

## **CHEETAHS AND GAZELLES**

Charles Darwin would be perplexed -- Evolutionists murdering Creationists.

And vice-versa.

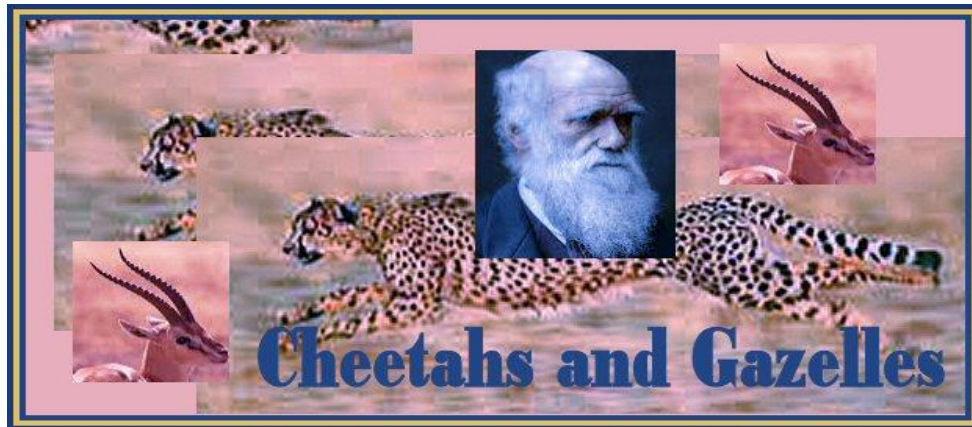
But all is not so clear ...

Can this problem REALLY be confined to  
cheetahs chasing gazelles, and gazelles out-running cheetahs?

Simone and Courtney (youngest daughters of Lisa and William Pendlebury)

work to solve the extraordinary murders  
alongside solid Detective Inspector Douglas Badger.

This is the sixth in the M'Couré series.



## ACT I

### **I, Introduction:** The Cheetah Stalks The Gazelle

*We start with grassland in Serengeti or some such African environment.*

*We are in the grass, close up.*

*Out of this gradually appears the head of the cheetah.*

*We feel the stealth and determined silence of the cat. It is stalking a small herd of grazing gazelles.*

*The cheetah steps forward on velvet paws.*

*However, the gazelle is aware, and nervous.*

*The cheetah is approaching stealthily.*

*The gazelle takes off.*

*The cheetah chases and then catches the gazelle. The cheetah kills the gazelle, then drags it off.*

### **I, Scene i:** The Drug Laboratory of Stephen, Linton And Nathan

(Wednesday June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2016)

*On a large TV screen, a nature study show trundles on. The men speak over this TV show as they work in the drug laboratory. Then gradually they come into view.*

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Nathan voice-over           What gent? Who rang you?

Stephen voice-over           Bumped into him at the races, matter of fact ...

*Nathan and Linton sound appalled.*

Nathan voice-over           What?

Linton voice-over           You have **got** to be joking!

Nathan voice-over           A racegoer – a coat-tugger?

Linton voice-over           Come on, my lad! Wakie-wakie!

Stephen *calming*           We found a secluded nook on the track (behind the fast-food eateries) where nobody could listen in. A deserted tote booth. Overgrown with ivy. That's all.

Nathan *suspicious*           Sounds just a bit crappy to my way of thinking.

Stephen *calming*           Don't get tetchy, my bonny boys. I made it clear to our racegoer that we **weren't** in the line of homicide. Not our style (I told him).

Linton *idea flashes*           It was Roth, wasn't it? Nobody else in London has that kind of gelt to spread about.

Stephen *calming*           We might very well be killing the peeps with our various pharmaceutical concoctions, but --

Nathan *forceful*           This is a wee portion of afternoon tea money (what we cook up here). What **he** was offering was a bespoke Saville Row suit and a luxurious Humber Keel houseboat. For each man.

Stephen *calming*           Didn't trust him.

Linton voice-over           A fucking punter wanted us to to do in 2 blokes for an extremely large chunk of stinking money. Well, I'm in. I'm very much in!

*Now the three men come into camera focus.*

*Nathan is in grave doubt. He ums and ahs. Only Stephen stands firm.*

*Linton reaches over to tweak a small piece of paper from Stephen's fingers. Linton quickly reads this paper.*

Linton voice-over                    Leslie Smart ... And his phone number. Thanks buddy. Ring him now.

*Linton waves the paper with a knowing wink.*

*Linton marches off, punching Smart's number into his phone as he walks.*

Stephen *warning*                    That number will change. He uses throwaways, of course. But see how you go.

*Suddenly, Nathan evidences concern at the sloppy way in which they are working.*

Nathan *urgent*                    Hey! Chemists are (you know) precise bitches. "Precise" is --

Stephen *smug*                    If we are to be involved with Leslie Smart's nasty little operation, then precision will be mandatory. I hope Linton Bilt understands that.

Nathan *continuing to carp at their work practices*                    Of all people (Steve) **you** should be telling **us** about the basic --

*Stephen jabs at a point behind his left knee with his right index finger.*

Stephen *speaks quickly*                    Nathe ... You are 100% correct! Murderers only get caught out because they're **careless**. If this is done right, there won't be one single doubt that Gentlysquashed went off the rails and O.D.'ed like any other junkie. Bilt has to aim directly for the soft skin behind his left knee. He was habitual ... Some are ...

Nathan                    Make sure that when you measure up the acid that you --

Stephen *continues as if uninterrupted*                    [*Sighs sadly*]

God I hate this shit!

Bloody shame! He used to be my best customer until they put

him on his last warning ...

*Nathan's eyes follow Linton's egress.*

Nathan *unsettled*            Maybe I should actually do the deed ...

*Just as quickly as he left the laboratory, Linton returns looking smug and confident.*

Linton *smug*                I'm in! It's tonight. So you gentlemen will have to excuse me.

Nathan                        Say! Maybe I should be the one to --

Linton *scathing*            Get out of here! You'll pussy-foot around. You'll go all sippy.  
You'd whimper: "Mother, forgive me!"  
  
Piss off! It's my trainwreck.

*Nathan is appalled at the imprecision. He seems to be genuinely upset.*

Linton                        That said, and all done to perfection (I trust) we'll discuss that  
other one which is less straight-forward.

Nathan *appalled*            Don't chuck it about like it's kitchen salt! D'you understand what  
I'm saying? There's a right way and a wrong way. What I'm  
seeing here is all wrong!

Linton                        They'll never know.

Nathan                        When they're dead they'll know.

Stephen *to Linton*            Murder! I can't (repeat **cannot**) be involved!  
  
Wear them latex gloves. Don't leave any prints!

*There is a dramatic pause as Nathan slams the table with his hand.*

Nathan *appalled*            Listen to us! Can you grasp it? We are talking about killing two  
fellow human beings as if ... I dunno ... As if this was writing-up  
a shopping list ...



*Nathan is putting the packets into neat rows.*

Nathan                                   How much will this little lot earn for us?

*Stephen appears to count mentally with the aid of his fingers.*

Stephen                                 If our clients come to the party and we all agree on what constitutes "fair and reasonable" ...

Nathan *hopeful*                       Ten grand?

Stephen                                 I'm looking at about 12 grand ... You're right. Feels like pocket-money. If --

Linton *nasty*                           If, if, if ...

*Nathan reaches across and grabs Linton's forearm.*

Nathan *exasperated*                 Linton! Are you up for this?

Linton *emotion-charged*         I have to be, don't I ... ? Since our esteemed pharmacist is lily-livered.

*Stephen glares at Linton, and then he shrugs dramatically.*

END OF SCENE

## **I, Scene ii:** Curtis Projects Ltd (Thursday June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2016)

*A large sign indicates the name of the company.*

*The office in which Perry Hancock works is large and spacious, filled with work benches and much equipment connected with paleontological studies. The sign indicating that Perry Hancock (Development) sits at this desk is made of laminated paper and is badly attached to the woodwork. Also in evidence are two or three battered and neglected golfing trophies.*

*Perry wears daggy clothes as he sits at his long desk. He breath-whistles as he labours to reconstruct the skull of an extinct artiodactyl (of the Bovidae family). An extant model stands nearby for comparison.*

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Damn! Okay ... See you later ...

