

Three

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Chapter 1

Sirens, trains and cars all seem to try and make the loudest noise in the multitudes of background sounds that compliments the city skyline. The sun has departed Kuwait, leaving everything and everybody that is left behind to fend for themselves in yet another long lonely night for many.

James Anderson has been staying next to the subway for the better part of ten years – alone in a flat on the 4th floor in a typical rundown apartment building. He is so very used to the noise; in fact he is not even aware of it anymore. The city hustle is only heard by visitors and newcomers. Old folk hardly ever realise that it is there. They are all so shut in their own worlds, each of them desperately trying to stay out of harm's way. Even though the war ended years ago, reminisces still remains engrained in the population.

These city inhabitants are desperately trying to make a decent, honest living and in James' case, doing that means being a freelance crime investigative journalist - A detective that captures the details of a crime and then publishes photos and articles in the tabloids. Typically he would inform the authorities just before a paper with a solid story goes to print so that the guilty parties can be brought to justice. This profession makes him a well-known figure amongst the local police circles.

Just returning to his apartment a couple of minutes ago, he is standing in a pair of shorts in front of his fridge and he seems troubled by the fact that the milk cannot seem to get out of the carton and into his throat quick enough. Apart from the week old milk carton and a few half empty cans of what can only be described as decaying matter, the fridge is

empty. They should really rent out rooms with only beds in them for people like James – People who dwell the streets at night, capturing the greyness of the city and looking for the sad stories so that they can make a living out of the suffering of others.

“What on earth is going to get the better of me tomorrow?” This question shoots through his head just as he falls down on the bed, remote control in his hand, scanning through endless channels that really do not provide anything useful at all.

The flashback of that dreadful day pre-empted this question in his mind – it seems as if the horrid has a habit of finding James and really messing him up.

Imagine being forced to walk down a mine field where small flags on wooden masks and pieces of dark red cloth indicate the location of the old land mines that lies silent, waiting in the dirt. Imagine having to do this blindfolded. Imagine hearing a click below your left foot and your knee touching what can only be one of these flags. What must go through a person’s mind in such a situation?

It is fascinating how deep the survival instinct of man lies within the core of his psyche. At that point in time the prisoner must have decided that he would have a better chance of survival with the sniper they pointed out to him before he was blindfolded. With fear clearly visible in his face, he turned around and ran as fast as he could.

“Stop”! Cried James before he reminded himself of the conditions of his visit to the camp – “No interference in our

ways” said the man, the commander of an underdog alliance by the name of Banda who had a dark eerie tone to his voice. Clearly he was not a man of many words. His sense of calmness was surprising, given the tense situation he found himself in.

The echo of James’ voice was overwhelmed by the single .5 Calibre shot coming from the watch tower where the sniper was sitting. Silence came over the camp as everybody stopped in their tracks and all eyes were on the prisoner who fell down on his stomach, face in the dirt. A single gunshot wound could be seen at the back, right in the middle of the blindfold that surrounded his head. A pool of blood could be seen slowly growing in size as more and more blood flowed from the wound in the man’s face.

James spent the last 10 seconds focussing on his camera, shooting what must have been a hundred photos. One of them capturing the prisoner just as the bullet entered the back of his head and the blood in his brain making way for the large piece of lead which pierced through his skull faster than the speed of sound. It is said that people who die in this way doesn’t even hear the shot – the bullet reaches the victim shorter time as what it takes for the sound of the shot to travel to the –then already dead- victim.

Just as the dust settled in the camp and after what seemed to be hours, a deep, satisfied, almost hysterical laugh cried out in the watch tower that housed the assassin. The soldier who had the wooden stick in his with which he convinced the blindfolded prisoner that he stepped on a landmine also started laughing shortly afterwards, followed by more and more of the soldiers in the camp.

All the laughter is quickly silenced by the words from the commander:

“Hey! You! With the camera! Show us your pictures” Shouts Banda. It took James about 2 seconds to be in a state that he is able to register that they are actually talking to him. “Oh yes. I’m coming”. He released his camera from the stand, wiped the dust of it and started looking through the images himself as he slowly and carefully walks over to Banda.

“Oh yes. They are nice. Go show the world that we do not take prisoners, and if we do, they don’t last long. These foreigners need to disappear from our land. Go! Quickly, before you also lie in the sand.” were the last words that was spoken to James before he left the camp, never to return again.

The journalist of the year award was nice to receive. That moment James was called to the podium is something he will never forget. He still remembers the way they showed that photo on a big screen as he was walking towards the podium.

It was equally rewarding to spend the prize money on a new camera. The only downside to this was the pain of seeing how this drama unfolded in front of his eyes and having to deal with it for the rest of his life.

After returning from this ordeal, James was never really the same person again. After the press lost focus in the event and the resulting photo, after his phone stopped ringing with

all sorts of people congratulating him is when the nightmares started.

