn't hired them yet. I'm still doing security checks, background that sort of thing.

MCKENZIE

I imagine you'd have to be quite thorough.

RUSSELL

Lots of strange people out there.

MCKENZIE

Did you do a background check on me?

RUSSELL

Couldn't see that being necessary.

Pause.

MCKENZIE

Then you know what I do for a living...

RUSSELL

Should I?

MCKENZIE

I'm a journalist.

RUSSELL

Who do you write for?

MCKENZIE

Several newspapers. I'm independent.

RUSSELL

Right.

MCKENZIE notices some newspapers spread out on a coffee table.

MCKENZIE

Judging by your boss's reading habits he might be acquainted with my work.

RUSSELL

I suspect he might be.

Pause.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

I like the one you wrote about the government attempts to turn education into an apartheid system. Pretty good that one.

MCKENZIE

(Annoyed)

Why didn't you just say you knew my occupation...

RUSSELL

Didn't seem important.

MCKENZIE

So...what did you like about the article?

RUSSELL

(With mock seriousness)

Thank you for asking...well it made you think what it means for students to have to pay three times more for a university education. How that will change the nature of opportunity.

MCKENZIE

I didn't think you'd agree with it.

RUSSELL

I don't. Couldn't care less in fact. If students want their education so badly they'll find a means of paying for it.

MCKENZIE

Sounds more like you're echoing the opinions of your employer...

RUSSELL

Of course I just wait for a dollop of wisdom every morning as I serve "the gov'ner his cup o' tea."

MCKENZIE

I didn't mean it like that. You're his...

RUSSELL

Bodyguard.

MCKENZIE

But you're not with the body.

RUSSELL

He has more than one.

MCKENZIE

So you're...one of many.

RUSSELL

It's not all master and servant.

MCKENZIE

By the sound of that phone call...

RUSSELL

I don't clean silver ware.

MCKENZIE

What I meant was, power differences in working relationships tend to influence the opinions of those in a subordinate position...

RUSSELL

I hope you don't always talk like that.

MCKENZIE

Why?

RUSSELL

The Boss is a plain speaking sort of man.

Pause.

MCKENZIE

Then maybe he should bring an interpreter.

RUSSELL

No need to feel agitated.

MCKENZIE

I'm not. But I don't even know who he is...

RUSSELL

Your stories have an element of risk about them. I thought you'd be used to it.



MCKENZIE

Any situation I've put myself in as a reporter, I've always been aware of who or what I'm dealing with...

RUSSELL

You're in One Hyde Park. How much trouble could you possibly find here?

MCKENZIE

If you're his bodyguard why are you with me...

RUSSELL

To make you feel comfortable.

MCKENZIE

Look...thanks for your hospitality.

MCKENZIE picks up his jacket.

RUSSELL

I'm not stopping you.

MCKENZIE

Tell your boss...

RUSSELL

Yes?

MCKENZIE

Nothing. Show me out please.

RUSSELL doesn't move.

RUSSELL

You're not a prisoner here Mr. McKenzie but an invited guest.

MCKENZIE

Of someone whose name I don't even know.

RUSSELL

You know who I am. There's nothing to worry about. Look, I know you came here for something very important, and my boss is taking this meeting quite seriously.

MCKENZIE

He's not even here.

RUSSELL

Some things are out of his control. Please.

MCKENZIE puts his jacket down.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Always wondered about journalists, what motivated them, that sort of thing.

MCKENZIE

It's a job.

RUSSELL

There's got to be more to it than that.

MCKENZIE

A lecturer at Oxford once said to me, "Real news is something that someone, somewhere has decided that you shouldn't know about." I thought I could undo the inherent truth in that statement.

RUSSELL

Oxford. That's quite the accolade.

MCKENZIE

It's just another university.

RUSSELL

I wouldn't know.

MCKENZIE

I wasn't-

RUSSELL

You don't believe that.

MCKENZIE

What?

RUSSELL

All that bollocks about "real news".

MCKENZIE

Depends on the risks one is willing to take.

RUSSELL

Put your life on the line for a story..?

MCKENZIE

I don't think British journalism demands quite that level of commitment. At least not on the home front.

RUSSELL notices MCKENZIE gingerly touching a bruise on his forehead.

RUSSELL

That's a nasty looking mark.

MCKENZIE

Oh this...

RUSSELL

You had stitches.

MCKENZIE

Yes...

RUSSELL

Didn't take you for a brawler.

MCKENZIE

God no. I was attacked. No, that sounds too dramatic. I was mugged.

RUSSELL

Where?

MCKENZIE

Near my home in fact.

RUSSELL

Deliberate? I mean...anyone you knew?

MCKENZIE

You're not likely to know your mugger are you...

RUSSELL

I trust they didn't clean you out.

MCKENZIE

Besides my wallet which had a fiver in it...my watch was stolen.

RUSSELL

Could have been worse...

MCKENZIE

They got my laptop as well.

RUSSELL

Never see that again.

MCKENZIE

Police think it might show up at a local pawn shop. Here's hoping...

RUSSELL

What brand and model?

MCKENZIE

That's not the point. It's what's on it that-

RUSSELL

If it shows up at the local pawn shop you probably won't even know its yours.

MCKENZIE

Make no mistake, I'd recognise it.

RUSSELL

You're a writer...you must have had some important documents on it.

MCKENZIE

Nothing I couldn't replace.

RUSSELL

You got assaulted. Forget the silly Americanisms. A laptop was stolen containing your work. That's pretty personal.

MCKENZIE

Unless I was mugged by another journalist who is very hard up for a story, I don't think my work is of any use to the assailant.

Pause.

RUSSELL

You haven't answered my question.

MCKENZIE

If you must know it was a Toshiba...an A 200.

RUSSELL

Not my first choice but there you go.

MCKENZIE

It was on sale and they seemed like a fairly reliable brand...surely you couldn't be that interested in my computer...

RUSSELL

All those stories...

MCKENZIE

I have back ups.

Pause.

RUSSELL

Of course you would.

MCKENZIE detects a change in RUSSELL'S tone and sizes him up for the first time.

MCKENZIE

More than enough.

RUSSELL

It must have given you a bit of a shock...

MCKENZIE

When you've been in a few war zones getting attacked on a city street and coming out of it in one piece doesn't strike you as grossly unfair.

RUSSELL

But this is where you live...

MCKENZIE

London is where I live. And it's not the same place for many people.

MCKENZIE looks around the room.

MCKENZIE (CONT'D)

Case in point.

Pause.

RUSSELL

I was attacked in the street once.

MCKENZIE

Were you hurt?

RUSSELL

Almost killed in fact.

MCKENZIE

I find it hard to believe someone would have got the jump on you.

RUSSELL

Some yob sliced my carotid artery.

MCKENZIE

How did that happen?

RUSSELL

I was mugged.

RUSSELL smiles. MCKENZIE does his best to suppress one of his own.

MCKENZIE

This was in the course of your professional duties...

RUSSELL

I was singing with my band.

Stop joking.

MCKENZIE

Seriously.

RUSSELL

You were in a band?

MCKENZIE

Yes.

RUSSELL

Doesn't fit with anything I see in front of me at the moment.