*Winona drifts to the door, and then stops as the last of the titles rolls through.*

Winona                      He's not having those substance abuse problems again, is he?  
Daniel, I mean?

*For the first time, Perry stops working to address Winona.*

Perry                        No, he's been clean for over 6 months. If you want I'll ring him  
and find out what's up.

Winona *nods*                Thanks. Yes, if you wouldn't mind.

END OF SCENE

### **I, Scene iii:** The Mortuary, Littlemeeth (Friday June 24<sup>th</sup> 2016)

[This identification of Daniel Angestan's body is **NOT** revealed to the audience at this time. That will come later. For the moment, we shall be told only that the corpse's name is "Dan" and that he died of an unsuspecting drug overdose.]

*Judith Avery is in close-up. She is scared and anxious and holds a squashed-up hankie to her nose.*

*Jeremy Hurstbridge is the relief Pathologist who right now is in a filthy mood. So sour is he that he has completely thrown his usual caring bedside manner out of the window. He wears green scrubs.*

Jeremy                        Stand closer to this drawer.

*Judith obeys, looking about her in a scared manner. She is close to tears.*

*With savage determination, Jeremy slams open the mortuary drawer, unzips the top of the body bag and then flips back that part of the material covering the corpse's face. Judith gasps.*

Jeremy                        Is this your brother?

*Judith glances at the face of the dead man. She gasps, reacting to her shock with a quick backward step.*

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Judith *grief-stricken* Oh God! Yes that's Dan ... Oh my God!

He'd stopped shooting-up ... That's what he said. He promised!

*Jeremy visibly sneers. Without another word, Jeremy re-bags the body, and then violently slams the body back into its closed drawer. Peter Sunnegard watches, wide-eyed.*

Jeremy *addressing Peter* Mrs Avery has identified the corpse. Get her paperwork filled out.

*Jeremy stalks off. Peter and Judith are surprised. Judith begins to sob, taking recourse to her scrunched hankie. Peter is unsure what to do and looks about for guidance. There is none, as Anne Grace (the other assistant) has followed Jeremy. So, Peter has to assist Judith to the desk in order to comply with Jeremy's paperwork edict.*

Anne *very worried, addressing Jeremy* That was a bit harsh. I'll have to slip a word to Doctor Kamar that you were short with a distressed client. You can't treat them like that, you know.

Jeremy *through clenched teeth* Just another dead druggie whose family will wonder for the rest of their days where they went wrong. They all make me sick!

Anne *gently* All the more reason to be kind to Mrs Avery.

*Jeremy is angrily stripping off his scrubs. Anne expects to get some further response from Jeremy: it does not come and so she turns to follow Judith and Peter.*

*Meanwhile Jeremy strides to his desk where he picks up an A4 envelope. He fiddles with the envelope, his face set in a very stern frown. Then he marches off after Anne, who is preparing to take the still-weeping Judith out for coffee.*

Jeremy *addressing Peter* Mind the shop, will you? I have to visit the pesky lawyer again.

END OF SCENE

**I, Scene iv:** The Offices Of Penneycard, Munro and Foxe, In Marquis

(Friday June 24<sup>th</sup> 2016)

*Jeremy stands at a vacant desk, bearing the wooden plaque "Beth Pendlebury".*

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*He appears to be very put out, and fidgets with his A4 envelope.*

*A middle-aged woman (Jenny Dodemaid) nearby smiles as she approaches Jeremy. Before she is able to speak, Jeremy forestalls her as he picks up the wooden name plaque.*

Jeremy *snarls* I suppose this will have to be changed from “Ms Pendlebury” to – what?... Or is she keeping her name?

*Jenny is puzzled.*

Jenny Beth? Are you looking for Beth? I’m afraid she’s on an Annual Leave day today.

Jeremy I thought that the wedding wasn’t until tomorrow?

Jenny *smiling* Yes, it’s tomorrow: the big day! She’s very busy and wanted to make sure that everything was organized. So, she took today off.

*Cheesed-off, Jeremy slaps the envelope onto Beth’s desk and makes to leave the office.*

Jenny May I help you with anything? Or can it wait until Monday? She’ll be back then.

*Jeremy stops, arrested. He turns slowly.*

Jeremy *puzzled* Isn’t she taking a honeymoon?

*Jenny stares at Jeremy for an instant and then realizes what has occurred. She laughs, shaking her head. From Beth’s desk, she rescues a prominently-placed framed photo, which she hands to Jeremy. It is a lovely snap of Louise and Archie at their engagement party.*

Jenny This is Louise, Beth’s sister. It’s **Louise** who is getting hitched tomorrow. Beth is chief bridesmaid. Louise, not Beth.

*Jeremy stares at the photo.*

Jeremy *at sea* But ... But ... This is Beth surely ...

Jenny No! This is Louise. Her twin sister. They’re identical twins. “Lill” and “Baney” they call each other.

*Jenny laughs. Jeremy is really embarrassed. The colour rises in Jeremy’s face as he continues to stare at the framed photograph.*

Jeremy *caught off-guard* I've managed to make a gigantic fool of myself ...

Jenny *reassuring* No, you haven't. Loads of people get them confused. You've just joined the noble line. So ... Why not pop back on Monday and you two can have a chinwag then?

Jeremy *blushing* Sure ... Yeah ... See you ...

*As he quickly takes his leave, Jeremy pretends to recall something and goes back to Jenny who has resumed her seat at her own desk. [Jeremy will later explain his duplicity.]*

Jeremy *feigning ignorance* Sorry to be a bother but I need a JP ... A Justice of the Peace ... I wonder if someone in this office ... ?

Jenny *smiles* As it happens, we always use the services of Beth's mother Lisa. She's a certified JP.

*Jeremy already knew this and pretends (not very well) to be surprised.*

Jeremy Beth's mother?

*Jenny provides him with a couple of business cards. [Obviously, with Lisa's card, Jeremy now has an address for Beth.]*

Jenny There you are. That's Lisa Pendlebury's card. Only Lisa will no doubt be concentrating on the big day, as you can imagine. So your best bet is to try this chap. He's not far away.

*Jeremy fidgets with the cards and then salutes Jenny good-bye with them.*

Jeremy *leaving* Thanks ... thanks for your help ...

END OF SCENE

### **I, Scene v: Linton And Nathan Revisited: (Daytime, Friday June 24<sup>th</sup> 2016)**

*Linton and Nathan stand about in the same kitchen we visited in Scene (i). They closely examine a stolen cricket bat which has been signed by the members of the West Indies cricket XI (which toured England in 1976). Both men are in a glow of happiness as they finger the bat or feel its weight.*

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Linton *swinging bat* Ha! Ha! Seconds out – round two!

Nathan *whispers* Bloody legends! Look, you can just make out “Holding” and that’s Choir Boy, isn’t it?

Linton *confused* “Choir Boy”?

Nathan *amused* Those West Indies commentators spoke “Clive Lloyd” as “Choirboy”. That’s what it sounded like. That’s all. Bit of a joke ...

Can you believe these signatures?

They’re amazing. What are we asking for it?

Linton Four thousand. That sounds realistic. Now come on: we have to get down to business. We have two hours before we hook up with our hit.

I’ll have latex gloves. You’ll put yours on later.

Nathan Let’s trot through the plan again. Make sure I remember ...

Okay. The dude’s attending the girl’s wedding tomorrow so he’ll be in a hurry. I’m booked to meet him in the rain shelter. I must appear genuine and interested. Let him hold the bat. Point out its good points. Stand back.

Linton Remember that!

Nathan Yeah – sure! Sure!

So I stand back to give him no doubt of my sincerity. Get the money, shake hands, press the beeper in my pocket.

Linton Excellent!

Then I’ll be outside shouting for a kid that I’ve supposedly lost. You’ll pretend to be scared: grab his arm. “We can’t be found here”. Skedaddle with him: get out of there quick. But most important is that you stay with him.