In these flashbacks of the event that he experienced, it would often occur that characters in the story would be replaced by people he knew in real life. Sometimes his mother was lead through the mine field, other nights we would wake up in a cold sweat just as his father told him to go and show the world how they deal with prisoners. He would very often wake up screaming in the middle of the night after this short time spent in Sierra Leone.

Chapter 2

Last night was not one of those nights. A familiar sound of his alarm is doing the job waking him up today. As James slowly wakes up, he notices the sun shining through a small opening in his curtains and he feels a positive notion as a result of having a good night's rest for once in a very long time.

9:31 is the time on his wrist watch as he looks at it with his eyes still not fully open. How nice is it to work for myself? – He thinks as most people are already in their small cubicles in high rise office buildings, performing the same mundane jobs over and over again. After a quick run through of the fixed routine of waking up, getting showered and dressed, James slams the front door of his flat shut and makes his way to the lift.

He presses the down arrow and while he is waiting for the lift door to open up, his mind is proactively planning the day. He only has a couple of things to pick up in town and a late afternoon meeting with an editor, nothing really too serious that requires his attention today. He is planning on doing a familiar round through town that night to see if he can possibly pick up on a few leads.

His mind is brought back to reality as the door in front of him opens up, revealing an empty lift. James quickly disappears into the lift and makes his way down to the parking lot. As he gets out of the lift, he approaches his pale blue car from the rear.

Being very fixed in his ways, he always opens his trunk first, places his bag on the left of his boot, closes the trunk and

then walks around to the driver side. As he gets into the car, he realises that in front of him, on the bonnet of the car is a very peculiar looking object. He stops what he was busy with and stares at it in total amazement.

“Those damn kids again” he concludes as being the source of the break in his routine. He quickly gets out of his car and scans his surroundings for traces of the origins of the small fake finger on the bonnet of his '82 Chevy. As he approaches, he makes up his mind that he would simply knock it off the car and get back into his routine.

He prepares himself to simply knock the fake finger from his car with a flick of the hand that would almost be unnoticeable by anybody that might be watching him. He leans his body across the car so that he doesn't have to walk too far to get the job done, and just as he wants to flick the finger off, he takes two steps back in total amazement:

“But it's not a fake finger – it is damn real! What the hell? Let me phone Conway!” James ceases to think straight as he is stunned by this find. A Cell phone appears out of his pocket and Conway is clearly assigned on his quick dial list as he is able to make the call and get the phone to his ear in one very slick move.

“James, my buddy, how was your evening?”

“Conway, you need to come over quickly. I got to my car this morning and found a dismembered finger on my bonnet dude – for real”

“What?”

"I kid you not! I am standing in front of my car looking at a finger! It just lies there! What should I do?"

"I'm coming. Let me see if there is somebody from forensics that can come along."

After the call James quickly scans the parking lot for signs of life. "Luckily it is late in the morning. How silly would it look if I just stand here staring at a damn finger on my car?" Curiosity gets the better of him and he leans forward, hands behind his back, to have a closer look. The fingerprints on this small finger are very clearly visible due to the presence of blood that practically covers the whole finger. It is as if the blood flowed in-between the grooves of the finger print so every crease can be seen clearly.

Apart from the blood and the fact that it seemed to have lost its body, there is nothing really special about this finger. Why was it now actually this finger that made its way to James' car and not another finger – one with a special characteristic that could explain the reason why?

This is what makes him so good at what he does. Normal people would wonder how the finger got there, but James rather focuses on why it is that specific finger that it is that crossed his life. The obvious things about it either being a random act or being placed there on purpose are things that he had figured out in his mind in a couple of seconds. James has the ability to look at things through a completely different view point and it is a gift that has served him very good in the work he does.

“This could be my next big break!” He says to himself while he takes his camera bag out of his trunk and proceeds to shooting the finger from every angle possible. “Pity I cannot move the finger to a location on the bonnet where I can get a better shot. Maybe I should move the car? No wait – this is a crime scene. I need to leave it as it is” he argues with himself on how to improve the photo quality.

Not once was he emotional about this whole thing. Being in the business of finding criminals and catching them in the act for so many years must have turned his stomach into rubber as James can take it all! This even holds true for cases such as these where it hits close to home.

His eye notices a car moving into the parking garage and immediately looks in the direction where the car is coming from. James quickly recognises the car and the driver, but the passenger has him intrigued.

The car is a typical long, black, Government Issue type of unmarked vehicle. This is a typical car for a tax collector or a police inspector alike. The long chrome parts along the length of the car reflect the outlines of the pillars in the parking lot as the car enters slowly though the driveway.

Why did Conway ask such a gorgeous forensic detective to escort him to James’ place? Clearly the fan inside the car is turned on as the car is moving slowly but the outer edges of the ladies hair is blowing softly in the wind.

“James, let me introduce you. This is Candice, our early bird forensic expert” “Hi Candice. Well, there it is – haven’t touched a thing. I’ll come with you to the station to do the

paperwork” is James’ reply to the introduction. He feels uneasy in the presence of beauty and that is why he focused all attentions back to the finger lying on his car.

