

## Ruby IV : Just A Shadow

### Chapter 14 – Our Antonov Home

**“Villand and his small army of ex-street people, were well known to certain people, but invisible to the general population in France. Going after them directly could bring unpleasant consequences. Knowing Villand’s reputation, he might even have protection by the CIA.”**

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Penny knew the man in the cells at Bishopsgate Police Station, had become a bit of an obsession. Ronald had told her the man’s criminal record, which was quite extensive, mainly for violent offences.

“Low level guy for hire.” Ronald had told her. “Need a business rival put in hospital, then he’s the one for you. My guess is that surveillance isn’t in his area of expertise, which is why the police spotted him.”

Lots of AKAs, also known as, and several nicknames. Born in Rotherhithe, the fairly nondescript man in the cell was currently known in the criminal world as Razors. None of the police officers had given her details, but she could guess how he’d gained the name.

“Many assumed names, but christened Cornelius Hughes.” Ronald had said. “Shortened to Connie Hughes for those he doesn’t know well, though he’s Razors to his friends and fellow criminals.”

It was knowing he’d been following her, photographing her and the Polandros offices. A genuinely dangerous man who’d happily maimed people for money. There were rumours about murders too, but as a young policeman had told her.

“Knowing and proving are totally different things.”

She’d recognised him as someone who’d been in the same queue as her in the local coffee place, on several different days. He’d smiled at her once and she’d smiled back. Just the usual ‘we’re comrades in the queue,’ type of smile. Now it all felt so sinister, so terrifying. No wonder his face kept turning up in her dreams and nightmares.

“Good, it means we can hold him for the full ninety-six hours.” Ronald had said.

“You don’t understand, it wasn’t just the coffee place.” She’d said. “There was one day he was in the Café, the Under The Bridge. Another time I saw him at the dry cleaners. Nothing to get upset about at the time, just the kind of coincidence that happens when two people work in the same postcode. Now I know he was following me, probably making notes about my routine.”

The obsession had begun and no matter how hard she tried to ignore it, or use common sense to get rid of it; it refused to go away. Razors looked like any one of a hundred people she saw regularly, going about their lawful business. But Razors had been paid by a faceless corporation who wanted her dead. Not being sure why they wanted her killed, added to her level of anxiety.

The second time she’d arrived at the police station had been without Ronald. Early evening and they’d been helpful. No cameras in the cells, it infringed their right to privacy. Penny could respect that; she wouldn’t want CCTV watching her pee. They’d taken Razors to an interview room. A plain clothes officer had talked to him for a while, just to make it look legit. The reality was that Penny wanted to look at that face again. She had to be sure that even if Razors grew a beard and dyed his hair blue, she’d still know him. There couldn’t be the slightest chance of him sneaking up on her.....Not again.

It was now her third time at the counter and the police weren't happy. It was the evening before Razors was due to be released and she wanted to look at him again, to imprint that face in her mind. A detective had wanted to send her away, until she'd suggested they called Ronald. Penny was currently talking to Ronald on a phone in a grubby back office. Public buildings had cleaners, but she'd noticed it before. Courts and cop shop always looked and felt a little grubby. Even on TV cop shows, there was the almost universal thin coating of grime.

"No Penny, he's being released in the morning." Said Ronald.

"Exactly, released. Not charged awaiting a court date, but released." She said.

"But you agreed to us letting him go. Special branch will be on him the moment he steps into the street. They don't lose people, Penny. We'll know where he is twenty-four hours a day. Cornelius Hughes isn't the sharpest knife in the drawer. He'll lead us to his boss, who in turn....."

"I get it, I really do. I just want to see his face one last time." She said.

"How important is to you, Penny?"

"I'm sorry?"

"On a scale of one to ten. How important is it to you, to see his face again?"

It was a strange question to ask, but she didn't need to think about an answer.

"Ten and a half, maybe a full eleven."

"Foxy said I should ask you that." Said Ronald. "He was alerted about your call. You were lucky, he usually has his warm milky drink and is in bed by nine. He's waiting by the phone, to hear how all this works itself out. We do appreciate what you've done, Penny."

"You appreciate Ruby, is what you mean."

"No, Ruby is part of a larger team, we've always known that." Said Ronald. "I can be there in.....An hour. Can you wait that long?"

"Yes, I'll be here." She said.

"I can think of a few questions to ask him, while you sit and watch on the screen. All not by the book, we could have trouble with using you as a witness in any future prosecution. Things get logged at cop shops and a clever barrister could rip your identification evidence to shreds."