Take him around the back of the rain shelter. It’s thick with

bushes so no-one will be there. I'll grab the bat from his grasp as I gag him. Then into the woods (both of us) pulling him along. Then I'll smack him up with the bat.

Nathan The bat is shoved back into its bag (hence the latex gloves). It simply appears to the innocent bystander as a bag of golf clubs.

Linton We have to move quickly. The stiff is either dead or dying by this time.

Nathan *chuckles* Pity that Steve is such a pious twat. I think that he might have enjoyed this rumble (all told).

Linton Aw! He was wittering on about some oath that they take ... Like the Hippocratic Oath doctors do ...

He's only a flipping chemist when it comes down to it.

*Nathan lovingly polishes the bat.*

Linton I'll take the bat and apply the girl's prints to it, leaving the DNA matter which links the bat to the stiff. Then at midnight I'll dump the bat in Eric's forlorn boatshed. He's leaving it open for some boaties to park their gear: couldn't be more ideal.

Nathan Propitious.  
Good! The body lies undiscovered in the woods. The bat leads to the body **and** to the dear bride (who I take it is in the correct "motive, means and method" camp)?

Linton Affirmative. She had easy access to the bat, she was having a long relationship with the stiff that was headed up the creek (probably getting in the way vis a vis her fiancé), and she had a day off work to prepare for her wedding. Drives about near the seaside before lunching with a group of chums at The Sailor's Forth: what's the bet? Plenty of time.

Nathan *worried* But a girl using a cricket bat?

Linton She is a registered member of a women's cricket team. Fits like a glove!

Nathan *forceful* But on the eve of her wedding?

Linton I explained that, didn't I? This bloke will be a danger to her marital success. It's all gone wrong so she smashes his head in.

Nathan Great! After how easy the first job went, I'm more than confident with this one. Could get a taste for it ...

END OF SCENE

**I, Scene vi:** The Pendlebury Residence At Marquis (Post Wedding) (Sunday June 26<sup>th</sup> 2016)

*Unable to wait, Jeremy has rocked up to the Pendlebury residence on Sunday morning. He knocks at the door, which is answered by Courtney.*

*In this scene, most of the conversation takes place with people talking over one another. The interior of the house is airy, sunny and utterly attractive. Jeremy is made to feel at home. Everyone is either still in pyjamas or has dragged on some lousy sportswear.*

*Signs of a recent wedding abound: lovely frocks, shoes and other apparel have been draped over the backs of chairs and there are gas-filled balloons kissing the ceiling, with long metallic curled ribbons hanging down.*

Courtney *bubbly* Come in! We're just about to rustle up some breakfast. Were you at the wedding? Who did you go with? Were you the guy with the slinky babe in the leopard-skin sheath?

*Courtney swings open the door and Jeremy enters. He follows Courtney to the kitchen area which is adjacent to the conservatory. A team of people is preparing breakfast. Jeremy is awe-struck and*

*hangs back. Jeremy is uncomfortable with his duplicity; he sometimes twitches and looks out of place.*

Jeremy *surprised*                      No I --

Courtney *opinionated*              I think it's absolutely out of bounds to dress like a wild animal for a wedding. It completely sends the wrong message.

Max *waspish*                              Her message was that she wanted every male eye in the room (including that of the groom) to be spot-lighted on her.

*Max spots Jeremy and nods in a friendly way to him. Jeremy returns the nod. This is in the manner of a tacit male understanding: "We are two guys surrounded by a bevy of females, so let's stick together".*

Simone                                      Anyone trying to outshine the bride at a wedding is clearly gagging for it. A total bimbo.

Max *trying to be smart*              Or else she's the ditchee and wants to get one back on the bride.

*A wave of horrified realization sweeps over Max, who has the grace to blush.*

Max *appalled, directed at Jeremy*              Christ! She wasn't **your** partner, was she?

Jeremy *flabbergasted*              No! No! I've never--

Max *absolutely relieved*              Whew! That could have been --

Leah *to Jeremy*                              You've come for breakfast, right? Do you eat anything or ...  
Thing is that you look like you might be a good trencherman.

*Max snuggles up to Leah from behind.*

Max *murmurs*                              Don't be personal. A chap can't help being a cruiserweight.

Courtney *loudly*                              Yes, he can! He could be bulking up – a bodybuilder.

Simone *waspish*                              Perhaps he needs to be fit to keep up with Ms Leopardskin.

*At this point, Courtney passes to Jeremy a plate loaded with all kinds of freshly-cooked breakfast delights. With a brief word of thanks, Jeremy looks about him for somewhere to sit.*

Courtney *pointing* Plonk yourself down in the conservatory. Think Dad might be in there (keeping out of the traffic lanes) ...

Betty Boo is in there trying to sleep. I'll bring you a cup of tea. Or do you require industrial strength coffee?

*Jeremy obeys Courtney, finding himself seated on a bamboo couch opposite what the sleeping Beth. He immediately eats his breakfast even though surrounded by feminine paraphernalia. An older man (William) sits nearby sipping coffee. Both men nod to each other.*

Jeremy No, tea will be great thanks.

Lisa *warning* Don't make too much noise. Beth is asleep on the couch.

*As he eats, Jeremy is able to stare at Beth as she sleeps. Evidently Jeremy is very pleased with this arrangement.*

William *to Jeremy* Rate the wedding out of 10.

Jeremy *surprised* Um ... well, I ...

William Come on! Five daughters, first one married. Did we get it right?

Leah The food wasn't up to the usual standard. The chicken entree was dry or burnt or something. Cancel that crowd for next time.

Courtney Oh, I don't know ... My cheesy vol-au-vent was alright.

*[To Jeremy]*

How did you say you take your tea?

Jeremy Er ... White with one please.

*Courtney immediately provides Jeremy with tea.*

Simone Who hired the band? They were excellent.

William Wasn't that you Max?

Max Not guilty.

*[To Jeremy]*

Was that your doing?

*Jeremy is drinking his tea which turns out to be way too hot.*

Jeremy *sputters* Um ... No, I --

*Jeremy tucks into what is left of his delicious breakfast.*

Leah Well, they played the **best** dance music. Usually, one gets stuck with schmaltzy crappy syrupy --

Simone I got into the wobbliest conversation with absolutely the most appalling man who fired-up just because we were discussing the latest Barry Edgware series. I mean, all I had said was that the colour and clarity was superb and he went into a rant about how Edgware deserved to be hanged for spouting his unchristian views on television.

*Beth stirs and speaks with eyes shut.*

Beth *blearily* Oh, I heard him. He was a complete tosser. On and on and on about God making gazelles so that they might outrun the cheetahs ...

William *waspish* Presumably the cheetahs starve!

Lisa Of course! He was just like the wedding guest in that Coleridge poem: waiting for "*le moment juste*" to pounce upon his victim and hold forth on his special subject.

Courtney *imitating a quiz show host* Your special subject is: boring the pants off everyone with your Creationist verbal diarrhoea.

Lisa *admonishing* Not whilst we're trying to eat, Baby.

*Beth sits up, rubbing her bleary eyes.*

Beth He was totally --

*Beth shrugs, losing interest. The others (Max, Leah, Simone, Courtney and Lisa) indulge in trivial background breakfast conversation.*

*Beth finds a cup of tea before her and begins to drink. Then she sees Jeremy (who is watching her as he eats, unable to stop smiling). Simone puts a plate of buttered and jammed toast in front of Beth.*

*Beth frowns and then points at Jeremy.*

Beth *to no-one in particular*                      Who is this?

*There is now a noticeable break in conversation.*

Courtney                              Who is what?

Beth *frowning*                      Who is this man?

Courtney *airy*                      He's the poor loser who was dancing with the leopard-skin tart.

Lisa *reprimanding*                      Courtney! You don't call someone a "loser" to their face; that's not very polite.

Beth *frowning*                      No, he's not. That was another guy.

*[Musing as she eats]*

It'll come to me. I know you but I don't know you ...