“June 24th, 2007. 344 Al Arabi Street, Mansouriya. 10:13. A dismembered finger is placed neatly on the bonnet of a car in the parking lot. Car was standing on the edge of the parking lot, so it could be that the finger was thrown onto the bonnet from outside, but there are no signs of localised blood spatter or markings on the bonnet...” Candice continues to record notes into the small voice recorder as she starts to sum up the crime scene.

James and Conway proceed to a wider area based investigation of the parking lot. Conway is inquiring on the possibility of a security system being present.

“There is the camera, but it hasn’t been working for years. We should go and find the tenants list from the land lord so that we can go through them and check for witnesses or suspects”

“James, you cannot be involved in this investigation because of the finger being on your car. I will deal with this okay.”

An hour later the whole parking lot is cordoned off as there were numerous footprints visible in the layer of dust that is present where the cars don’t normally drive. There are a total of nine members of the police force busy gathering evidence, pulling finger prints from James’ car, scanning the road outside, lifting footprints and making notes. It seems as if the whole exercise is merely driven by protocol as nobody is taking it too seriously.

“What do you think happened here?” asks James with a low voice as he steps on his cigarette butt outside on the street where he is now surrounded by three detectives who would rather spend their time speaking to their mate James than assist with the investigation. “You managed to get yourself fingered!” Sais one of them and group bursts out laughing in a typical male type of way. Conway interrupts the laughter with a soft voice

“It was intentional. Maybe not intentional that it should be on your car, but it was placed there as a sure sign. That would be my bet. We should have prints lifted off the finger in the next hour or so and then we’ll know. Murderers leave fingers as signs when they want us to know who they are targeting. They could just as easily have left an ear or something else that doesn’t have prints on.”

“That is a very wise observation. So you’ll let me know later today?”

“No. It will all be kept confidential.”

James feels a sense of being side tracked by Conway but he understands that is all about being professional in the job. Nothing is left to chance and nothing is ever done by Conway that would jeopardise the outcome of his investigations – Ever!

“Can I go with you to the station? I suspect that my car will have to stay here for most part of the day while the team wraps up the work on the scene”

“Get in.”

At the station, Conway throws his car keys on his desk, moves around and falls down in his chair.

"OK, you woke up this morning at.."

"Nine thirty"

"Then what?"

"I got up, took a shower, and went down to my car."

"And?"

"This will take too long. Give me that file – let me fill in the statement for you.

"OK – details please..."

Conway slides the brown empty file over to James with a black pen on top.

"I'll be back now..."

"OK."

He walks out of his office and presses the upward pointing arrow next to the lift door. He turns around and stares as James who quickly took the pen and started writing. It is clear that all the information is still fresh in James' head as he doesn't pause to think about what happened. He is simply writing the statement as it is. If James was busy cooking up a lie, he would have paused at times to make sure the facts given makes logical sense...

The sound of the lift stopping causes Conway to turn around and start walking into the lift. He has to pause as the lift door is not yet fully open.

The lift is empty, he gets in and the doors of the lift closes, breaking eye contact between these two old friends.

“Any news on the finger found this morning?”

Conway asks as he exits the lift on the forensics floor. A young rookie in the corner quickly gets up with a file in his hand.

“Male, Caucasian, late thirties – it was a left pinkie. The finger was severed close to the hand with a blunt cutting action. It was probably a large knife with a thick blade. The weapon was similar to a machete but with a wider blade perhaps? The bottom bit of the bone broke as the cut was made. It was a cutting action and not chopped off, markings on the bone proves this. It must have happened between one and four this morning. We don’t know yet whether the man was alive or dead at the time when the finger was removed. All we know is that flow of blood to the finger stopped at between one and four.”

“Anything else?”

“There was one military style boot print found in the dust close to the car, but it can belong to anybody. The parking lot is accessibly by the public remember”

“Yeah, I know. Please keep me posted will you?”

“OK sir.”

Down at the office James is still in the process of writing down every small detail of what happened when he is distracted by Conway who is leaning over his shoulder, reading what is written on the piece of paper.

"Is that it? You came, you saw, you took pictures. Nothing else that you can remember that might be of relevance?"

"Not that I can think of at this moment."

"Well okay then. Ask that man to take you home, I've got lots to do"

As James leaves the office, Conway's first action is to pick up the phone and call Candice.

"Hey Conway..."

"Listen, James has left the station. If he interferes with your work, you call me right."

"Ok I will. There is something you need to know. We found two more"

"What, footprints?"

"No you dumbass, we've found hundreds of footprints in this dusty old place. We found two more fingers. One was nicely tucked in behind the front-left wheel of the same car and the other was balanced on top of the door going to the stairs that leads up to the foyer. One of my inspectors wanted to take a leak and the finger fell down in front of him as he opened the door. Maybe you need to come down here..."

"I'm on my way. And keep that James character away from your scene or you might end up being on the cover of one of those damned tabloids tomorrow morning."

Chapter 3

"What's your name son?" Conway asks the frightened young investigator where he stands next to Candice.