MCKENZIE

Rhythm and blues. Just a few of the local lads.

RUSSELL

Your throat cut...

MCKENZIE (CONT'D)

Yes.

RUSSELL

Surely you weren't that bad...

MCKENZIE

Beat.

MCKENZIE (CONT'D)

Didn't mean to offend you...

RUSSELL

None taken.

MCKENZIE

I didn't realise singing with a band could be so life threatening...

RUSSELL

We're in this bar you see., just finished a gig...and well, a brawl started...

MCKENZIE

You didn't try to stop it by any chance...

RUSSELL

My thinking hadn't gotten quite that far...

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

A drunk went at me with a knife. There I was sitting on the pavement trying to hold my neck in place.

MCKENZIE

My computer's got nothing on that.

RUSSELL

Ended my singing career it did.

MCKENZIE

Damaged vocal chords will have that effect.

RUSSELL

No. Damaged view of life. I sat there and realised there was nothing I could do to stop him from doing it again...or someone else for that matter.

MCKENZIE

So when you recovered...

RUSSELL

I joined the Territorials.

MCKENZIE

You could have learnt some self defence...taken up a martial art. Better still, played in less dangerous pubs.

RUSSELL

I'd done kickboxing for years. My Dad encouraged me to take it up with him...for all the good it did.

MCKENZIE

I'm sure you two are quite alike.

RUSSELL

He's a dyed in the wool pacifist. No. The transformation had to be total. A new me. The army was just the thing. Soon found myself applying for the Parachute Regiment. Never looked back.



MCKENZIE

But you left.

RUSSELL

They brainwash you to kill then want you to be a politician. Enough was enough.

MCKENZIE

And I'm sure this sort of work is a lot more lucrative financially.

RUSSELL

Not wrong there.

MCKENZIE

For far less risk.

RUSSELL

I'm not sure what you mean.

MCKENZIE

You made a pragmatic decision. That's all.

Pause.

RUSSELL

So where was your attack?

MCKENZIE

I was just leaving the theatre.

RUSSELL

The West End's not what it used to be.

MCKENZIE

It's in Kilford. The Tricycle.

RUSSELL

What a daft name for a theatre.

MCKENZIE

There's no proper name for a theatre.

RUSSELL

Yes there is...Regent, Viceroy...Athenaum.

MCKENZIE

Well this one's called the Tricycle.

RUSSELL

You prefer plays.

MCKENZIE

On this particular occasion.

Pause.

RUSSELL

You don't have to tell me what it's about.

MCKENZIE

I just don't think would interest you.

RUSSELL

Presumptuous. I've been to plays.

MCKENZIE

It was about Afghanistan. The history of British involvement there. You'd have to have a particular interest in the subject.

RUSSELL

Well I'm British and I've been to Afghanistan. Sounds right up my alley.

MCKENZIE

And that's where you fine tuned your political skills...

RUSSELL

In a fashion.

Pause.

MCKENZIE

The politics of this play wouldn't have suited someone like yourself.

RUSSELL

Why? Was it another left wing attack against Britain..?

MCKENZIE thinks about it for a second.

MCKENZIE

Yes. You might say that.

RUSSELL

I've been to the Tricycle.

MCKENZIE

(Disbelief)

Of course you have.

RUSSELL

Ages ago. A girl I was dating, some teacher, took me to see a play with a strange title...Ubu...Ubu...

MCKENZIE

...and the Truth Commission.

RUSSELL

I just knew you would have seen it. It was our first and last date.

MCKENZIE

I rather enjoyed it.

RUSSELL

Some fellow supposed to be a part of a death squad running around in a nappy..? You jokin aren't ya?

Pause. MCKENZIE has picked up on this particular regional expression.

MCKENZIE

You know Russell, there's no need to camouflage your accent.

RUSSELL

I haven't.

MCKENZIE

Middlesborough originally right? Met a few of you guys in Iraq. Could always tell. Very proud they were. I would have thought...

RUSSELL

What?

MCKENZIE

You were in the ranks. Never met a Midlands boy who tried to sound like an officer.

RUSSELL

I'm not.

MCKENZIE

Officers wouldn't go in for this sort of work. At least not a British one.

RUSSELL

What do officers do when they leave the military..?

MCKENZIE

Consult. Liase. Manage.

Pause. MCKENZIE has clearly gotten under RUSSELL'S skin with this comment. He weighs his options.

RUSSELL

So you were attacked in a theatre. Audiences these days...

MCKENZIE

Outside the theatre. On the way home. Didn't see it coming. Came from behind.

RUSSELL

Must have been a couple of black kids.

MCKENZIE

You can't know that.

RUSSELL

Besides reporting the news do you ever watch it...

MCKENZIE

It's a media beat up half the time. They make it about race but it's more about poverty...

RUSSELL

They were wearing runners...sneakers so you couldn't hear them. In Kilford...it couldn't have been anyone else.

MCKENZIE

I don't know, but that's no reason to automatically assume my attackers...

RUSSELL

Muggers...

MCKENZIE

Were black.

RUSSELL

I suppose you have a point.

MCKENZIE

Not so unusual. If they were black it's something that's easier to deal with. You haven't been betrayed by your own tribe.

RUSSELL

The tribe of white people from Middlesborough?

MCKENZIE shakes his head bemusedly.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Lot's of white people I don't trust. Soon as kill you they had half a chance.

MCKENZIE

In your line of work I'm sure there'd be quite a few of those.

RUSSELL

And you haven't? In your line of work..?

MCKENZIE

I'm a journalist.

RUSSELL

Don't tell me there's no competition for a story. There's got to be some who would sell you down the river for a scoop.

MCKENZIE

Comes with the territory. No real surprises. But we're not the ones doing the killing.

RUSSELL

Fight or flight reflex kick in?

MCKENZIE

I'm rather incapable of hurting someone. At least not physically.

RUSSELL

You must have gotten into a stoush at Oxford. Poetry readings at 50 paces that sort of thing...

MCKENZIE

A girlfriend did throw a book at me once.

RUSSELL

(ignoring this)

In this instance your life was in danger.

MCKENZIE

Rubbish. They wanted my possessions...

MCKENZIE checks the time and realises he hasn't got his watch.

MCKENZIE (CONT'D)

Five more minutes.

RUSSELL

I'm sure he'll be here by then. I could arrange a driver to take you to wherever you're going. Take 20, 30 minutes off your trip...

MCKENZIE

I'm going to see my daughter...she's at Blackheath.

RUSSELL

Sorry.

MCKENZIE

Not necessary.

Pause.

RUSSELL

In some ways it might be a kind of blessing.

MCKENZIE

What...

RUSSELL

Her not knowing the full circumstances...with her mother, your ex wife.

MCKENZIE

There's no blessing in anything that's happened...for either of them.

RUSSELL

I didn't mean to offend. Just paying you respect by voicing an honest opinion. The Boss was saying the other day how sad it was a girl in her predicament with no one to look after her...

MCKENZIE

(Frustrated)

She has a father and her mother's still alive.

RUSSELL

Yes but with your work taking you out of the country so often and...your ex's situation being so dire.

MCKENZIE

So...your boss knows about my daughter...

RUSSELL

Of course. Thorough background checks for all visitors. Didn't I say? Can't let just anyone up here.