*Now the several members of the Pendlebury family wait agog for Jeremy's answer. Jeremy goes for broke.*

Jeremy *grins*                              I'm a gatecrasher. I'm pretending that I've come to get some documents witnessed by Mrs Pendlebury. Stage-managed entrance. Hope I'm not mucking up your morning by ...

*[To William]*

I'm terribly sorry Mr Pendlebury, but I couldn't actually get a word of explanation in before ...

William *crack of laughter*                      It'd be bloody hard around here to slip in anything other than a brief nod, such is the noise level.

*William leans forward such that he and Jeremy are able to shake hands. Jeremy murmurs his own name.*

Courtney *affronted* And he's not a "Mister" anyhow. My father is Air Chief Marshall Pendlebury, one of the highest of highflyers in the Air Force.

*Here Jeremy shows surprise.*

Lisa Courtney! That's enough!

*[To Jeremy]*

But I **am** intrigued. My afterhours visitors who require a JP are usually accompanied by a policeman.

Max *grinning* If this bloke is a gatecrasher as he says he is, then he probably dumped the rozzer as he leapt over the gate.

*[Imitates a boxer]*

Nice little right cross.

*Everyone is now in the conservatory looking at Jeremy. He has finished his breakfast and his cup of tea. Again, Jeremy decides to go for broke.*

Jeremy My mono is Jeremy Hurstbridge and I'm doing a locum as Pathologist in Littlemeeth whilst the incumbent is on holidays with his family.

To put it bluntly, I was very rude to a lovely lady on Friday because I thought (not knowing that she had a twin sister) that it was **Beth** who was getting married. She came (the lovely lady that is) came to identify her druggie brother in the morgue and I should have been caring and comforting and instead I was an utter pig.

Why was I a brute? Because I was gut-wrenched and heart-broken. I'd met the only girl who meant anything to me in this whole world and she was marrying some peanut on the following day.

Simone and Courtney Archie is **not** a peanut!

together, *both affronted*

Jeremy                                   It was like a colossal kick in the stomach. Like being smacked about the bean with a cricket bat.

Beth *ashen-faced*                   But I hardly know you.

*Jeremy looks directly at Beth.*

Jeremy *taut and adamant*                           I knew from the second that I walked into your office and saw you working at your desk. It was instant and total. Wham!

*This causes a wave of thrill. Simone takes an audible breath. Max sniggers.*

Simone *excited*                       Wow! Love at first sight! I thought that that had died out with knicker elastic.

William *musings*                   Same thing happened to my parents in 1950. Dad was weighed-down with breakfast, newspaper, people ... to shake his hand Mum was forced to stretch across the table, almost at full length. Kapow!

Leah *laughs*                         Isn't that funny? Everyone kept chipping at Beth at the wedding: "Your turn next!"

Lisa *smiling*                         So, we'll have to start saving up again.

*Jeremy finds this evident family support for his suit very reassuring if not amusing, whereas Beth is appalled.*

Beth *outraged*                       Now just hang on a minute!

Simone *cajoling*                   Think about it, Beth! He'd come home from work every evening and serenade you with gruesome stories about the bodies he had cut open that day.

Courtney *elated*                   It's win-win, Babe! Yes! Because he in his turn would be fascinated by all that paralegal waffle you try to impress us with.

Simone                                 Which equates to us being spared. "Behind every grey cloud there is a silver bullet".

*All but Beth correct Simone, saying "lining". Simone shrugs, laughing.*

*Jeremy takes pity on Beth, who is obviously appalled.*

Jeremy *gentle* Sorry. I've embarrassed you in front of your family. I should have kept my cakehole shut. I'll call in on you tomorrow at work. Alright?

*Jeremy stands and nods to the family members.*

Jeremy Thanks for the breakfast and the cuppa. I'll get going.

Lisa What about the papers I have to witness?

*Jeremy is shamefaced and drags a hand through his hair.*

Jeremy *shrugs and chuckles* Oh, they were just a ruse to get me through your front door. Good-bye all! Sorry to have been a gate-crasher but I hope to see you all again.

*Max on the other hand is cheeky and insouciant.*

Max *wryly* We should charge him a tenner for the fab brekky.

William *laughing* Yes! Always welcome.

*Jeremy takes off. Beth suddenly jumps up and sprints after him.*

*The girls (Leah, Simone and Courtney) position themselves at the window. They are viewed from behind as they spy on their sister Beth.*

Simone Mum! Come and look! Beth's in her jarmies: no bra, no shame. What a crock!

Leah *thrilled* He's holding her shoulders as she unburdens herself.

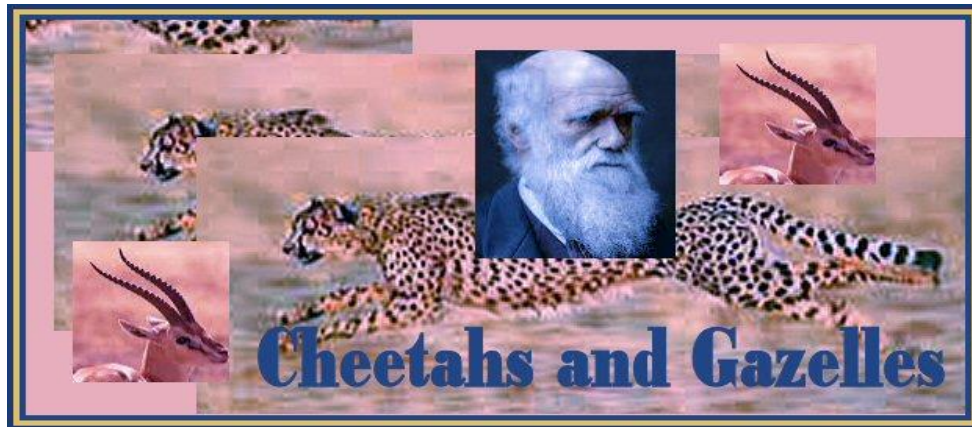
Courtney Love conquers all!

Simone See, that's where I think that I may have erred.

Romance over the internet has just this **one** drawback: little or no physicality.

Leah You should know ... How is your tank-boy?





## ACT II

### II, Scene i: The Mortuary, Littlemeeth (dates irrelevant)

*These are three funny takes resulting from Jeremy taking on board the criticism of his "brutal" treatment of the visitors to the mortuary.*

*Our three visitors have obviously been shown the mortal remains of a loved one. We shall hear Pachelbel's Canon but no dialogue.*

- *Jeremy looks sympathetic as he hands a box of tissues to a shaky old Indian man. Jeremy pats him gently on the shoulder.*
- *Jeremy suddenly hugs a very surprised old lady. He rocks her.*
- *A soignée lady has a stunning coiffure and elegant make-up. This lady dabs at her eyes with a lace hanky as she nods sadly. Jeremy removes her toy dog from her grasp, and then sweeps the lady to his chest, with his free arm. We see that the lady is shocked at being scrunched-up against Jeremy, and that the dog begins to yap.*

END OF SCENE

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**II, Scene ii: A Wood By A River (Wednesday June 29<sup>th</sup> 2016)**

*The music fades out.*

*A body in the very early stages of decomposition has been found in the woods. A police crime scene is in operation: tape, copious personnel in scrubs or police uniform, and so on.*

*Jeremy squats down beside Detective Inspector Badger. The two men stare at a body.*

Jeremy                      This corpse has been eaten: nibbled-at.

Badger                      Before or after death?

Jeremy                      I don't like guessing (even an educated guess).

                                    However ... No. The gentleman died first.

                                    Any time from 4 to 6 days ago. I'll need him on the slab to narrow that margin down.

                                    A surprise hit with no chance to defend himself. Death instantaneous I should suppose.

                                    Your turn. Pontificate, please.

*Badger takes a long sigh.*

Badger                      Since I have no problems with speculating, I'll cast the dice. This man was beaten about the head with a blunt instrument. He died (or was in the process of dying) when the local wildlife fed from his remains.

Jeremy *nods*                      Then we are agreed. I immediately leap to a cricket bat as the instrument in my fevered imagination.

                                    I mean: a bat would be expected to make these indentations in the skull.