"Me? My name? Hmmm. Inspector Murray Sir."

"Yes I can see that on your uniform dammit. I asked for your Name!"

"Oh yes. It is Andy Sir"

"Right Andy. You found the third finger, correct?"

"Yes Sir. There, on top of that door."

He points out in the direction of the door and Conway can see that the man is taking this ordeal badly as he is shaking quite heavily.

Anything particular or out of the ordinary?

No, not really. The only thing that was weird was the placement of the finger – neatly in line with the door so that nobody could see it, but it was definitely the idea for the finger to fall to the ground when somebody closed the door. I suspect that this was a purposeful act and then the person who left the finger there expected somebody specific to go through the door. The lifts go all the way down to the parking lot, so there would only be specific cases where the stairs would be used.

"Very good Son. Keep up the good work - Candice, the second finger?"

"Interesting, let me show you"

She leans down downwards to the wheel and points to the inside of it through one of the gaps in the old metal rim.

“It wasn’t on the ground. It was made to rest on the inside of the wheel – over there. It is almost as if it was planned that the finger would fall out when the vehicle was being driven.”

“Hmmm, What do you make of this?”

“Don’t really know. It took us a while to spot it. In fact, it was picked up by somebody at the lab who saw it on one of the photos we sent through.”

She steps away from the wheel just as her phone started ringing with a very formal unpleasant ring tone. It was even more boring than the standard tone that those phones normally has as a standard.

“Speak to me... Yes... And... Okay. Thank you”

She slams the phone shut and forces it into her pocket as she starts explaining to James.

“It was the lab. All three fingers belong to the same person - all from the left hand. The thumb and index finger are not included in the package though.”

“I see”

“Quite a cute fellow hey.”

“What, who? The guy who’s fingers we are picking up?”

“No man. I’m talking about James your friend. He is good looking.”

“Maybe so, but let me tell you – he is a complete nut case. He was subjected to some seriously sick shit in his life - totally messed him up. He must be seeing about seven different types of shrinks currently. I always say to him that he is so weird the shrinks must be using him as a P.H.D. Study subject. Let’s go have a word with him and please don’t tell him anything about the case”

They slowly proceeded towards the open lift, pressed the ‘four’ button and the lift closed on front of them.

“Go away! I’m sleeping!” was James’ first response as they knocked on the door.

“It’s me. Open up”

“Oh, I’m coming”

As he opens up the door wearing only a pair of shorts he wipes his eyes with his right fore-arm. At first he startles as he notices Candice also standing in his doorway with a slight smile appearing in the corner of her mouth as she notices a perfectly well formed six-pack on his exposed body.

“Are you done with my car?”

He immediately jumps to the case at hand so that he doesn’t have to deal with the beauty and the resulting thoughts of the person, only the reason why she is here.

"Yeah, we're pretty much done downstairs. Can we come in?"

"Oh yes. How rude of me. Please do come in, excuse the mess. You know how it is with bachelors"

He leads the way, picks up a cushion from the floor, and gives it a couple of shakes to get it in form. He puts it down on the couch and points to Candice.

"Have a seat. What time is it? I was so tired after I got up from the parking lot that I had to take a nap."

"It is almost five already"

"Oh hell, did I sleep for two hours?"

"Maybe?"

"It is amazing how stress can just drain the life out from a person."

"James, you need to understand that the details of the case cannot be shared with you in any way. It seems as if you are being targeted by somebody."

"Look, I understand that. Do you think the finger is a warning of some kind?"

"Three." Sais Candice without thinking clearly.

"Three what? Fingers?"

"Yes James, we found a total of three dismembered fingers. Two of them were on your car. The reason why they were

there still needs to be investigated, but it might be safer for you to stop getting on criminals' cases for a while okay."

"Well, what am I supposed to do? Start working in a fast food joint? This is my life, the way I make a living"

"Yes, and if you're not careful it might also be the way you end your life. We are concerned for your safety."

James realised where this going and very quickly became defensive at idea if him being put in a protection programme.

"I understand and appreciate your concern, but I am going nowhere okay. I will stay where I am and do the work that I love doing. In any case, I am yet to find out of a murderer who scares his next victim by pointing the previous victim's fingers at him – so to speak".

"Joke all you want James, but this is serious. You have a point – this case seems unlike anything we came across in the past. It is the unknown element that scares us."

Candice feels as if she is not even in the room due to the way these two guys are discussing matters all by themselves. She makes an attempt at getting noticed by first clearing her throat and then saying: "Phew, look at the time. Maybe we should move this conversation to a place where we can get something to eat?"

"No thank you. I've got to get ready for work"

"What do you do?"

“Same as you really, only I don’t arrest them. I take photos of their actions, notify the cops and then publish the article shortly afterwards in tabloid newspapers.”

“And am I right in saying that you are working on a case?”

“Well, I was - until today’s ridiculous finger placement exercise. I now have a brand new case altogether. Let’s see who gets him first! If you’ll excuse me, I need to get going”...