MCKENZIE

And you knew about her already.

RUSSELL

(coily)

I was exercising discretion. And the business with the mother, let's just say you've got a few people of influence ready to back you up on this one.

MCKENZIE

How much do you actually know?

RUSSELL

Well that's one of your stories I couldn't put down...exposing the truth of private military contractors in Iraq, just when I was thinking of a career change. You focussed on one in particular...New...New...

MCKENZIE

New Horizons.

RUSSELL

That's the one. Hammered a few nails in that cross.

MCKENZIE

They're still in business.

RUSSELL

I was a private military contractor.

MCKENZIE

That's something else you forgot to mention.

RUSSELL

Do you want to interview me?

MCKENZIE

If you have a story why not.

RUSSELL

There was this time we were driving these journalists, quite like yourself, possibly younger, from Baghdad to the Green Zone along Route Irish...

MCKENZIE

So hold up a second...you were in Iraq?

RUSSELL

Let me finish. I'm in this GMC4 wheel drive, don't usually go for American cars but I liked the tactical advantage of the vehicles height...

MCKENZIE

How so?



RUSSELL

Be patient. So as we're chugging along, all of a sudden we're hemmed in by four men in a black series BMW, all armed. I'm in the passenger seat in the front and I can see their boss just staring me down to get the car to pull over. One of his men opens his window, leans out and fires a burst across our bonnet. I looked and saw their boss was really eyeballing me now. The next burst wouldn't be a warning.

MCKENZIE

What did you do...

RUSSELL

They weren't going to back off so I lowered my window, looked right through him and pressed the trigger of the AK47 sitting across my lap. The height of the GMC compared to the BMW put the driver's head right in the line of fire.

MCKENZIE

Hence the tactical advantage...

RUSSELL

I gave it a two second burst and his head exploded. Armour piercing assault rounds you see. I give another burst into the engine, steam and back smoke starts pouring out, the BMW spins out of control. No one walks away from it and we get to our destination in record time.

MCKENZIE

How did you feel afterwards?

RUSSELL

When we got back to our digs I was elated. Couldn't get to sleep. Biggest rush I ever had.

MCKENZIE

That wasn't the kind of incident I was talking about.

RUSSELL

I know.

MCKENZIE

Wait a minute. I covered that story when I was-

RUSSELL

Yes you did. In fact you interviewed me. But I guess we look all the same behind sunglasses and body armour.

Pause. MCKENZIE and RUSSELL lock eyes or the first time. MCKENZIE doesn't like what he sees. RUSSELL'S phone rings. He answers it. RUSSELL says nothing but listens intently. He hangs up.

MCKENZIE

Who did you work for in Iraq?

RUSSELL

What was that?

MCKENZIE

You heard me. Which private contractor did you work for in Iraq?

RUSSELL

Who do you think?

MCKENZIE

Just say it.

RUSSELL

New Horizons. More importantly, I still do.

MCKENZIE

That wasn't your boss was it...

RUSSELL

Actually it was an associate of mine telling me they've just broken into your apartment and safe. Took them longer than I expected.

MCKENZIE

That's absurd.

RUSSELL

The truth often is.

Pause.

MCKENZIE

Right. That's it. How do I get out of here?

RUSSELL  
Same way you came in.

Pause.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
The elevator.

MCKENZIE  
It had a code.

RUSSELL  
I disarmed it. Just press "G".

MCKENZIE has grabbed his jacket and prepares to exit.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
Haven't you forgotten something...

MCKENZIE  
No I have what I came in with.

RUSSELL  
But not everything that's yours...

MCKENZIE  
What are you talking about...

RUSSELL  
The doors to that cabinet over there. Open it up.

MCKENZIE  
What for?

RUSSELL  
For heaven's sakes all you have to do is go over there and open it.

MCKENZIE cautiously, warily, walks over to the cabinet.  
He gets to the doors and stops.

What's in there?  
MCKENZIE

Open it and find out.  
RUSSELL

Pause.

Don't worry. It's not booby trapped.  
RUSSELL (CONT'D)

MCKENZIE tentatively opens the doors of the cabinet and looks inside.

There's a DVD. No title.  
MCKENZIE

No not that.  
RUSSELL

MCKENZIE picks it up and holds it in the air.

What's on it?  
MCKENZIE

Nothing you'd want to see.  
RUSSELL

(Cryptically)

MCKENZIE casually puts it back on the desk.

Other than that there's this...computer.  
MCKENZIE

Last time I looked.  
RUSSELL

MCKENZIE looks at it a little more closely. He then turns accusingly on RUSSELL.

It's...my computer.  
MCKENZIE

RUSSELL  
So easily recognisable.

MCKENZIE  
What's it doing here...

RUSSELL  
Waiting for you to collect it I'd say.

MCKENZIE  
But this means...how'd you get a hold of this..?

RUSSELL  
Do you really want to know...

MCKENZIE  
Of course I want to fucking know!

RUSSELL  
A little black boy gave it to me...happened to be wearing white sneakers.

MCKENZIE  
You bastard! I don't fucking believe this...you had me mugged and stole my computer..?!

RUSSELL  
Basically.

MCKENZIE  
Why.

RUSSELL  
To see what's in it of course...

MCKENZIE  
You've read it then..

RUSSELL  
It's been two weeks. How slow do you think I am.

MCKENZIE  
If you...your boss want it so badly why is it still on my computer?

RUSSELL

Well, technically it's not yours anymore.

MCKENZIE

Of course it bloody well is! You said it yourself.

RUSSELL

Yes...but that was to stop you from going.

MCKENZIE tries to take the computer from the desk but it won't move.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Security lock on the back.

MCKENZIE

I have other copies this is not the only...

MCKENZIE realises he has said too much.

RUSSELL

Hence the visit to your flat.

MCKENZIE

Your boss isn't coming is he?

RUSSELL shakes his head. MCKENZIE hovers over his computer checking files.

RUSSELL

Don't worry, nothing's been deleted.

MCKENZIE

Why did you steal my computer?

RUSSELL

You know what you've written Mr. McKenzie.

MCKENZIE

And obviously so do you.

RUSSELL

What's that saying...real news is something that someone somewhere has decided the public shouldn't know about. This is one of those moments.

MCKENZIE

My book details what private military contractors have been up to in Iraq these last few years...no lies, no exaggerations, just the unadulterated truth.

RUSSELL

That's why they pay you the big bucks.

MCKENZIE

Your company has gained a reputation for criminality to rival Blackwater's.

RUSSELL

And it's your duty to do something about it heh...

MCKENZIE

I'm a journalist. That's what we're supposed to do.

RUSSELL

I'll be frank with you Mr. McKenzie. Your revelations could...will bring the company to its knees. Our work depends mainly on government contracts which will completely dry up if your book is published.

MCKENZIE

How unfortunate.

RUSSELL

How very fucking unfortunate.

MCKENZIE

You...the behaviour of the company you work for has reached a criminal level right under the government's noses.

RUSSELL

Then bring them down. Whatever it is you say we've done they knew about it.

MCKENZIE

That's not how it works and you know it. They'll deny everything even though they're as guilty as hell.

RUSSELL

Our removal will make no difference. The other companies will swoop in like vultures.