                                    But as I said ...

Badger                      Yes, quite!

                                    Could a woman have done this?

Jeremy *shrugs* Depends on the woman.  
You need to get with the times, Douglas -- no-one asks that jaded question anymore.

Badger *sighs* Used to be able to discount 50% of the population with that single question.

Jeremy It's all a new ballgame now -- women aren't what they were.

Badger More's the pity. I rather enjoyed women being women.  
*[Another heavy sigh]*  
Identification. Do I have enough body left to get an ID? I think that I very likely do.

Jeremy Mmmmm ... Someone is missing him, I suppose. So we get in touch with "Missing Persons".  
*[Puts on high-pitched voice]*  
"My husband was due home some time ago but hasn't surfaced yet and I'm getting sort-of worried."  
*[Back to normal voice]*  
Yes, you can bring on the parade of weeping souls: I have plenty of tissues.

Badger *wry humour* But not much sympathy, I hear?

Jeremy *reassuring* Oh yes! I'm oozing sympathy now, since being upbraided by my subordinates.

END OF SCENE

**II, Scene iii: The Mortuary, Littlemeeth (Friday July 1st 2016)**

*Jeremy and Anne face each other in the mortuary.*

Jeremy                                    Have we had any response on the river bloke that the wildlife were feasting on? Surely **someone** is missing him?

*Anne grins smugly and passes to Jeremy a sheet of paper which he glances over (avidly).*

Anne                                        Yes, as it happens.  
  
Just had a call from Missing Persons. They're sending over a chap ... May be a good lead.

Jeremy *reading*                       Howard Gore ...

Anne *nods*                               From the sound of things, our "unknown" may be a missing acquaintance of his.



*Howard Gore stares at the corpse. Jeremy and Anne stand on either side of him. Badger faces Howard, from the other side of the corpse. In the manner of being a time-honoured ritual, Jeremy holds out a box of tissues towards Howard.*

Howard *shaken*                        This ... This is Braydon Flint-Carew. I'm well-acquainted with him through business, y'understand. It's hyphenated: his surname. He lived in Paltney (I believe) but worked in the City. Big international company.

Yes ... Flint-Carew ... My company deals extensively with his and we also belong to a Church group ...

Oh dear ... This is quite awful ...

Badger                                     He was apparently belted over the head with something large and heavy. Wooden: perhaps a cricket bat, we were thinking.

Does that suggest anything to you?

Howard                                    What do you mean?

Badger                                    Are you aware of anyone in Mr Flint-Carew's circle who might be in some way connected to cricket or who owns or has access to a cricket bat? Someone who had a grudge against this man?

I realize that this might be a long-shot but --

Howard *very firmly*                    I don't know about that ... But I know who did this. I can tell you with surety who murdered my friend.

*This direct attack surprises Badger and Jeremy.*

Badger *alert*                            Yes?

Howard                                    I mean, I'm fairly certain.

Badger *insistent*                    Yes, go on!

Howard *"from a lofty peak"*                                    Those blasphemous irreligious fanatics who blindly follow the misguided utterances of Charles Darwin. That's who did this! That's who killed him!

*There follows an awkward silence. Howard looks at the faces around him.*

Howard                                    I'm a bit knocked-up by this ... Do you mind if I sit down? And if I could cadge a cup of tea I'll oblige you by pouring forth about his last movements. I know that that will be of extreme interest to you; and importance.

*Badger, Jeremy and Anne look at each other, surprised and caught on the hop.*

Jeremy *indicates his desk*                                    Would you please sit here, Mr Gore? And I'll fetch you a tea tray.

Anne                                        No, I'll do it. Stay there.

*Anne bustles off. The three men sit. Badger and Jeremy watch Howard mop his brow with a couple of tissues.*

Howard                                    I met with Bray on the Friday. Lunch at the Camelot. He seemed very chirpy. Nothing troubling him at all.

And he was supposed to be attending a wedding on the

following day: the Saturday. I felt that he was looking forward to it, too.

And then a lady from my Church group rang me on that Saturday wondering where Bray had got to.

She had rung him several times: no answer.

Badger On the Saturday morning?

Howard Yes! I mean after lunch ...

He was to be the escort of my friend from my Church group (Mrs Maggie Stearforth). She's a widow who resides in Paltney. To this wedding that I mentioned. But he couldn't be contacted and so (eventually) I went in his place as her escort.

We were both quite concerned and worried. It was not like Bray to dodge an engagement.

Badger I can well imagine your concern ...

So you say that he couldn't be contacted? What date was that?

Howard Saturday the 25<sup>th</sup>.

Jeremy *surprised* A wedding on the 25th? Not Louise Pendlebury's wedding to Archie Someone Bridegroom?

Howard I ... Yes, I think that that was it ... St Remi's church. C of E.

*Jeremy frowns then excitedly points towards Howard.*

Jeremy *exclaims, triumphant* Holy cow! You're the "cheetahs and gazelles" man!

*Howard evidences a mixture of amazement and astonished disbelief. He schools his expression.*

Howard Whatever do you mean by that?

Badger *startled* I beg your pardon?

Jeremy I wasn't there myself but was informed later. A Creationist was

involved in a heated discussion. At this Pendlebury-Bridegroom wedding. I mean of course at the reception later ...

Something about Barry Edgworth – no “Edgware” ... Barry Edgware -- needing to be strung up and that God had personally created the gazelle to outrun the cheetah. Edgware had devoted an entire program to it: the way that the cheetah is designed by Evolution to chase and catch its prey while at the same time the gazelle is designed to outmanoeuvre the slinky cat. And jackals or hyenas thrown in for good measure. You gave everyone within earshot a real dust-up, I understand.

Howard *pretending to be affronted* Well, you understand it wrongly, my good fellow. Those are strong words and I hardly indulged in a “heated discussion”. Nor in a dust-up. Thank you very much!

*Badger flicks a certain look at Jeremy. Jeremy composes his expression to be less comical.*

Badger I’d like to hark back to your initial assertion upon the guilty party. Can you explain to me then why those who believe in Evolution (I assume they are the people to whom you refer) might wish to murder your friend?

Howard *vicious, immediate response* Because (Detective Inspector Badger) they despised him. Bray had placed some highly learned treatises on the Internet only to receive scathing electronic responses from those ill-mannered buffoons.

*Badger sighs, disappointed.*

Badger Everyone gets hate mail on Facebook ... That doesn’t lead to murder ...

Howard *emphatic* The rhetoric left no doubt that extermination was intended, Detective Inspector Badger. When Bray disappeared off the radar both Mrs Stearforth and myself became more than anxious.



**II, Scene iv:** London, The International Company Sonix Jubatu (Friday July 1st 2016)

*In the very grand and impressive offices of Sonix Jubatu, we see Badger being ushered by a well-dressed receptionist towards a huge suite of offices. Anthony Roth appears, striding confidently towards Badger, and grasping his hand.*

*Evidently we will not be privy to their conversation (at this time).*

END OF SCENE

**II, Scene v:** The Pendlebury Home (Monday July 4<sup>th</sup> 2016)

*Badger stands at the front door of William Pendlebury's home. Just as he is about to knock on the door, Simone opens it violently. At first she seems delighted that Badger is the guest. But then she pretends to be a prim and proper young lady.*

Simone *acting a part*      We are only at home to members of the Iroquois Confederacy or to thespians who are able to recite the first 23 lines of Shakespeare's "Henry IV Part I".

*Badger is nonplussed. Luckily, he is rescued by William whom he knows.*

William                      Detective Inspector Badger! Come in, Douglas!

*Badger shakes hands with William but addresses Simone.*

Badger *grinning*              May I pass as an honorary Iroquois, then?

*Simone nods primly as William and Badger drift indoors, sharing very small smalltalk. Simone follows.*

Simone *interrupting the men*      What's up, Inspector?

Badger                          So sorry to bother you Air Chief Marshall and Miss -- ?

William                                      This is Simone.