Chapter 4

James must be doing only 15 miles per hour as he drives down Mohammad Bin Al Qasim Street. A thin line of sunshine is still on the horizon and rays are split up by the high buildings outlining the city skyline. There is lots of dust in the air which is caused by the bustle of city folk who all seem to try and get home after a long hot days' worth of work. On one side of the street is an old lady walking around with a tray of dried fruit and various other things which she is trying to sell. Nobody hardly even notices as her as she tries to get people to see what is on offer. She seems almost desperate to get some of her stuff sold.

He is making his way to the outskirts of town where criminals and the like normally hide in small rooms and alleys. His eyes fall upon the old lady and they stare at each other for a couple of seconds as his moving car forces him to focus on something else. Both James and the old lady are equally out of place in their surroundings. James is a foreign citizen staying in Kuwait and general western dress very often seems weird to the local people and attracts the attention of people and especially ladies who stare. Maybe they long for western freedom, who knows?

The old woman doesn't fit in where she is either. Although she is clearly a local, the fact that she is trying to sell merchandise amongst all the people rushing to get home does make her look different. As he drives past, he looks at her again, this time in his rear view mirror and notices that she has started talking to a man who seems interested in what she has to sell. An exchange of money occurs, but James didn't notice what he actually bought from her.

A sudden flashback of Sierra Leone, but with the old woman running blindfolded from the small mine field and being shot in the back of her head forces him to sway his head in in the opposite direction. His eyes are blinded by the sun on the horizon. "Just drive dammit..."He is frustrated by the fact that wherever he looks, there is something which makes him uncomfortable. He starts to focus only on the car in front of him and drives off.

Reaching the outskirts, he moves his focus back to the side of the road, which is now a lot quieter. All the people have gone and only a couple of lost souls are still dwelling the streets after dark. These people who are still outside have no real sense of direction. They do not seem to be doing anything or actually going anywhere. One man is leaning against a shop front smoking a cigarette while another is sitting with his back against a street pole just staring into the far distance.

The car slowly comes to a standstill in a parking spot next to the road. Moments later, the car and the lights are switched off. There is deafening silence as James is sitting completely still. His mind is so busy contemplating what has happened that day that he decided to stop as he is not concentrating on his surroundings in any case.

Damn, that woman is hot. Why three fingers and not a whole hand? Why his car? Why today? Where is the rest of the person's body? Can he still be alive somewhere? What is Conway not telling him? Where were the other two fingers hidden? Did anybody in the apartment block notice anything?

The only thing that he does know is that the woman who was with Conway earlier that day is extremely attractive. She also comes across as highly intelligent and very successful. His mind drifts into an underworld of visions of him and Candice being together...

He is awakened by the sun appearing in the sky and shining directly into his eyes. It took him a couple of seconds to realise where he is. He sits up straight and explores his surroundings and quickly come to realise that the street where he parked last night now has a totally different feel to it. There is more activity, mostly visible near the houses as women are cleaning and many of them are clearly busy doing laundry. In this hot dry place it takes only a couple of minutes for something to dry when it is hanged out on the washing line. Laundry is thus only visible for an hour or two in the early mornings.

He gets his car in motion as he slowly makes his way back home through the city. As he pulls into his garage, he realises that he is immensely tired even though he slept for most of the night. He considers phoning his doctor for sleeping pills, but decides against it as he did that before and almost ended up being an addict after two months of constant use. He makes his way up to his apartment without even taking his camera out of his car and falls down on his bed. Once again, he ends up sleeping for most of the day.

Chapter 5

James awakes just as the 9 O'clock news is about to start and is sitting up straight in his bed to pay close attention to the headlines of the day. Local news bulletins on television and stories in newspapers are a valuable source of information for people on his line of work.

The headline story deals with a confrontation amongst politicians about fiscal policies and the value of the local currency, neither of which is of much interest to James as he came to the conclusion early in his life that chasing after politicians in this place is much too dangerous for a one man show.

Later in the news is a story about a female body that was found in the western outskirts of the city. James' mind wondered off in the meantime but his attention was drawn to the story the second the term 'severed fingers' were used by the newsreader. He immediately turned up the volume of his television and saw his friend Conway releasing a statement. "We are currently investigating a similar murder that happened in central Kuwait, but under different circumstances. These two incidents happened in a very short period of time and there are too many similarities to be discounted as pure coincidence. In the one case we found three male fingers and in this instance the body was found, but three fingers were severed and are missing from the body or the crime scene for that matter."

James rushed for his phone the minute the news bulletin finished and pressed the all-to-familiar speed dial button to reach Conway. While the call is initialised James does wonder whether he is not wasting his time making this call

seeing that he is most probably a suspect in this case. He prepares himself for his first words that really need to be convincing that it is merely an innocent search for conversation.

“Hi, you’ve reached the phone of Conway...” James ends the call immediately as he is not really in the mood to make idle conversation to a machine.

His head is full of thoughts, trying to tie up all of the loose ends which really make no logical sense. James gets up and without even thinking about it, he starts the all too familiar routine of getting showered, shaved, dressed etc.