"I'm sorry, Ronald."

"It's alright, Foxy said if it really matters to you, we'll do it."

"Thank you."

"I'll be there in about an hour. Get a cup of tea off them."

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Olga had been worried about the cost of setting the Russians against Gallaan. There had to be cut offs to control cut offs and a few clever people who could act out a role. More of a sting really, than anything else, though they weren't after Gallaan's money. The main rule was no direct contact between the various players in the sting and Olga's gang.

She remembered an accountant from Bermuda, who thought he'd get away with ripping off a Russian gang. He'd remained on Bermuda for years, confident that he was untouchable behind tough immigration controls and a few military types who were on his payroll as gardeners. Then one of his sons was to marry a woman from England. A pretty young woman who'd worked on the island as a nanny for several years. Of course, her family insisted on organising and paying for the wedding. It was going to be in England, in a quiet village in Devon. Quite an affair from what Olga had heard, though the big day hadn't gone according to plan. Russian gangs have long memories though and a very long reach. The accountant's new daughter in law had found what was left of him. It was said

the poor woman was never quite right after that. So no, Olga was determined to keep a kind of cell structure in place for the sting, no matter how much it cost.

“Actually, it’s not going to cost as much as I feared.” She said.

“You must let me reimburse you.” Said Eugenie.

“Nonsense, you’re all family. I can remember when you.....I was going to say when you were all children, but you’re all older than me. Anyway, I still feel like an aunt to all of Ruby’s super kids. So, I wouldn’t dream of taking your money.”

“You should have seen Lol’s face when I told him I was born in eighteen twenty nine.” Said Eugenie. “I can imagine.”

They were sat in what Olga thought of as her office, though her tech guys called it the comms room. Lots of computers in partitioned off cubicles. All regularly tested for infiltration by law enforcement, the computers were the heart of her legitimate businesses. Encrypted emails were used for low level criminality, but her tech guys always pulled a face about emails. It seemed they were traceable and sometimes who sent an email to who, was more important than what was said.

“Early stages, but I’m getting a good feeling about this.” Said Olga.

“I heard about Maya Mizrahi, from Nadia.” Said Eugenie. “She mentioned the people killed because of the information she sold. I feel less guilty about what might happen to her.”

“She tried to get Dimitri arrested too.” Said Olga. “Shed no tears for that one.”

Burner phones were the way Olga conducted the part of her business the police would be interested in. Not just the local police, just about every police force on the globe had extensive files on her. She knew that for a fact, she’d bribed various people to get copies. Cheap throw away phones were perfect. Almost as if they’d been designed as a way for organised crime to become, organised. The ones used by her gang were destroyed and replaced on a regular basis. The specially bought phones for the sting, wouldn’t be used for long enough to gain the attention of the authorities, or her business rivals. One day burner phones would be regulated out of existence, but something else would come along, something always did. Newer tech, smarter tech, tech with better encryption. Olga was almost looking forward to it.

The phone Olga picked up was in a tray to the right of the computer. No labels, no words written by a marker pen. Olga knew what the phone was intended for, as did Eugenie. The phone was their Gallaan phone, or at least the pieces in the game thought of the phone number as Gallaan’s.

“Here we go, time for the shipping agent to have lunch with Maya.” Said Olga.

“Poor Elio Fulci.” Said Eugenie. “By the sound of it, Maya will eat him alive.”

It was a dreadful game of chess with humans as pieces. Some of those pieces wouldn’t survive, yet Olga found herself enjoying moving them around the board.

“Get lookout one in place.” Said Olga.

“Already done.”

It was easy because of all the hours of groundwork put into it, by various people who had no idea they were working for Olga. A quick and short text message from a phone Maya thought belonged to a senior buyer at Gallaan. The buyer was real, but Maya would never call the Gallaan office to confirm. She was aware the arms deal she was involved in was dodgy. She didn’t know the arms and the deal were just a sting operation. Eugenie was looking pleased about something.

“I take it lookout one has eyes on them?” Asked Olga.

“Yes, right down to seeing Elio order a scotch with ice.”

Maya was a backstabber and an opportunist. Even so, she was unlikely to pass on the forged paperwork to the Russians. The paperwork implicating Gallaan in ripping of several million on a

failed arms delivery. Such a thing suited her nature, but it was likely to kill the current deal and Olga remembered Maya's personality. The woman loved money, so she'd do nothing that might lose her the commission on the current sale. The forged documents would be found later, when Maya was probably dead. The Russians would find the documents and as Spider would put it, they'd go fucking ballistic.