*Then follow the handshakes. They drift into the conservatory.*

Badger *takes a breath*                      A body has been found. The victim has just been identified as Braydon Flint-Carew (with a hyphen) who was in fact supposed to be a guest at your daughter's wedding. He was murdered (possibly beaten about the head with a heavy wooden object like a cricket bat) just prior to the ceremony (as far as we can establish the time of death).

*William raises his eyebrows whereas Simone gasps.*

Badger                                      Ring any bells? Anything at all?

*William and Simone look at each other for inspiration.*

Simone                                      Just a guess, but the double-barrel surname gives one pause: my Gran will know him. Probably one of her buddies. She invited quite a tranche of dubious character types to the nuptials.

William                                      From her church: St Bartholemew's in Danube Square.

Simone *gushing*                              She **loves** the ravishing stained-glass windows and the vicar has a "nice manner" (whatever that implies).

*Badger notes these items, nodding slowly as he does so.*

Badger                                      Actually, it was Miss **Bethany** Pendlebury who knew him. Is she at home? I'd like very much to interview her.

William                                      At work. On the Marquis High Street. Penneycard, Munro and Foxe. There'll be a business card floating about.

*William heads off.*

Simone                                      Several (if truth be told).

*[Direct attack on Badger]*

What grounds have you for linking my sister to a murdered man?

Badger He worked for a largish international company: Sonix Jubatu. One of the most senior men is your cousin, as it turns out.

Simone *nods quickly* Yes. Anthony Roth.

Badger Mr Roth freely gave up the information that Bethany had been spending considerable time of late working on a rather major contract with the victim. Prior to his demise of course.

*William strolls back, flicking the card to Badger who nods.*

Lisa *worried* But only in a business sense, surely. I mean, there was never any suggestion of a romance with her clients or anything like that.

Badger Nevertheless, I'll need to interview her.

Simone *airily* That's just tosh. Beth won't be able to help you find the killer.

*[Frowning with meaning]*

No, the clever money's on the bloke who swanned in here all uninvited (on the day after the "Wedding-That-Swallowed-Lyme-Regis") and scoffed ten quid's worth of breakfast. And then commenced to snog our Bethany.

*Badger appears to be all at sea.*

*There is a noise outside, as of a car pulling up on loose stones. Simone appears intense, enthralled.*

Simone *conspiratorial* Ullo, ullo, ullo ... The cavalry arrives and the murder will out.

*Simone steps quickly to the window. The Pendleburys are receiving an unexpected visit from Lisa's mother in her chauffeur-driven Daimler. This seems to wildly please Simone. She gives a naughty smile to Badger, lifting her eyebrows.*

Simone *wisely* Uh-oh! You're for it now, Detective Inspector. Gran is here to set all to rights.

*Badger is even more confused. He looks towards William.*

William *puzzled* For what it's worth I thought that that chap of Beth's was quite

decent.

Simone *darkly* Huh! If King Kong is decent. You know, Dad: if that guy swung a cricket bat at your scone, you'd stay hit.

*This with an "I-told-you-so" look towards Badger.*

*Badger blinks at Simone's revelations as Gran is welcomed in. She receives a big hug and kiss from Simone and Lisa. William rises and embraces his mother-in-law. William vaguely waves in the direction of Badger, speaking both his name and title.*

Lady Highgrove Besides wanting to hear the sound of a human voice, I have to report a robbery.

Lisa *aghast* You've been robbed?

Lady Highgrove *to Lisa* I'll need you or one of my beautiful granddaughters to telephone to the rozzers.

Simone *surprised* But we already have one **here**, Gran!

*Lady Highgrove (now seated) is surprised at this news, going so far as to peek under a small table.*

Simone Dad introduced you to Detective Inspector Badger and you --

Lady Highgrove Inspector? I thought he was checking the gas meter or some such thing. Well, this is service! You don't see much of it these days. Police arrive before they are called!

Badger You've suffered a robbery, Lady Highgrove?

Lady Highgrove My late husband's cricket bat. Taken from its wall scone.

Everyone else Cricket bat?

William, Lisa and Simone *surprised* Pa's cricket bat?

Lady Highgrove Signed by the entire West Indies Test team, what's more. A treasured collector's item as well as being of supreme sentimental value.

Lisa Anything else missing?

Lady Highgrove No. Not so far as we can tell. All the *objets d'art* seem to be lolling about as they ever did.

Simone *frowning* It doesn't look like a robbery then, if only that one item was nicked.

Might one of the family have simply borrowed it?

Lady Highgrove Without asking me first? No! Emphatically no! My family members aren't inclined towards waltzing off with my possessions. You should be well aware of that, Simone.

No! It's robbery plain and simple.

Badger And when did this theft occur? Very recently?

Lady Highgrove Oh Lord knows! Could have been any time in the last century. I didn't notice. Neither did my general factotum. The vicar put me onto it. He loves the thing – loves to touch it. The old boy came to tea this morning and whiffled-on about the cricket bat having been moved about. "Where was it? Surely I hadn't sold it on!" Gone! Gone!

Badger Very well then, Lady Highgrove. If I may (with your kind permission) I'll send two of my uniformed people around to dust for fingerprints.

*Lady Highgrove nods that that arrangement would be satisfactory.*

Badger And may I ask (if you've no objection): were you at all acquainted with a Mr Braydon Flint-Carew?

Lady Highgrove Yes. He's one of the nest of vipers at my church.

*[Sparking up]*

And that's another thing that you might give your "uniformed people" to work on: have them tell those rubbishing blighters to

concentrate on the Lord's good works and leave the terrorism to the Arabs. St Bartholemew's is not a proving ground.

*Lady Highgrove's words act in the manner of shattered glass. There is a distinct lacuna when her speech finishes. Her audience is aghast. During this slight pause Badger's gaze does not flicker from Lady Highgrove's face.*

Badger *carefully* Are you able to expand upon your theme, Your Ladyship?

*Lady Highgrove stares at the carpet.*

Lady Highgrove You used the phrase "**were** you acquainted". Does that mean that Flint-Carew is dead?

*Badger continues to watch Lady Highgrove intently.*

Badger I'm afraid so. Yes. His body was found a few days ago but only identified on Friday morning. He was murdered. We believe that he was struck on the head with a cricket bat and left to die in the woods.

Simone *wisely to Lady Highgrove* Probably **your** missing specimen, old darling.

*There is a taut silence. Then Lady Highgrove emits a long deep "Agh" sound.*

Lady Highgrove The nest of vipers to which Flint-Carew belonged ruined (probably forever) the peacefulness of my beloved church. They raved on and on and on about God being the supreme architect. They wanted to crush the prevailing beliefs in Darwinism and Evolution and fossils of feathered dinosaurs ... Poppycock!

William *musings* "Cheetahs and gazelles".

Lady Highgrove *acerbic* Of course. And it surprises me not one iota that at least **one** of their number should have been bludgeoned to death.

Detective Inspector Badger, I'll scribble down their names for

you. I can tell that you are champing at the bit. If somebody will furnish me with writing impedimenta ...



*Badger is leaving. He stops in the entry near the front door to study a large, lovely photograph of William, his wife and five grown-up daughters. Badger turns, smiling towards Simone who has escorted him to the door.*

Badger I've enjoyed your witty badinage, Simone, even if not entirely befitting a murder investigation.

Simone "So shaken as we are, so wan with care  
Find we a time for frightened peace to pant."

Badger *softly* "And breathe short-winded accents of new broils  
To be commenced in stronds afar remote."

Simone *laughs* Touché! Are you off now to grill my poor sister?

*Badger stops at the doorway to look Simone over.*

Badger I promise to be unfailingly gentle.  
  
Now, you mentioned earlier a beefy chap who visited you here on --

Simone *bright, alert* Oh, yes! He's the undertaker at Littlemeeth. Suspicious as hell. Dripping in guilt. You ought to drag him in immediately for questioning.

Badger *surprised* An undertaker?

*Lisa approaches the opened door where Badger stands.*

Lisa Trust you to get it wrong, Sim. He's the acting Pathologist as it happens, Douglas. And a nice young man with it.

Badger *shocked* You can't possibly mean Jeremy Hurstbridge?