He scans the bouquet of channels to find another news channel which is covering the story in more detail. As he pays close attention, he realises that the female corpse was found only a couple of city blocks away from the location where he had spent the night in his car. Without hesitation, he gets up, grabs his keys and rushes out of his apartment.

This time he does not take his time to observe his surroundings, he makes his way quickly to the exact same location as where he was parked the night before.

On the way to the outskirts of town, he has a flashback of that terrible day. The same sequence of events plays off in his mind, but as always, there is a twist to the actual flow of events.

There are multiple snipers in the building who all aims at and shoots the prisoner at once. Multiple bullet wounds and multiple pools of blood conclude the scene.

His attention is forced back to reality with a sudden stop by the taxi in front of him. He also stops, pauses a couple of seconds and then gets into motion again as the passenger got out of the car in front of him.

He realises that the people in the watch tower were actually himself, Conway and Candice. All of them were dressed in old, ran down army camouflage uniforms. They were fully kitted, each with an amazingly well looked after .5 calibre sniper gun. Each of them had a backpack, a pistol on their belts and also various other pieces of equipment such as compasses, knives, two radios etc. Why on earth would he be in the tower this time, accompanied by two people that he knows?

His car comes to a stop a couple of parking bays away from where he was the previous night. James turns the key out of the ignition, quickly gets out of his car, grabs his bag from the left of his boot and starts making his way into one of the alleys that begins in the main road. His mind is dwelling in the information that he received on the news bulletin and before he knew it, he was met by the familiar yellow police crime scene ribbon that prevents unlawful entry. His focus is on the surroundings and he realises that he is at the same location as where the shots were taken from that he saw on the news.

“Lucky me”. He considers himself quite fortunate to have come across the location so fast, given that he randomly walked around looking for it. Within the cordoned-off area, he notices a single cop busy cleaning the last bit of blood from the cobbles and James knows that apart from the clean-up, the on-site work was done.

Driven by instinct, he reaches for his camera and tries to be silent as he starts taking photos of the officer who is standing in the middle of the road, mopping up blood.

James pauses for a second to look at ways of taking photos from an alternate angle, maybe from up in one of the buildings that surrounds this street corner. As he looks up, on one of the roof tops, he notices a drop of blood dripping from the roof of one of the houses.

"There!!!" He gets the attention of the cop and points to the roof.

"On that roof. There is blood dripping from that roof."

"Are you James?" The cop asks in reply and this question totally amazes him.

"They told me that you might come. I need to inform the office. You stay here."

The officer makes his way to the building that James pointed out, climbs on a window sill and peeked over onto the roof.

"There they are - all three of them." The officer utters these words in a tone that indicates his satisfaction with his find.

He gets down from the window and turns his back to James as he reaches for his two way radio. James cannot hear what the officer is saying, but he doesn't really have to hear. He is pretty sure he knows what is being said.

A couple of seconds later the man puts away his radio, takes out his gun, points it towards James and starts speaking:

“I need to take you in. Put these on”.

James cuffs himself and starts walking towards the cop car parked on the opposite side of the street. The cop removed the barriers, throws them in a dustbin and follows shortly afterwards.

Chapter 6

“The time between the missed call on my mobile and the time you rocked up at my crime scene is only 43 minutes apart. Travelling from your apartment to that part of town takes at least 35 minutes. That leaves you with at most 8 minutes to find the crime scene. Distance from where your car was parked to the scene was over a mile. You were either very lucky, or you knew where the body was.”

The small room is as dull as can be. A camcorder is strategically placed in the corner, and a red light is indicating its status clearly to all who is sitting in the chair where James is finding himself. The small table has a grey, heavily scratched top. It is evident that the table has seen many confrontations in its lifetime as the only table in the interrogation room.

Conway is standing on the other side of the table, both hands stretched out and resting on James’ end of the table. Both his body language and the tone of his voice are very intimidating as he reveals fact after fact to James in an attempt to get him caught.

“How did you see a single drop of blood falling from a roof that was 15 meters away from where you were? Anybody else would have missed that totally.”

James quickly realises what technique Conway is trying to make use of and he is quickly bored by the psychological game that he knows all too well. His mind wanders into a new place where he finds himself more often these days – him and Candice, alone in an unfamiliar area with people nowhere to be seen.

Her hands are holding each other behind his neck, and she stops and takes a moment to thoroughly examine each part of him. She slowly bends his head downwards and finally moved closer to him so that he can feel her hair touching his face on his cheek. He moves his head so that he can smell the freshly washed hair and the cleanliness of the person who in his dreams managed to get so very close to him.

A photo that is dropped on the table forces him to concentrate to the situation he finds himself in – the damn interrogation room where he dreads the moment when Conway stops talking because he doesn't really have answers to all the questions that was posed to him.

The photo is of three fingers, placed in an upright position on a piece of corrugated roof sheeting. The pattern that is formed by the fingers seems familiar, but James cannot make out what exactly it reminds him of. Alongside the area where the three fingers are placed, are two lines of blood drawn in parallel to one another.