"The lookout says Elio is turning on the charm." Said Eugenie. "He seems to fancy his chances."

"I didn't see that coming, though he isn't Maya's type." Said Olga. "An interesting development, but it changes nothing. Use the Dealer phone to arrange a container pickup in Milan."

Only four or five moves into a game that might need twenty or more, but so far. Everything was going according to plan.

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Lily's leg still hurt like hell, but she could walk properly. The knee joint worked, even if she was still relying on pain killers. Whatever Sophie had done, had done wonders and she would be eternally grateful. Every day the pain eased, though it would have been nice if it was gone.

"Hey, I'll lift that, it's why I'm here." Said Spider.

She didn't have much in the way of personal belongings and was feeling a bit of a fraud. Others had much more to bring onto the Antonov cargo plane and were doing it on their own. Ruby had insisted though and Spider had become her personal carrier of anything heavy.

"There's so much space." She said. "Ruby said it was big, but this.....You could have a game of football in here."

"Wait until everyone has all their kit onboard." Said Spider. "Sarah is over the moon about the bathroom. Our new Antonov home has a proper toilet."

"And a kitchen, though I imagine we'll get fed up with queues for everything."

Ruby had gone around talking to everyone in groups, rather than a huge team brief type of meeting. They had a plane that could get to anywhere on the globe in a day, but it was going to be their home for a while. Bad news for those who didn't enjoy travelling by plane and even worse news for those with travel sickness problems.

As for fuel, landing permissions and avoiding being shot down by whatever passed for a local airforce ? Foxy was helping with that, of course he was. No doubt Ruby would be expected to do the British security services a few favours in return, a kind of quid pro quo.

"We'll be heading for Muscat first, in Oman." Ruby had said. "Supplies will be arriving there and some extra soldiers. The Antonov will be our flying hotel, which is why we need to make it comfortable."

There might be a two day wait in Muscat, before the supplies arrived. Lily liked to explore new places, but there was something comforting about living on a plane inside the wire of the airport's perimeter fence. No one was giving their elderly plane a second look in Aden. Every other plane landing was a cargo carrier of some kind, loaded with food and medical aid. In other countries, they might get a little more unwanted attention, as Charlie had put it. Lily was ready, she still had a Glock 32 under her pillow.

"Have you been to Muscat ?" She asked Spider.

"Yes, though just passing through. We stopped in Oman in my army days, on the way to places further east. A small population and a history of getting on with Britain."

"So, not somewhere that might kick off, as Max calls it ?" She asked.

"No, it's quite touristy." Said Spider. "I'll give you same advice I'd give a tourist in London. Don't go out on your own and be aware of your surroundings."

It sounded like something out of an MI6 training manual, but she knew what he meant. There were partitions, the kind used in offices. They talked as they created a personal space for her, with Spider doing all the hard work. Once the memory foam mattress was on the floor and the partitions moved around a bit, the effect was quite surprising.

“Wow, I’ve lived in motels that looked less cosy.” She said

“Ahh, I know what you need.”

Spider vanished, before returning with a battery powered lantern. It was the sort of thing common in parts of the world where the lights had a habit of going out. Lily had no idea where he’d found it and she wasn’t about to ask. He turned it on and off a few times.

“The battery looks good.” He said. “It’ll give you light enough to get into bed. Do you have enough blankets?”

“I do, thank you Spider.”

She gave him a quick hug, before sending him back to helping Sarah set up their few square feet of personal space. Living on a plane was never going to be perfect, but everyone was together. She was going to feel safe, which mattered after being abducted by Gallaan.

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Gareth Lee had gone by several different names in the past, most with a general European flavour to them. The people he employed in the Paris office, had known his wife as Donna and him as Siegfried. They’d used the names for years and reacted to them when called to, though few dared to shout at the boss across the open plan office. Those names had become known to their enemies though and were now a liability.

Josh had talked to the interrogator, everyone does. The computer shop owner had been good, he’d remembered a lot of idle chatter between Eugenie and Flex. Some of it had been worrying, his new adversaries appeared to be motivated by something other than money. That was rare and would need some thought. Like many governments, Gareth had learned the best way to handle an annoyance is to pay them off. An annoyance who didn’t value cold hard cash, had the potential to be very dangerous.

“Pity he died so soon, though I think we got everything we needed.” Said Gareth.