Simone Yes, that'll be it. "Dripping in guilt."

Lisa A largish, solid, pleasant-faced young man?

Badger *nods* Yes! Quite a lad. And you say he came here on Sunday the 26<sup>th</sup> of June?

Simone To help himself to a gargantuan breakfast worth at least £10 prior to seducing your number one suspect.

Lisa *grins* He seemed very taken with Beth. The breakfast was more or less forced upon him, I think.

Simone *darkly* The sooner you get him behind bars, Detective Inspector, the safer we'll all feel.

*Badger laughs as he shakes his head, and then waves farewell.*

END OF SCENE

## **II, Scene vi: Badger Reasons With Himself (Monday July 4<sup>th</sup> 2016)**

*Badger drives. He is thinking to himself as he does so.*

Badger *voice over* My first impulse upon meeting Howard Gore was to pin this murder on him.

However – not to be.

Both Gore and the victim were committed (almost to the point of violence!) Creationists. Gore was running about with the widow lady from the “nest of vipers” all that day. They were either trying to locate their missing friend or they were preparing for the wedding or they were **at** the wedding.

Then I wondered if he had **hired** someone to do his dirty work. But that’s a non-starter. There are no substantial amounts

missing from any of his bank accounts.

Until someone comes forward to contradict my findings, I've eliminated Gore from my enquiries. Instead, I shall concentrate my efforts on finding the Evolution-minded person (or persons) whom Gore has incriminated.

END OF SCENE

## **II, Scene vii:** The Stolen Cricket Bat Has Been Located (Monday July 4<sup>th</sup> 2016)

*Badger sits at his busy desk in the Littlemeeth police station with a young policewoman facing him.*

Policewoman                      Sir! The Dowager Lady Highgrove's cricket bat has turned up over the weekend in a disused boatshed at Climney By Sea. It was bagged-up and sent over to the Morgue, to the Pathology people.

*Badger nods and snorts.*

Policewoman                      Dr Hurstbridge later rang to confirm that the same bat had been used to bash in the skull of the murdered man found by the river: Mr Flint-Carew. Erm ... Traces of blood, hair and skin tissue, he says.

*Badger nods and snorts.*

Policewoman                      He dusted for prints. The handle had been wiped clean except for Miss Pendlebury's prints.

*Badger (alert) looks at the woman through shaded eyes.*

Badger *growls*                      Which one? There are five females titled "Miss Pendlebury" ...  
No! Four now.

Policewoman Well, Sir – not the one who knew the victim. It was Louise Pendlebury, Sir.

Badger *very surprised* "**Louise Pendlebury?**" Are you sure?

Policewoman *checking paperwork* Yes. That's it. "Louise Pendlebury". Definite match on the prints.

Badger *perplexed* Not that that's her name anymore. Louise Someone Bridegroom ...

Policewoman Her married surname is Munro, Sir. Husband: Archie Monro, dentist. They are on their honeymoon. She and Mr Monro popped into a local police station in Italy and their prints were taken. Then the Italians whizzed those prints over to us quick smart. Very co-operative.

Badger *frowns* Yes, of course ... Her fingerprints were on the missing cricket bat? Louise's prints?

Policewoman Yes Sir.

Badger *decisive* I'll call on the family and get all this sorted out.

*The policewoman stands her ground. Badger looks her over.*

Policewoman There's more, Sir.

Badger *flummoxed* More?

*The woman hands to Badger a manilla folder of papers.*

Policewoman Yes, Sir. About Miss **Bethany**.

END OF SCENE

**II, Scene viii: "It's All So Ghastly!" (Late, Monday July 4<sup>th</sup> 2016)**

*Beth is clearly distraught. She stands in the kitchen before William, close to tears.*

*Enter Courtney (into the kitchen) carrying 4 or 5 used bread-and-butter plates. She is bright and over-cheerful.*

Courtney *proudly*                    There! That's my civic duty done for the day.

*Courtney slaps the used plates onto the sink. William snatches this God-sent opportunity to avoid Beth's imminent burst of tears. He smiles at Courtney.*

William                                Then you may like to help your Mother.

Courtney *bright*                    Don't you want to hear about my extreme heroism? There's a little knot of rozzers outside. I fed them! Oven-fresh apple teacake. I can't **tell** you how they appreciated my valiant effort.

Lisa *not too busy for sarcasm*                    What a good girl you are! Being kind to those lovely coppers who are no doubt (even now!) tramping about on my herbacious borders in their heavy boots.

Courtney *unsinkable*                    I offered a pot of tea as well but they'd mastered a portable gas ring of their very own (bless them!) Tin cups and a bright copper kettle and all. Billowing plumes of steam ...

One of them was like a little boy who'd grown awfully tall overnight and now didn't know what to make of it. What a dear!

*Beth shakes with unshed tears on hearing that there are several policemen outside.*

*Lisa and Courtney are busy preparing food.*

Beth *shaken*                            Oh Dad! This is all becoming so ... so ghastly ...

Lisa *bracingly*                        Usually you would have called it "crappy". "Ghastly" is such an old-fashioned word to have used.

Beth                                        It was in an antiquated black and white movie I saw. The heroine's gown ... Her sister's comment on it ... "Ghastly".

Courtney                    You'd have hated it, Mum. A real shocker.

                                  It was: "That's the most ghastly shroud. Looks like you've just exited a flophouse."

Lisa                            From 1935 (I should imagine) or thereabouts.

Beth *teary*                    We're veering off the subject. With policemen milling about in the garden and so forth ...

*[Takes a hacking sigh]*

                                  We're in a mess (Lill and I) through no fault of our own and I want to find my teddy bear. He would be still in the loft, wouldn't he?

Lisa                            Probably. Unless someone's thrown it out.

Beth *very close to sobs*    Oh! Don't say that ...

Courtney                    I'll get it! I know exactly where it is ... Just let me finish this ...

Beth                            Because I want to sit on Dad's knee with teddy clutched to my chest and be cuddled and rocked.

William *reasonable*        You're a bit long in the tooth for that sort of parenting.

Beth                            Lill has Archie to comfort her. But I have diddly-squat. Dad, you must come through for me.

*Beth sniffs, dabbing at her eyes. Lisa swoops on her, wrapping her in a firm hug.*

Lisa *comforting*            Here! I'll give you a big cheesy hug. There! There! There!

*Even though her hands are covered in sticky dough, Courtney carefully joins in the cuddle. Beth is now crying outright. William simply looks on: he has seen it all before. Beth tries to thank her mother and sister but is too distraught.*

William                      What about that sturdy young chap who rings you from time to time in the hope of scoring a date? Visited us on the day after Lou and Archie's wedding ... something about how he dropped the rozzer at the gate with a right cross ...

You know whom I mean -- the chunky stand-in pathologist ...  
Hurstbridge his name was ...

Courtney *airily*

Oh, you mean Jeremy, the gatecrasher? And there was no policeman involved: he simply marched up to the house and spun a yarn.

Lisa *admonishing*

**You** let him in.

William *playful*

And fed him up. To the tune of several quid when I totted it up in my poor old brain.

Courtney *defensive*

I took pity on his sweet little face (for all that he's a sizable unit).

William *triumphant, to Beth*

Well, there you are, then! Everybody appears to be in agreement about Hurstbridge being a suitable candidate for your comfort blanket. Get **him** to cuddle you and your teddy.

*The group hug breaks up. Beth has indulged in a hearty cry as is evident.*

Beth *reluctant*

I suppose that I have his number somewhere ... You know very well that he'll take it as a come-on when I phone him ...



*Badger sits at his ease in the Pendlebury lounge room in an armchair. He has a large balloon of brandy in his hand. He watches the liquid glimmer as he slowly rotates it. Beside him (on the couch) sits Jeremy who holds Beth on his knee. She cuddles an aged teddy bear as she nestles against Jeremy's body. Throughout the conversation, Jeremy will surreptitiously kiss Beth's hair. It is evident that Jeremy is idyllically pleased.*

*Courtney marches into the lounge room and takes photos of the visitors and Beth with her mobile phone. Badger chuckles. Jeremy pulls funny faces.*

Courtney

How cute! These are going onto the Web.