Some distance away from the two lines is another, fairly large blood mark, this time appearing like a number of drops that were left to drip onto the roof. It is this blood that eventually started dripping from the roof.

It takes another couple of minutes of constant questioning when James realises what he is looking at.

"I know him!" James interrupted Conway.

"The guy must have been at that minefield. The lines and the formation formed by the fingers are exactly the way the mines were laid out. Do you see? The two lines indicate the

ends of the mine field and that blood over there is where that poor old man got shot to death. I'm telling you; whoever did this was with me that day."

Conway was really expecting another response from James, but the obvious link that James pointed out was something that he couldn't ignore.

"Okay then. You need to start explaining yourself in detail".

James proceeded to telling Conway the course of events that saw him being captured in Sierra Leone while he was working as a tabloid photographer who sneaked into the country to take first-hand photos of how life was there after the war.

"There were stories of active cells still being operational, mostly ran by ideologists who could not make peace with the fact that they had lost the war. I was in a restaurant, when two men came in.."

The story continues to unfold with James telling how one man showed him a pistol and instructed him to accompany them with his camera. They travelled for 7 hours in a public bus before instructing the bus driver to stop. A further thirty minute walk finally got them to the camp.

James was thrown in a cell for two days without food. He was given water twice during the whole two days. Guards fetched him on the third morning and that is the day James saw the terrible execution of an innocent civilian man.

James proceeded to explain how the flags in the mine field represented the placement of the fingers on the roof and also

how he managed to take that photo that made him so famous.

“Looking back at it now, I would have rather stayed at home. The fame was not worth the pain”.

Those were James’ concluding statement. After about a minute of silence, Conway got up, stopped the camcorder and instructed James not to leave town.

“Come and see me again tomorrow okay.” James nodded as he left the office. He realises just how lucky he was to go home after that incriminating session. “My guess is that they will be watching me so better not go to work tonight”.

As he enters his apartment, he could feel his heart pounding in his chest and he could feel that the stress accompanied by the day is taking its toll.

He proceeds to putting on his running shoes, and a comfortable set of clothes. As he leaves his apartment, he starts taking a slow jog in the passageway. He opens up the door to the stairway and starts running up the stairs. He does this with a fast pace, making sure that he actually puts a foot on each one of the steps so that he could get his heart-rate going.

On the top floor, he turns around and starts heading down the same set of stairs. He reaches the fourth floor, but continues downwards.

Once he reaches the basement, he opens up the door that leads to the parking lot and heads out the parking lot for the rest of his 5 mile run.

His way back into the building is the exact opposite of how he left. He enters through the parking lot, takes the stairs to the top and then goes down to the fourth floor.

Once in his apartment, he proceeds to a cold shower and a fall-down on his bed with his remote in his hand, watching the news at nine.

Chapter 7

An unexpected knock on the door surprises James as he was just about to fall asleep on his bed. As he gets up, he scans his flat to make sure that everything is in order and puts away a couple of things that are out of place on his way to the door.

As he opens up the door, he is fairly amazed to find that it is Candice of all people who caused this interruption in his otherwise lonely existence.

“Before you get all uptight with me, let me just assure you that I am not here on official business okay. I made sure that nobody noticed me. I parked in the basement and came up with the staircase” was the unexpected start to a couple of minutes of confused conversation.

“Oh well, hello then. To what do I owe this visit then?” James is asking this question to try and find out if she is there with a hidden agenda. It could very well be that she was actually sent to try and find out if he is aware of anything or maybe even get him to confess to anything.

“Let me come in before somebody notices me,” Without saying a word, he takes a step backwards and points inwards with his left hand.

She makes her way into the dull flat and just as she is in, she quickly turns around and makes sure that he closes the door.

“Well, to answer your question, if I must be honest, I did sort of enjoy the sight of you the day you called Conway and we came over. The afternoon we visited you, I fell in love with

that perfectly formed six-pack on your stomach and I figured since we are both alone in this foreign city, that you could do with a bit of companionship”

“To be honest, you are also very good at making an impression on a lonely man such as me, but you need to understand that this situation could be very detrimental to your case. How do I know what your real intentions are? I mean, you just spent hours questioning me, and now this? How do I know that you are not wearing a listening device of some sort”?

While James is saying all of these things, Candice is looking at him with a wicked smile protruding from a corner of her mouth. Her face is giving away the fact that she has a plan that is well worked out.

“Well, the only way to make absolutely sure that I do not wear a wire is to make sure that I am also not wearing anything else” is the reply from Candice with a very subtle, soft voice.

James pretends as if he was suffering from a short deafness, and did not hear anything that was just said.

“Can I offer you anything to drink?”

“If you really have to, I’ll have a glass of red wine”

James walks over to a cabinet, takes out a fairly old bottle of wine which he received from one of his friends one evening as a gift for helping out at a function with some photographic work.

“This should be okay...” he reassures himself of her acceptance of the wine before proceeding to open up the bottle and pouring two glasses.