“His heart, I think. He looked so fit, but looks can be deceptive.” Said the interrogator.

A debrief with the interrogator, before talking over options with the head of security for Gallaan Industries. Josh would have died anyway, but it should have been death by a bullet to the head, a day later. There was always that nagging feeling when a captive died early. The worry that something important had died with them. It was one of the main reasons Gareth had set up specialist interrogation centres, like the one in Belgium.

“We needed to act fast and you found out what we needed to know.” Said Gareth. “I take it the body is on its way to the people who deal with disposals?”

“Yes, it left the building two hours ago.”

“Good. You may go now.”

The transcripts from interrogation were normally very good, but they had been asked to be quick, rather than detailed. Gareth listened to the tapes of Josh pleading, before telling the interrogator everything he knew. Often the gaps between words were as important as the words. Mozart had once said the music wasn’t in the notes, but in the spaces between. Gareth knew exactly what the composer had meant. He listened and used a pen to write carefully above sections of the transcripts. No new details about the group in Norway who’d been worrying him for some time.

‘We missed something important.’ He wrote.

Josh had sensed something, probably due in part to who had referred Eugenie and Flex to him. Gérard Villand was someone even Gareth was loathe to go up against. Once a very dangerous operative with the French DGSE. There were those who still believed him to be dangerous. A digger was Villand, a delver for information considered unfindable. Employed by intelligence services from around the world, to fill in the gaps in what they knew.

‘See....Here.....We missed it.’ Gareth wrote.

Villand and his small army of ex-street people, were well known to certain people, but invisible to the general population in France. Going after them directly could bring unpleasant consequences. Knowing Villand’s reputation, he might even have protection by the CIA. That didn’t stop them from being watched, but it came back to Villand’s reputation once again. He’d know his people were being watched within a very short period of time and those unpleasant consequences could arrive. An old man with an army of kids and misfits, but Gareth was wise enough to be wary of upsetting that particular old man.

“Here again, the captive knew or guessed.....Something.” He wrote.

The group in Norway had been very specific about their needs and they paid well. It was one of the reasons why Gallaan had worked so hard to acquire energy weapons that were still on the secret list. His wife, Anne, had suspected something weird about them, without ever going anywhere near Norway.

“It’s all in their buying patterns and requirements, if you look at them the right way.” Anne had said. Anne believed their well-paying clients in Norway, who used the bank in Tromsø to funnel offshore payments, weren’t.....

“Sounds crazy, Anne.” He muttered. “But I think you’re right. They’re not human and neither is this Eugenie and her friends.”

Once said, albeit in a mutter, it felt easier to admit it to himself. The energy weapons that Lily Faria had been sending to Somalia had a weird design, his own tech people had confirmed it. They were designed to disrupt a certain kind of DNA, one not found anywhere on the planet. The energy weapons the group in Norway were buying in large numbers would kill ordinary everyday people. But they too were specifically designed to kill creatures who didn’t exist on planet Earth. The conclusion was impossible, but the only one that explained the evidence.

“They’re all aliens and they’re getting kitted up for a war.” He muttered.

No writing that down, even the most loyal members of his team was likely to question his judgement. Crap, Gareth was beginning to wonder about his sanity. Nick Teems, his head of security, had known him for years. Even him though, would he accept the unthinkable ? They’d once joked about all the people from Knowheresville Kentucky, who think aliens travel thousands of light years, to abduct them.

“He’ll have to know eventually.” Gareth muttered.

He scooped up all the printed transcripts and placed them in his briefcase. A quick text to his driver and there was a promise to be outside in ten minutes. Security were in a different building to interrogation, a building owned by a different part of his corporate conglomerate. Every area of the business kept separate from every other corporate entity. It was similar to a terrorist cell structure, though the Lee’s had used to it to minimise corporate espionage, and the likelihood of anyone knowing too much about the illicit side of their empire. Do a little transfer pricing and it was also a good structure for minimising taxation, though that was just a pleasant side effect.

“I can get Nick to deploy intelligence teams in Norway.” He muttered. “He doesn’t need to know exactly why, not yet.”

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Ruby had worried about privacy on the huge aircraft, but the Antonov had plenty of small compartments. There was even a bedroom with bunkbeds, for when a second crew was required on long haul flights. She'd claimed the small room as her own, mainly for somewhere private enough for meetings. Max was there and Kallina, but no one else. Ruby had learned over the years that the top-level strategic planning couldn't be agreed by consensus. There was a danger of it becoming an anarchic shambles. The three of them were the war cabinet, the ones to make the important decisions. There was a map of the area around Oman spread across one of the beds.