MCKENZIE

All of you operate outside of any legal jurisdiction while acting as self appointed judge, jury and executioners of whomever you decide is the enemy.

RUSSELL

We're just doing business Mr. Mckenzie.

MCKENZIE

In 2008 your company was responsible for several incidents in the space of one month, some of them fatal and none of which have been fully investigated or reported by the Western media.

RUSSELL

You talking about that Iraqi boy...we apologised for that. Paid some compensation to his family.

MCKENZIE

A 16 year old restrained with six car tyres wrapped around his body, no food no water for 24 hours.

RUSSELL

He was a thief.

MCKENZIE

He stole a cable.

RUSSELL

Our South African employees have some unusual methods for dealing with criminals.

MCKENZIE

Your South African employees are former members of the Vlatplaas death squad.

RUSSELL

They were rehabilitated before we hired them.

MCKENZIE

My God you're so dodgy you could swallow a nail and shit out a corkscrew. I investigated each incident myself, spoke to witnesses, survivors, victims and the stories correlate. Doctor's reports on the wounds received or the manner of death...in some cases we have photos...

RUSSELL

Just like your book, they can't be circulated.



MCKENZIE

Some of the people in your company are murderers pure and simple. You can sugar coat it any way you like but at the end of the day they fired on innocent civilians because of some deranged sense of invincibility and superiority to all forms of human life outside of your compound in Baghdad.

RUSSELL

They're private contractors...they can't afford to be concerned about anything other than the job at hand.

MCKENZIE

How does that explain your men opening up on a group of civilians standing around a car on Abu Nawas St in broad daylight?

RUSSELL

They thought it was a car bomb.

MCKENZIE

But of course it wasn't was it? Just a pregnant woman and her family trying to get to a hospital surrounded by some good samaritans, neighbours, relatives called to the rescue after their car broke down.

RUSSELL

How were we supposed to know that...

MCKENZIE

I don't know...maybe by using some fucking common sense and not shooting at people who are unarmed.

RUSSELL

Warning shots were given.

MCKENZIE

Your contractors murdered a family. Dozens more deaths are related to your company, most if not all unjustified.

RUSSELL

In Iraq, accidents like that happen all the time.

MCKENZIE

Accidents huh? I was at the hospital when the victims came in, the pregnant woman with her baby shot dead while still in her belly, the husband with his arm blown off, their young son without a leg, several of the others, including children taken straight down to the hospital morgue in pieces. Survivors of this massacre came in with minor wounds and I asked them what happened but no-one would talk. Another insurgent explosion I thought but then I hear rumours of what actually did happen and how your men began shooting from your vehicles without warning and then threatened to kill anyone who spoke of what went down, confiscated their cell phones, actually taking their addresses and photos like some death squad in waiting...refused to even take the wounded to the hospital.

RUSSELL

They were on a job...

MCKENZIE

Yes. Heading to the airport to escort some corporate executive into Baghdad whose plane was delayed and didn't actually arrive till the next day.

RUSSELL

We waited hours to get into that airport, past all the security checkpoints. The first one, that's when you really started to shit yourself because its a total lottery as to whether there's a suicide bomb that day just waiting in the queue and if there is they take two or more cars with them.

MCKENZIE

You expect me to feel sympathy?

RUSSELL

(Indignant)

Just understand there was more to the job than just driving around intimidating the local population who could just as easily knock you off while sitting in a car in Baghdad traffic. Iraqis come staring at anyone through the window when you're stopped at the lights and they noticed everything and anything that didn't quite fit in. We'd be sitting at the back of an unmarked car to look inconspicuous, wearing a shamag, growing a beard, suntanned skins, no wraparound sunglasses to give ourselves away, in which case they'd come right up to the window and stare deep into your eyes to see if you were a Westerner and if they were right you better be faster on the trigger than they are.

MCKENZIE

So what was that family doing heh? All staring at you at the same time?

RUSSELL

Those men have been dealt with.

MCKENZIE

That's right. Two were quietly allowed to leave Iraq and another was given a bonus to keep his mouth shut.

RUSSELL

How do you know that?

MCKENZIE

Some of your own people weren't too happy with the insurance plan.

RUSSELL

No-one's going to jail. There will be no big trial and those men are long gone.

MCKENZIE

By the time I am finished with you and your employers, there will be a government investigation of what your company did to those people, of all your activities in Iraq.

Pause.

RUSSELL

Look around you Mr. Mckenzie. A short walk underground and staff at the Oriental Hotel are pampering customers in five star facility while you remain interned in an apartment unmatched anywhere in Europe, dare I say it the world. Your character, your moral courage are all meaningless. Whatever you think , no one cares who you are or what's happening to you. You're as abandoned as your ex in some cellar in Baghdad...

MCKENZIE

How dare you...

RUSSELL

Your book's mostly about her, about what was supposedly not done to protect her. That's why you wrote it. Most blokes wouldn't want a bar of their ex but you go ahead and immortalise her.

MCKENZIE

She's an extraordinary woman.

RUSSELL

But you're not together anymore so...

MCKENZIE

That makes no bloody difference. We split because of our professions...not out of any loss of feelings for each other.

RUSSELL

Not because of your daughter? Neither willing to sacrifice their careers to care for their disabled child...

MCKENZIE

She requires full time professional help. Do you understand? Something neither my wife...ex-wife or I are capable of providing.

RUSSELL

Like some bloody Hollywood couple you two.

MCKENZIE

Far from it.

RUSSELL

Your ex was living with another bloke before she was kidnapped.

MCKENZIE

They were partners, did charity work together. That's what brought them to Iraq in the first place.

RUSSELL

Hell of a honeymoon.

MCKENZIE

Jill has a feeling for the suffering of others that even I couldn't fathom after writing about it for decades.

RUSSELL

Regular Mother Theresa. Obviously you just couldn't stand being married to a saint.

MCKENZIE

Don't belittle her like that! My God...a hired gun from some innocuous backwater dares to mock someone whose boots you're not fit enough to clean.

RUSSELL

I learnt how to spit and polish with the best of them.

MCKENZIE

I don't see what your employer would want to know about her.

RUSSELL

You name names, make some very direct accusations without any real proof.

MCKENZIE

Real proof? For God's sake your organisation knew Jill was in trouble, it was in charge of security for which you were all paid a obscenely handsome profit...

RUSSELL

I don't know where you get your information from...

MCKENZIE

Your own informants told you she was going to be kidnapped but you did nothing.

RUSSELL

She was in Iraq. Trying to do charitable work. She couldn't have been in any less danger.

MCKENZIE

They...your mob knew there were threats.

RUSSELL

People get threatened in Iraq on a daily basis Mr. McKenzie. It's a national past time.

MCKENZIE

The whole lot of you...private military contractors, whatever you like to call yourself, are just one big cowboy show. Pretending you're legitimate warriors for a cause.

RUSSELL

Be that as it many, you can't go tarnishing the reputations of legitimate businessmen who are only trying to improve the situation in countries less fortunate.

MCKENZIE

You managed to say all that with a straight face.

RUSSELL

It's true.

MCKENZIE

There's nothing legitimate about mercenaries Mr. Russell.