As he hands her the glass, she takes it, and as she slowly takes the first sip, she also makes her way to his patio and opens up the windows.

Half of the view is spoiled by an adjacent high riser building, but to the left, the city night lights are clearly visible. She walks to the end of the patio, places the glass on the hand rail and places both her hands on the rail.

“What a lovely evening...”

“Yes, pity about the heat though.”

“I am also feeling very hot.”

Just after saying that, she turns around to face James, takes him by the hand and leads him into the room. He wants to reach for the patio door to close it, but she hints with her eyes for him not to. There is uneasiness between them as they enter his bedroom and she assures him that there are no wires involved...

Chapter 8

The usual 9'0 clock alarm does the job of waking James up. It takes him a couple of seconds to recall the absolutely wonderful night that he had and as he turns around, he notices that Candice had already left.

As he reaches for the remoter control of the television, he notices an out-of-place cup of coffee standing next to him on his bedside table. This is a treat that is often taken for granted by half of all married people – coffee in bed.

Cup in the one hand, remote control in the other, he switches on the television and the all-to-familiar news reader is sharing info regarding the latest findings on the murder case. This reminds James that he needs to head over to Conway, and this thought kicks off his usual routine of getting ready for the day.

Chapter 9

As James walks into the police station, he is greeted by two unfamiliar police officers.

"Please come with us sir." One of them politely shows James the way and he starts to walk through indicated passageway. James is not sure where this passage leads to as there is a closed door a couple of metres down.

A couple of steps into the passage, and the two men overpowers James with a quick action.

"Sir, we are placing you under arrest for the murders of the two victims found..." James' thought wonders of as he is lying on the floor in handcuffs.

This is actually no surprise to James seeing the session he had with them the previous day. The only thing that James is now not sure about is what the inconclusive evidence is that they might have. Yesterday it was all circumstantial.

The two officers take possession of all his belongings, issues him with a prisoner's uniform and places him in the same interrogation room as the day before.

He sits there in the room, motionless for what seems to be at least an hour before Conway makes an appearance. The professional cop in Conway took over his actions as James is not even greeted properly even though they've known each other for such a long time.

Conway makes his way to the table in haste, puts down his briefcase and takes out a thick light-blue file filled with various reports, photos and the like.

“It’s all here James. I spent the last twenty four hours in conversation with three of your psychiatrists. Each one of them had a piece of the puzzle, but nobody really had all the answers. The four of us spent the last two hours discussing you in depth and that is when we realised what was going on.

You suffer from a condition which, in its symptoms closely resembles multiple personality disorder. What makes this unique is that the personalities are very close to one another in terms of observed behaviour and it is also very weird that your name remained the same, regardless of the personality that was active.

Each one of the doctors also only ever came across one of the personalities, but the minute they started discussing you with one another, did they realise what was going on.

Let me explain this to you in more detail”

Conway spent the next three hours explaining the three known personality types to James in detail.

The first personality is the James whom Conway knows so well – the person who is obsessed with the world of crime. This is however not the true personality of James.

His true personality is actually slightly less independent and would have preferred to work for a fixed monthly income, have a wife and the proverbial 2.4 kids.

It is the third personality within James which was causing all the havoc in his life. The doctors guess that the switch to and from this personality typically occurred during sleep.

James would thus wake up and be a completely different person altogether.

The origin of this third personality is guessed to be as a result of James' mother or father and the way that he was treated as a child.

As James is sitting there, listening to how much Conway actually knows about him, he has a flashback to his childhood and specifically to an incident that he will most probably never forget. The surroundings of the memory are vague, but he remembers his father leaning over him pointing a finger to him in a very overpowering way:

"Remember son - Always remember that three fingers are pointing back to you when you are pointing a finger to somebody else. Don't blame other people for your actions or your own misery. Only you can change your world, nobody else."

He remembers many different occasions when these words were said to him by his father. The circumstances were always different, but the words were exactly the same:

"Remember son - Always remember that three fingers are pointing back to you when you are pointing a finger to somebody else. Don't blame other people for your actions or your own misery. Only you can change your world, nobody else."

James quickly turned all his attention to Conway when he started discussing the victims.

“The first victim was a male soldier in Sierra Leone who was trained as a sniper in the Special Forces. In his apartment, we found your famous photo up on the wall. I knew then already that there is a link between the two of you, but exactly what it was, I was not sure of.”

Conway proceeded explaining to James that the body of the soldier was found in his room, his fingers were cut off while he was still alive and then a single knife wound in the heart killed him eventually.

He proceeded on to explain that the lady was the wife of the late commander Banda who was shot in Sierra Leon a couple of weeks after James had left the country.

Further facts revealed that a book found in James’ car had details regarding the whereabouts of many of the people involved in the Sierra Leone incident in some way.

“It must have taken you years to gather all that information James”

“If only I knew how I did it...” were James’ last words to Conway before he was taken away to a jail where trail awaiting prisoners were kept.

“Candice will escort you to your cell...”