"So, where do we go once we leave Muscat?" Asked Max.

There was a problem with Max knowing her plans, even if she did want him to agree to them. Her mind was a locked vault to Sophie and the other wunderkinds, as was Kallina's. Max though, was a different story. Charlie in particular had been known to fill an information vacuum by using her gifts to look into the minds of others. They'd all vowed not to, though Ruby knew that deep down, they were all like curious children. If Charlie didn't look into Max's mind, Sophie would, or maybe Nari. Not that them knowing everything was terrible, but if they didn't like her decisions, they'd argue with her. No use avoiding it, Max had to know where she wanted to take them. Luckily the pilot gave her a good excuse to avoid speaking.

'We've just received clearance to take off.' He said over the tannoy. "Those who want to should buckle up.....We're about to hurtle down the runway."

Ruby had noticed that pilots on such aircraft, had a quite a relaxed attitude to some areas of safety. A civilian passenger jet had strict rules about seat belts and folding trays away. On military cargo jets, you could decide whether seat belts were your thing, or not. The plane had been towed to a waiting area earlier, but now it seemed to be taxiing under its own power. The engines growled and the wheels rumbled over what felt like rough ground. The noise was already making talking difficult and was likely to get worse.

"Nice to be leaving Aden." Yelled Max. "It felt like we were a sitting target."

"Yes, Muscat will be far safer." Shouted Ruby.

A little lurch to one side, as the engines went wild for a second or two. The worst part was having no windows, none at all in that part of the aircraft. The only clue to what was happening was the rumbling of the wheels and the occasional high-pitched screech of the jet engines.

"Shout Ruby, where do we go after Muscat?" Yelled Max.

Maybe the noise and being jolted about was a good thing? It would stop endless rows over the minutiae of her plans.

"Baku, for more supplies. We're also meeting people there." Ruby Shouted.

Max and Kallina both nodded in agreement. Not that she'd escape the twenty questions, once the aircraft was in level flight and relatively quiet. At least they both liked the idea of Baku though. A city with more than its own fair share of problems, but also heaps of charm. The Antonov stopped sharply, as the pilot pushed hard on the brakes.

"Here we go." Yelled Kallina.

Ruby grabbed the metal frame of the bunk beds and held on tight. The acceleration was incredible, as the large cargo plane hurtled along the runway. It seemed a long time until the rumbling of the wheels stopped, meaning the quarter of a million-kilo aircraft was off the ground. The roar of the jets decreased dramatically, once they stopped climbing.

"That.....Was quite enjoyable." Said Kallina.

"So Ruby, who are we picking up in Baku?" Asked Max.

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Delmar had flown quite a bit over the years, but the huge cargo plane was nothing like a civilian jet. The noise and vibration were louder and there was no inflight entertainment system. Actually, there wasn't even a designated seat with a seat belt. Rickety looking seats with belts lined the outer walls, but they were on a first come, first served basis. Not that there were arguments about who got them, nearly everyone had been content to grab hold of something solid looking, as the Antonov climbed out of Aden and headed east.

"You're looking a bit pale, Delmar." Said Nari. "I think Luca has some travel sickness pills."

"Those things always make me drowsy." He said. "I'd rather risk throwing up than being spaced out until we reach Norway. Do you know where we're going?"

"No, but I'm sure the pilot knows. We're heading east, so my guess is Oman, or maybe Dubai."

It was ridiculous, they'd only been on level flight for ten minutes, yet his guts were feeling bad.

There was a film of sweat too, right across his face and neck. There was also the general feeling of malaise, that he knew wasn't just from travel sickness.

"Crap Delmar, you need to see Doc Luca, she'll sort you out." Said Nari. "You look dreadful."

"I'll be fine and it's not just being in this flying college dorm."

Delmar had put some thought into where to drop his memory foam on the floor and call the spot home. Logic told him the centre of the plane was going to be the bit that bobbed and lurched about the least. Not that the Antonov was unstable, it just felt that way to him. Being right in the centre of everyone, had its drawbacks. Mainly there was zero privacy. When Nari raised her eyebrows and looked at him, expecting him to explain, he said nothing.

"I get it, come on.....I'm not taking no for an answer." Said Nari.