RUSSELL

We don't call ourselves that any-

MCKENZIE

A whore by any other name.

RUSSELL

Enough. Point is your expose will have to wait.

MCKENZIE

Other journalists have penned articles...

RUSSELL

You've gone the whole hog though haven't you? Using your ex who is still alive as an excuse to rip the lid of what you think is a den of thieves and cutthroats...

MCKENZIE

She's been held hostage by Islamic insurgents for eight months thanks to your company's inability to do their job properly. Jill's fate is the cross you bastards should be nailed to!

RUSSELL

This is going to be more difficult than I thought.

MCKENZIE

Why is my book so important? You've been condemned before. And its not just the photos...

No answer.

MCKENZIE (CONT'D)

I really must have gotten close.

He gets up to leave.

RUSSELL

Where are you going?

MCKENZIE

Home. You can keep the computer.

RUSSELL

That's not possible.

MCKENZIE

You going to kill me? In here? Something tells me that's not quite what your boss had in mind.

A phone rings.

RUSSELL

I think its yours.

MCKENZIE doesn't know what to do.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Well go on. Answer it.

MCKENZIE

I have no idea who it might be...

RUSSELL

I do.

MCKENZIE answers his mobile phone.

MCKENZIE

Yes...yes it is. What? I'll...I'll just be a moment.

MCKENZIE puts his phone against his body.

MCKENZIE (CONT'D)

(Agitated)

Two men have just shown up at Blackheath.

RUSSELL

That's right. They're there to pick up your daughter. You've done it before...

MCKENZIE

Not these blokes.

RUSSELL

Of course not. They work for me.

MCKENZIE

They want confirmation...what are you doing..!?

RUSSELL

I'd give it to them if I were you.

MCKENZIE

What's going to happen to my daughter?

RUSSELL

Nothing if you co-operate and just give permission for my friends to escort your daughter...they're from your office where once again you're working late on a Sunday. We know you've done it before.

Pause.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Time you let them know.

MCKENZIE

(On the phone)

Yes. It's all been arranged. They're from the office. I was driving you see...just needed to pull over. Wouldn't want to cause an accident...yes I'll be there once she arrives.

MCKENZIE hangs up. He is visibly distressed.

Pause.

MCKENZIE (CONT'D)

If anything happens to her...

RUSSELL

Yes...

MCKENZIE

Where are they taking her?

RUSSELL

You should know. You said you'll be there once she arrives.



MCKENZIE

Where!

RUSSELL

To your place. She won't even need a key.

MCKENZIE

How do you know all this...you hacked my phone...

RUSSELL

Don't you know that's illegal.

MCKENZIE

What do you want?

RUSSELL

Any and all copies.

MCKENZIE

You can't destroy them.

RUSSELL

You can't destroy certain people Mr. McKenzie. Too many inquiries of late...makes the plutocracy a little nervous.

MCKENZIE

It's nothing so earth shattering. God knows no-one will be surprised.

RUSSELL

Please. Don't belittle the importance of your own work.

MCKENZIE

I'm not...but it's all I have.

RUSSELL

You have a daughter.

MCKENZIE

Are you going to kill her?

RUSSELL

The scales are still swinging in that head of your aren't they?

MCKENZIE

Of course not.

RUSSELL

Could I handle losing my daughter to protect my work...

MCKENZIE

That's obscene. You're the bastard here...

RUSSELL

You haven't capitulated yet have you? Want to know how far we will go...kill a disabled girl left to rot in a rehab facility by her idealistic arsehole of a father.

MCKENZIE

She hasn't been left to rot...I visit whenever I can...whenever I am in town...

RUSSELL

30 minutes tops. That's the longest. Hardly ever take her out.

MCKENZIE

Don't judge me. You're a fucking animal.

RUSSELL

We haven't quite gotten there yet. Of course there's still time.

MCKENZIE

There's nothing in my apartment.

RUSSELL

You really expect me to believe that...

MCKENZIE

They can turn the place upside down they won't find anything!

RUSSELL

God you're unbelievable. Do you think we're playing around here? Game of charades or truth and dare? A lot of effort has gone into placing you in this...predicament. Cruder methods were considered.

MCKENZIE

Cruder...? What the hell do you call what you are doing now?

RUSSELL

Coercive. Nothing more. I swear not a hair on her head will be touched if you are truthful with us Mr. McKenzie.

MCKENZIE

She is totally defenceless.

RUSSELL

No she's not. You can protect her by making a professional rather than a...personal sacrifice.

Pause.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

If by the time your daughter gets to the apartment nothing's been found...patience is not their virtue. Or mine.

MCKENZIE

And your boss...?

RUSSELL

He was all for the cruder methods.

MCKENZIE

But you persuaded him otherwise.

RUSSELL

You wish to wait till they're in your flat is that it? Alone with your daughter dragging her into the bedroom. These guys aren't too fussy...

MCKENZIE

She's like a child.

RUSSELL

Only in some ways.

MCKENZIE

How dare you!

RUSSELL slaps MCKENZIE across the face. He is momentarily stung by this.

MCKENZIE (CONT'D)

I'm telling you it's not there!

RUSSELL

You really are something...willing to gamble on her safety.

MCKENZIE

Her life's already been taken away. Safety? She was run over crossing the street in broad daylight by a motorcyclist who didn't even bother to stop! Everything to live for and now she's permanently brain damaged...

RUSSELL

She's still your daughter.

MCKENZIE

Fuck off. Enough has been taken away from me. More than enough. I don't know what you expect...

RUSSELL

Save her fucking life how about that? Or what's left of it. That's your call.

MCKENZIE

I'd gotten used to losing those close to me but this was completely different...

RUSSELL

Christ are you not hearing what I'm saying? If you don't tell us where they are your daughter is not going back to-

MCKENZIE

You threaten to kill her and that's my responsibility...

RUSSELL

We don't want to kill her. We want to kill your story. By any means necessary. You have the means to save her...

MCKENZIE

I can't do anything for my daughter...not a damn thing...neither can Jill...

RUSSELL

I'm going to call them now. Tell them not to bother.

MCKENZIE

You have no idea how smart she was...how beautiful...

RUSSELL

Honour her memory then. Tell us what we want to know.

MCKENZIE

Tell them to turn back...there's nothing there.

RUSSELL

You...you're signing her death...

MCKENZIE

They are with her.

RUSSELL

What?

MCKENZIE

They're with my daughter.

Pause.

RUSSELL

Where?

MCKENZIE

In an envelope, Sitting in a drawer by her bed.

RUSSELL

The latest drafts of your book...

MCKENZIE

Yes.

RUSSELL

Of all the possibilities we didn't think of that one...

MCKENZIE

Please...just take her back.

RUSSELL

Is there a key?

MCKENZIE

(Shakes his head)

There are no other visitors...friends stopped coming over a year ago.

MCKENZIE speaks into his phone which was on the coffee table and left on speaker.

RUSSELL

Did you get all that? Good. Call me once you're there.

RUSSELL makes another call.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Hello yes this is Mr. Dyson...I am a colleague of Mr. McKenzie, yes another journalist. Unfortunately he won't be able to meet Rachel. An urgent matter... To do with her mother? Quite possibly. I know she will be disappointed. Anyhow Rachel's on her way back. There's an envelope in her room which Rowan left last time and would like returned. No trouble. The two gentlemen can pick it up and bring it to the office. Yes he's asked me to pass on a message to Rachel that he loves her very much and looks forward to spending more time with her once he becomes available. Thank you.

RUSSELL hangs up. MCKENZIE stares at him.

MCKENZIE

What if I had said nothing...

RUSSELL

We knew you wouldn't.

MCKENZIE

How?

RUSSELL

Fathers, daughters that sort of thing. And if you did say nothing then you're the evil bastard not us.

MCKENZIE nods as he tries to absorb this twisted logic.

MCKENZIE

What now...

RUSSELL

You stay. We wait.

MCKENZIE

I think I'll have that drink.

RUSSELL

Do you think you should...

MCKENZIE

What do you care?

RUSSELL

Well I know that excuse of being on the job was just a load of bullshit. You're on the wagon. One of the reasons you and your wife split...

MCKENZIE

I haven't had a drink since...

RUSSELL makes his way to the bar.

RUSSELL

What do you have...

MCKENZIE

Scotch.

RUSSELL pours him a drink and hands it to him.

MCKENZIE takes a gulp.

RUSSELL

Relax. If what you say is true she'll never know and you can forget this ever happened. There's other stories out there that won't get you killed.

RUSSELL takes a bottle over to MCKENZIE and pours him another one. MCKENZIE takes another gulp.

MCKENZIE

You know when they announced One Hyde Park was going to be built four years ago I...I felt a certain triumphant glee. This was going to be the tipping point, something that would galvanise people in Britain...all this extravagance in an apartment building, and with the economy in a nosedive. Outrage would be the order of the day. But no,...here we are in the deepest recession since the 1930's...how could anyone spend so much money on a place with bomb proof windows, swimming pool inside the apartment, private cinema, virtual games reality room, and private underground tunnel to the Mandarin Hotel with 24 hour access to all its staff and facilities. The answer is that they can and would do so without blinking an eyelid.

RUSSELL

Why are you so surprised?

MCKENZIE

I'm not surprised...just bitterly disappointed by it all.

MCKENZIE takes another gulp.

MCKENZIE (CONT'D)

The rest of the world would simply be busy trying to keep their heads bobbing just above the water line. Our police and politicians can be bought off by a newspaper magnate for a pittance or a horse. Corruption of public life had made extravagance on this scale like the discovery of the eighth wonder of the world. How many slaves died to make it is irrelevant.

RUSSELL

That's good. I can see why people read your columns...

MCKENZIE

When a newspaper bothers to print them.

Pause.

MCKENZIE (CONT'D)

This'll destroy me you know.

RUSSELL

What?

MCKENZIE

Everything that I represent in the industry is in that book.



RUSSELL

Write another one.

MCKENZIE

I don't want to write another fucking book. That's the one I was writing and almost completed till you bastards came along.

RUSSELL

You came to us. We just threw out the bait. The boss wasn't so sure you'd accept the invitation from an anonymous party.

MCKENZIE

What changed his mind...

RUSSELL

I did. Just had a feeling you couldn't resist seeing what all the fuss was about. See all that extravagance up close.

MCKENZIE

And you've never questioned how it is someone can own all this while so many...

RUSSELL

That's your privilege. Only a fool thinks everyone has a right to challenge or even question the way things are...

MCKENZIE indicates he wants another drink.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

I think you've had enough.

MCKENZIE

Give me another fucking drink.

RUSSELL complies.

MCKENZIE (CONT'D)

Why did your company allow Jill to be so exposed when threats, explicit threats had already been made heh? All this talk of administrative bungling just doesn't fly with me.

RUSSELL

It's what happened. Look I agree with you. You want better security let the military handle it but they don't want to do it, the governments are not interested in them doing it which is where we come in. Private military contractors...fucking mercenaries, I don't give a flying fuck either way, have got their place and in the new homeland security complex, and that place is getting bigger and bigger. We're the future.

MCKENZIE

The oldest professions always like to think they're the future.

RUSSELL

(Smugly)

That's because we've been around long enough to know our true worth.

MCKENZIE

She called me you know, before the kidnapping. Told me something wasn't quite right with security. Felt that you guys weren't taking your jobs serious enough.

RUSSELL

Why? Because we weren't shadowing her every move? There were no specific threats to your ex. Just to the organisation which meant there were hundreds of potential targets.

MCKENZIE

She told me she was getting rid of you all...the amount of hate your company, its employees had attracted from the local population was tarnishing anyone associated with them. Jill had talked to the people in the neighbourhoods where she worked, they warned her your company played both sides of the fence....

RUSSELL

Deal with insurgents...?

Pause.

MCKENZIE

She wouldn't say, but was planning on going to the local military commander, an American and begging him to provide some military protection so she could get rid of you lot. Untenable Jill said. It was untenable to keep your organisation around or be connected with them in any way. I asked her to be more specific...

RUSSELL

And was she?

Pause.

MCKENZIE

I could tell she was scared. That was something I had never heard in her voice.

RUSSELL

Everybody was scared in Iraq.

MCKENZIE

“Betrayal was like a currency for anyone willing to spend.” Her words. It was just a matter of the highest bidder.

RUSSELL

I’ll admit Baghdad was beyond anything we expected, good and bad. We were all on edge.

MCKENZIE

She was going to call her CEO in Zurich and get him to terminate your contract forthwith.

RUSSELL

What if he refused?

MCKENZIE

She was going to pack her bags and leave. Something she would never have threatened to do in the past. Jill was the agency and they knew it. Without her, well, it wasn’t worth contemplating. I told her to wait but she couldn’t. Jill had absolutely no confidence in New Horizons. She’d seen, heard too much. And then she was kidnapped..

RUSSELL

I can’t wait for the sequel...

MCKENZIE

I have a feeling you’re writing that one.

Pause. RUSSELL pours himself a drink. He doesn’t offer MCKENZIE.

RUSSELL

That kind of rumour could destroy reputations.

MCKENZIE

It wasn’t a rumour.

RUSSELL

You don't know that. You have no proof, no evidence that can link her disappearance to New Horizons...

MCKENZIE

(Cagey)

I wasn't assuming they had anything to do with the kidnapping. Just a case of mind boggling incompetence...

RUSSELL

Tell me the truth McKenzie. Show me what a brave journalist you really are. What do you think really happened?

Pause.

MCKENZIE

I think she became a client who saw what a liability your company had become and wasn't afraid to say it, so the powers that be decided she was longer worth the investment as far as her safety. A case of wilful neglect.

Pause.

RUSSELL

I hope you haven't divulged all this in your latest draft. Because it's not in the one we have.

MCKENZIE

Why the fuck should you care? If your company had nothing to do with it then why worry what a broken down drunk of a journalist has to say huh? Just blame it on the booze and one too many war zones...

RUSSELL

You must realise by now the extent to which certain people will go to cover up something like that, no matter how untruthful it might be...

MCKENZIE

Like kidnapping a disabled girl..?

RUSSELL

We haven't kidnapped her. We just...borrowed her for a little bit.

MCKENZIE

You bastard...