When Nari became a little intense, she could be scary. Delmar didn't resist as she dragged him out of the dorm area and onto one of the rickety seats along the wall. The privacy was never going to be perfect on an aircraft full of telepaths, but Nari had obviously decided it would have to do.

"Talk to me, Delmar." She said. "Is this about Anna?"

"Of course, it's about Anna. Everyone went on and on about Doc. How bad he must be feeling, how terrible it would be for him to hear about it. Anna and I had been lovers since Paris, yet I was supposed to carry on as usual.....It's just.....Not fair."

Ruby had understood, at least a little. She'd given him a sisterly kind of hug, which had been nice.

Nari didn't hug him, but she held his hand, entwining her fingers through his.

"I'm sorry, everyone thinks.....We all thought it was just a fling." Said Nari. "Did you love her?"

"I'm not sure, but I think so. We never did work out where it was going. It mattered though and I'm not alright. I doubt if I'll be alright for quite some time." He said.

"People are feeling awkward and uncomfortable, Delmar." Said Nari. "Anna wasn't killed because she made a mistake, or wasn't good at what she did. Anna caught a stray bullet and any of us could catch one too. That makes her death awkward to talk about. It's not you, they know you cared about her."

Nari kissed him, a kiss on the lips that was so quick, it shocked him.

"That's not an invitation." Said Nari. "That is about as intimate as you and I will ever get. This evening we'll almost certainly be on the ground, somewhere. I suggest you and I get a bottle of something decent and drink it until we pass out."

"Will that make me feel better?" He asked.

"No, the hangover the next morning will be terrible. But.....There isn't much else to do on this plane."



Nari laughed and he joined in. Nari had spent most of her life in a village cut off from the rest of the world. She had been known to say some very strange things. But talking to her had made him feel better, just a little.

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Penny liked to watch cheesy TV in the evening, though it was usually ten thirty or eleven, by the time she relaxed on the sofa. Usually something old on cable TV or a streaming service. Her ideal shows were cop shows from the seventies and eighties. Lots of action with no real plot to worry about. No real character development, but she had enough characters to deal with at work.

“Oh, don’t be an idiot.” She muttered at the TV. “Drop the gun and the bad guy will grab it.”

Which of course the bad guy did, just a minute or so later. Lots of flaws, yet easy watching after a long day at the Polandrous Foundation. Penny had even picked up a few regular phrases, like leave it out Guvnor, or calling everyone guvnor rather than boss. Usually by one in the morning, her eyelids were closing and she was ready for bed. Guvnor had been told to leave it out at least four times and it had to be close to midnight, when Penny heard a motorbike pull up outside.

“Who the hell is that ?” She muttered.

Opening the curtain just a little, revealed a young man getting off a large motorbike. A serious looking motorcycle, though she had no idea of the make. George had told her about messengers turning up at his house, when he’d been the UK head of the foundation. They’d often turned up at weird hours, as though it was the most normal thing in the world. It appeared that with all the clever stuff GCHQ had at their disposal, a young guy on a bike, carrying a package, was still the most secure way to deliver certain kinds of information.

“It’ll be telegram boys on BSA Bantams next.” She muttered. “Something from Foxy I bet, or maybe that young man of Ruby’s.”

It never crossed her mind that the man coming up to her door meant her any harm. Crooks and hoodlums weren’t likely to drive up on noisy bikes at midnight. Nor were they likely to walk up to her door holding a jiffy bag. Penny was behind her door, waiting to open it, the instant he rang the bell. George was used to excitement, but to Penny, it was all new and a little bit like the movies.

“Are you Penny Green ?”

“Yes, I am.”

He never asked her to keep still, before he aimed a phone at her. Actually, it was the same size as an iPhone, but it probably wasn’t a phone. He seemed to scan her face, before the device beeped. Her ID must have been confirmed, he smiled as he handed over the jiffy bag.

“No reply is required....Have a nice evening.” Said the young man.

George had codewords to prove he was himself, the genuine article. Penny hoped she’d get codewords, eventually. She took the jiffy bag into the kitchen and emptied the contents over the breakfast bar.

“Oh, I know that face.” She muttered.

Half a dozen black and white photos of the man known as Razors. Why black and white and not colour ? She had no idea, though maybe that worked better at night. All the pictures were of the man walking along a street, with another older man. Every picture was taken in the dark, night time in a city, probably London. There was a sheet of A4 paper with the pictures, with a few very neat words written on it, in blue marker pen.

‘We know where he is.

We won’t lose him.’

Penny sighed and knew she was going to sleep better that night.

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