This comment spurs MCKENZIE to get up and confront RUSSELL with a fury that he is unaware he possessed. He throws himself at RUSSELL so that they both topple over onto the floor. For a brief moment MCKENZIE has his hands on RUSSELL'S throat. Then, almost as if dealing with a child, RUSSELL grabs MCKENZIE by his hair on the back of his head and pulls him away.

RUSSELL

Go on...get up.

RUSSELL holds on till he pulls MCKENZIE to a standing position then throws him towards the nearest chair.

MCKENZIE is out of breath and can barely move.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Try that again and I'll break every finger in both hands.

MCKENZIE

You were never a soldier...just some bloody tourist in a uniform.

RUSSELL

I've seen a few things...

MCKENZIE

In Afghanistan how many Taliban did you kill heh?

RUSSELL

We were in several firefights...

MCKENZIE

How many did you kill!?

RUSSELL is silent.

MCKENZIE (CONT'D)

That's what I thought. But you're a veteran now heh? Cushy job as a "private contractor slash bodyguard." Real fucking soldiers don't go in for the sort of shit you're doing. They've got too much pride, or too much humility.

RUSSELL

I've got your life in my hands and that of your daughter's. Her death would mean nothing to me. Yours might actually be enjoyable.

MCKENZIE

God help me but I would give so much to watch you suffer...

RUSSELL

Couldn't you do it?

MCKENZIE

I'm too old and you know it...

RUSSELL

Age isn't your problem. You just don't have it in you. Would have been just as gutless thirty years ago.

MCKENZIE

I remember you from Iraq. Remember your real name as well. Bragging about your little adventure on Route Irish like it was the gunfight at the OK Corral.

RUSSELL

You wrote about it.

MCKENZIE

Didn't mention that a few of us went to the site of your little adventure. Spoke to some locals who only heard the gunfire from your vehicle.

RUSSELL

We were fired upon.

MCKENZIE

Then managed to speak to the other contractors in your vehicle. None would deny or confirm your version of events. A lot of faces unable to make direct eye contact, or looking down at the ground. No answers that flawlessly matched your version of events.

RUSSELL

Why didn't you put that in your story?

MCKENZIE

Gave you the benefit of the doubt. Till I visited your old unit. Curiosity got the better of me you see. Talked to a few of the lads who remembered you. Seems you left under a bit of a cloud. Dead civilians in a village somewhere in Afghanistan.

(MORE)

## MCKENZIE (CONT'D)

A family wiped out because of your...negligence? Threw a grenade through the wrong window then upon discovering your mistake, killed all the survivors including three girls, all sisters, under the age of twelve.

RUSSELL

The press would have had a field day with that. Cute little things they were...

MCKENZIE

No one willing to go on the record. The unit covered it up, you're quietly asked to leave, an embarrassment to the unit.

RUSSELL

I'd shut it right there if I were you.

MCKENZIE

Then give me the gun you have tucked in your waist and turn around..

RUSSELL

What?

MCKENZIE

You heard me. Give me your gun and see whether I am capable of killing you.

RUSSELL

You know what would happen then...

MCKENZIE

Fuck you and your threats...using my daughter to destroy my life. Put the gun on the table, turn around then see whether I have the bottle to shoot a cunt like you.

RUSSELL

Why would I want to do that...

MCKENZIE

Because you're a dog that knows he needs to be put out of his misery. I don't even have to ask if you've got a family. Who'd have the likes of you...

RUSSELL

I should just blow your fucking brains out here.

MCKENZIE

You won't because you're a coward. My death without the prize to go with it would be completely on your head. Another failed mission. You'd become unemployable. Might as well turn the gun on yourself.

RUSSELL pulls a hand gun out from behind his waist. He places it on the coffee table. MCKENZIE picks it up and aims it at RUSSELL. His hands are shaking but it is clear that MCKENZIE is preparing to shoot.

RUSSELL

You need to cock it first.

MCKENZIE cocks the weapon.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Safety's still on.

MCKENZIE switches the safety off.

He locks eyes with MCKENZIE and realises that he would be prepared to kill him. In one deft move. RUSSELL takes the gun out of MCKENZIE'S hand and using his other, wraps it around MCKENZIE'S throat. He pushes MCKENZIE against the back of the seat with his hand remaining firmly on MCKENZIE'S throat.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

You can't play this game McKenzie. Violence is not in your bag of tricks so when its done to you just suck it up...can't hide behind Oxford or your journalistic bullshit it's all or nothing...

A phone rings. Neither moves.

MCKENZIE

I think it's yours. You better answer it.

RUSSELL answers his phone. MCKENZIE rubs his neck with a palpable sense of relief.

RUSSELL

Right. OK. I believe you. Of course you couldn't. No. No need to go back. I'm sure it would more than a little suspicious. Just wait for my call.



RUSSELL hangs up.

MCKENZIE

Well...

RUSSELL

They have a copy of what's on your computer. It's the same draft on the USB that was with your daughter.

MCKENZIE

I'm telling you...it's the only and latest copy of the manuscript...

RUSSELL

Shut up.

MCKENZIE

Please...I have no idea what happened.

RUSSELL

Don't fucking lie McKenzie. You're terrible at it.

Pause.

MCKENZIE

Are you going to hurt my daughter...

RUSSELL

Something tells me you want us to put her out of her misery...or yours.

MCKENZIE

Don't be so vile.

RUSSELL

You're not doing anything to ensure her longevity.

MCKENZIE

She has nothing to do with this...

RUSSELL

You involved her...

MCKENZIE

I didn't expect this to happen now did I?!

RUSSELL

Where is it.

MCKENZIE

I don't know.

RUSSELL

You're lying aren't you...

Pause.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

It was never left with your daughter was it? I dare say it's not in your flat either...

MCKENZIE shakes his head.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Your book cannot be published.

MCKENZIE

It has to be. It must be. Don't you understand..?

RUSSELL

No frankly I don't. Whatever has happened over there isn't worth your life, or your daughter's.

MCKENZIE

My book keeps Jill alive! It...makes her relevant...real to those who can do something about it.

RUSSELL

What? You're talking about Whitehall?

MCKENZIE

If her profile fades so does any chance of the government negotiating her release, bringing her back to England could appear at least to be some way of addressing all the cock ups they've made...particularly with you lot.

RUSSELL

I thought you understood how governments worked...

MCKENZIE

I do. Despite this elaborate ruse of yours, there is still a chance her ransom will be paid by someone, maybe even the government, but her star must shine brightly before those that can will do anything.

RUSSELL

This is her husband's problem wouldn't you say...

MCKENZIE

For God's sake he came to me, begged me to do something when it became clear she'd been abandoned!

RUSSELL

These insurgents don't play around and negotiation isn't their strong point, particularly with Westerners.

MCKENZIE

Jill serves no government, no political party or interest. All she cares about is helping the suffering.

RUSSELL

That's a fairly political position if ever I've heard one...

MCKENZIE

She can't go this way! I'm not going to let her be executed by some half crazed insurgents or waste away in some basement till there's nothing left of her do you understand?! Not when there's the real possibility of securing her release. I cannot...will not do it and if that means you have to kill me then so be it.

RUSSELL

You can tell me now. We get any and all copies of your manuscript and we'll let you and your daughter live.

MCKENZIE

My publisher already has the latest copy.

RUSSELL

You're lying. It wasn't finished.

MCKENZIE

How do you know?

RUSSELL

We checked your emails...monitored your phone messages. Nothing to your publisher.

MCKENZIE

I dropped it off personally. They have instructions to publish the existing draft if anything happens to me and to send a copy to Whitehall the day before publication.

RUSSELL

Why would you...

MCKENZIE

I've always known the kind of people I was dealing with and something told me that the mugging wasn't such a random act.

RUSSELL

How?

MCKENZIE

They stole a watch worth less than a hundred dollars and left my phone worth ten times as much. It had fallen out of my jacket pocket and was lying there in the street but my attackers didn't take it. You were right, too improbable in that kind of neighbourhood.

RUSSELL

Your fucking publisher...

MCKENZIE

Yes. In a big ivory tower that won't bend even to the likes of you. Especially to the likes of you.

RUSSELL

They're not untouchable.

MCKENZIE

Be my guest. Either way there's nothing I can do to stop it even if I wanted to. Jill's welfare is all that matters and my book may be able to do something your whole security apparatus was incapable of.

RUSSELL

She left you and your life has spiralled downward ever since. You owe her nothing.

MCKENZIE

Don't you see...if I save her then maybe she'll come back. It's that simple. Nothing else matters.

Pause.

RUSSELL

I know where she is.

MCKENZIE

Don't joke about this...

RUSSELL

No joke. I could throw you into a cell with her remains.

RUSSELL moves away. MCKENZIE is stunned by this admission.

MCKENZIE

What...what you are talking about..?

RUSSELL

She's already dead.

Pause.

MCKENZIE

No. She is not. Nobody has heard anything so don't you dare-

RUSSELL

Jill Cowen...your ex wife, is dead.

MCKENZIE

How...how would you know that? There have been no reports, no body found, nothing....

RUSSELL is silent. MCKENZIE is consumed with rage and despair.

MCKENZIE (CONT'D)

Well...how the fuck do you know?! Jesus fucking Christ do you think I'm just going to stand here and take as gospel the utterances of someone like you...

RUSSELL

I was there.

MCKENZIE

What are you saying...you didn't...

RUSSELL

No. But I was one of the last people to see her alive.

MCKENZIE

How is that even possible...she was kidnapped by insurgents when your bodyguards weren't even around...

Pause.

MCKENZIE (CONT'D)

Why are you telling me this now..?

RUSSELL

Her death wasn't inevitable.

MCKENZIE

What the fuck are you talking about? You people colluded with those who kidnapped her...

RUSSELL

We didn't collude. When we heard there was going to be an attempt to kidnap her, we were told to let it succeed.

MCKENZIE

(Incredulous)

So she could be executed?

RUSSELL

That wasn't supposed to happen...just...frighten her enough to get out of the country. We knew what she thought of us, what she was saying to those who had influence.

MCKENZIE

And you were part of the "rescue team"...

RUSSELL

Yes.

MCKENZIE

After blackmailing me with my daughter's life you tell me this...why didn't you save her...

RUSSELL

We knew where these jihadists were keeping her. It was just a matter of when. Then the Boss tells us before the mission that there will be no assault. I'm given a training bag full of cash and the address where she was being kept..

MCKENZIE

Who paid the ransom...

RUSSELL

Her employers. No one was supposed to know.

MCKENZIE

So you're thieves as well as murderers...

RUSSELL

Anyway...we knock on the door. There was three of us, armed but not in a firing position. They just let us in. Eight of them playing cards upstairs, smoking. All heavily armed. The Boss had already talked with their leader. Seems as though he'd cut a deal. The ransom is paid. We split it and don't kill them.

MCKENZIE

Did you honour the agreement?

RUSSELL

After the money was paid, they decided they wouldn't let her go. We couldn't believe it. They still wanted to kill her. She was supposed to be dropped off but they'd changed their minds, said we were lower than a dog in the street...we were outnumbered, so there wasn't anything we could do.

MCKENZIE

For God's sake why?! If you'd made a deal...

RUSSELL

One of the jihadists recognised some of our men on the rescue team.

MCKENZIE

Recognised..?

RUSSELL

He said they were responsible for killing some of his relatives.

MCKENZIE

And were they?

RUSSELL doesn't answer.

MCKENZIE (CONT'D)

So you just watched. No one lifted a finger to save her?

RUSSELL

We thought we could control the situation. It wasn't that unusual...deals with enemy insurgents. A win-win for everybody.

MCKENZIE

What happened to her body...

RUSSELL

It will never be found.

MCKENZIE is doing his utmost to stop himself from breaking down.

MCKENZIE

I don't understand...they released a video only months ago showing her alive....

RUSSELL

It was made that night. We found it after, when we came back in force. The mess was taken care of and decided to release it. Cover our tracks...

MCKENZIE

You and your thugs as good as murdered her...

RUSSELL

She was working in one of the most dangerous places on earth...

MCKENZIE

She was an aid worker...



RUSSELL

I tell you now I didn't know about it till the last minute. None of us were too happy about dealing with these bastards and then they go and double cross us...

MCKENZIE

They just knew exactly what they were dealing with...

RUSSELL

We thought we were bringing her out alive.

MCKENZIE

You weren't supposed to tell me any of this...

RUSSELL

No.

Pause.

MCKENZIE

So negotiations are over...

RUSSELL

Yes. Of course you might want to tidy up your affairs.

MCKENZIE

Would you like to give me a date?

RUSSELL

Next week, next month. As long as you have a routine, prize some semblance of normality in your life, you will be gotten to. Security in your apartment isn't so flash and I'd guess you couldn't afford the state of the art stuff, So there's a variety of ways to send you to the other side. You can booby trap a coffee maker...

MCKENZIE

I drink tea.

RUSSELL

You get the point.

MCKENZIE

Would you be the one doing it?

RUSSELL

Bigger bastards than me out there.

MCKENZIE

And my daughter?

RUSSELL

Not my final decision. Either way, I promise you'll be first. That way you'll never know.

MCKENZIE

The world's a pitiless place.

RUSSELL

On its quiet days.

MCKENZIE is about to exit.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Haven't you forgotten something?

MCKENZIE

You can keep the computer.

RUSSELL

The tape...

MCKENZIE

If it's the ransom demands I've already seen it.

RUSSELL

This is the one they took of her death.

MCKENZIE is stopped in his tracks. He goes over to the cabinet and tentatively picks up the DVD.

MCKENZIE

They...

RUSSELL

Yes.

MCKENZIE

Have you...

RUSSELL

What do you think.

MCKENZIE

Why are you giving me this..?

RUSSELL

Before they placed...her last words were your name. Who else should have it...

MCKENZIE takes the tape. He exits. RUSSELL'S phone rings for the last time.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Yes. Thank you. No. We won't be needing this place after today. My organisation is grateful for your co-operation in this matter.

LIGHTS. The TV in the study crackles to life. JILL COWEN is seen in a dank cell tied to the floor. There is no SOUND. She watches her captors walk back and forth. Their faces cannot be seen. A hood is finally placed over JILL'S head. In shadows, RUSSELL walks over to the TV and turns it off. Lights fade.

The End