*William and Lisa enter, armed with trays of food.*

Badger

Oh, now! You're going to too much trouble.

Courtney *smart-arse* It's not all for you, Detective Inspector. Most of this lot is for the "Man from the House of Death". He has an insatiable appetite.

*Courtney and Jeremy make funny faces at each other. Beth looks up into Jeremy's face and the pair share a lovely kiss.*

Badger *jovial* Do you know (young Miss Courtney) that I've derived no little pleasure from the rapid-fire conversation of your sister Simone. You remind me of her a great deal.

Courtney Ha! I'm nothing to her. She went to a political rally once (I was there as chief pot-stirrer) and she completely bamboozled the candidate. He had to take recourse to a glass of water and I swear that his hand was shaking. Some of the Press took photos of her. They didn't know who she was but they labelled her a "rebel".

I could never rise to those Pyrrhic heights.

Badger *chuckling* That doesn't take much imagination to picture it. Alright, William ... Your turn ...

William Here's chapter and verse for you, Douglas.  
The preamble is that (in the Dark Ages) I was set to become affianced to Rachenda (the elder sister) whereas Stephen Roth II was lined-up to be a calming influence on younger sister (Lisa here). Fate intervened and I fell for Lisa whilst Roth was attracted to Rachenda.

A straight swap and everyone happy.

Lisa and I had five daughters whereas Rachenda and Roth had a son Anthony (who is about 27 years old now) and two daughters: Diana and Casey.

In my opinion, Stephen Roth II was simply a dilettante playboy, pretending to be a businessman. I met him upwards of a dozen

times in Saudi during the '80s. He impressed me only as a charming wannabe.

Badger This son Anthony ... He's the impressive chap who spoke to me at the Sonix place. In fact: your cousin, girls.

*Beth is still curled up on Jeremy's knee. She simply nods a little. Courtney nods too.*

William *continues* To my mind Anthony is the smarter cookie of the two (father and son): he inherited his grandfather Arlington's business acumen rather than his father's devil-may-care cuteness.

At any rate, Lord Arlington (Rachenda and Lisa's father) passed away about 18 months ago. The title devolved upon Anthony Roth. So here we have a young man (not yet 30) who is next-door to managing a petrochemical company (with fingers in innumerate pies) and has been raised to the peerage as Lord Highgrove, Earl of Arlington.

Badger Yes, that's very clear. So not only a smart cookie but also a titled gent. Hmmmm. And you Bethany are somehow under contract to your cousin Anthony Roth at Sonix Jubatu?

Beth Yes, from my position at PM and Foxe. I manage several accounts: client accounts that is. The Sonix one is just another in my portfolio.

Badger And one of the most important clients you handled was Braydon Flint-Carew. The late Braydon Flint-Carew. That is correct, is it not?

Beth I suppose in a way it was a kind of nepotism. Anthony asked me to manage that account by way of a subcontract.

Badger And by that means you were put into close communication with a man who has recently been bludgeoned to death with your grandfather's cricket bat bearing your twin sister's fingerprints on

it.

*Just as everyone is about to expostulate, Courtney yawns loudly. Everyone except Badger gives her a stern look. She mumbles some kind of apology.*

Badger *ignores Courtney* And what about Louise? What line of profession is she in?

Beth She works in modelling those lifelike animal figures that one sees on – say, Edgware – and that Wallace’s Line show. Pretty talented, my sis.

Badger *alert* Not at Curtis Projects?

William Not quite. It’s a small subsidiary. But yes they do a great deal of integrating with Curtis.

Badger *to Beth* Okay. So, the current state-of-play is as follows. Your twin sister and your new brother-in-law will cut short their wedding trip and will touch down at Heathrow soon (possibly tomorrow). Right?

*Beth manages to nod her affirmation prior to turning her face into Jeremy’s shoulder, sobbing hopelessly. Jeremy is supremely masterful in soothing his love. Badger wishes only to progress his investigation. He turns to William.*

Badger *winding up* The three of us (Beth, Louise and I) must have a long talk before the boys from Thames Police Strategic Command trample all over us. (They resemble nothing so much as Easter Island Moais!)

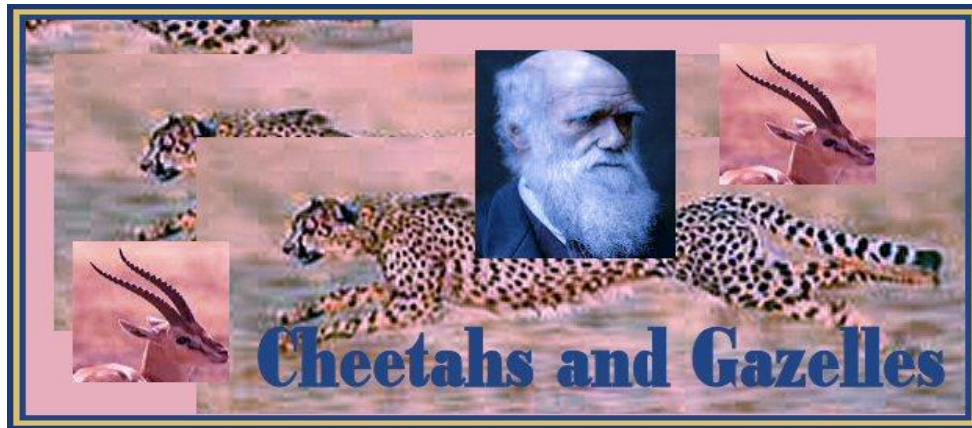
Louise is about to wing her way home from Italy and I can see that Beth’s all-in for today. So! Tomorrow then!

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT II

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### ACT III

#### III, Scene i: At Curtis Projects (Tuesday July 5<sup>th</sup> 2016)

*This is how this scene works:--*

- *Throughout the scene we shall watch the model-makers at Curtis Projects construct extinct artiodactyls. Also, a male member of staff will type words on an up-market PC. The camera will move about for the sake of interest.*
- *In the background there will be a low murmur as of the typing man telling himself what to type. The words will be fragmented and disjointed: this is background after all and need not continue after the Vicar begins his long speech. So either stretch the words out to fit, or abridge as appropriate.*
- *At the same time as the droning voice, we shall hear but not see Badger following-up on the various threads of his investigation (from ACT I).*

#### Background murmur from the typing man:

Family Bovidae. Ruminants. Behaviour. Glands. Browsers, grazers, mixed feeders. Evolution and dispersal of bovids throughout the continent of Africa. Miocene genera. Differentiation. Seminal review composed at Yale in the 1920's. Cladistics based on DNA. There are several systematic problems with fossils of genus Gazella. The possession of and position of horns. Derived embryologically from the frontal bone. Cover of keratin. Permanent feature. Horn core preserves

extremely well in the fossil record. Gazelles differ from the other bovids in skull structure, dentition, premaxillae and skeleton. The rough edge, sheath, integument and pedicle. Seen in sketch (viz Solounias 1999 to 2000). Right horn *Gazella dorcas*. Well-preserved fossil horn core and pedicle. More revealing than the dentition, and illustrates the bovid diversity. Horn core of *Gazella* exhibits fine grooves. Is oval to round in cross-section. Posterior curve noted. Absence of keel. Hornless females: *Gazella dama*. Orbital rims. No projection noted in Miocene *Gazella*. Dorsal and anterior view.

*The following speeches are (as already explained) voice-overs involving Badger and others.*

*They occur **WITH** and **OVER** the above droning male typist's speech.*

### Badger Interviews A Waiter

Badger *voice-over* I have a photograph to show you. It's post-mortem, I'm afraid. And another photo of a live gentleman. Could you remember if they dined here together ... Luncheon on Friday the 19<sup>th</sup> of last month?

Male *voice-over shaken* Oh dear ...

Badger *voice-over* Yes, I'm sorry to do this to you. It's part of my investigation.

Male *voice-over* Yes ... Yes ... They dined ... Not sure if that's the date but quite possibly ... I formed the impression that these gents were quite ... erm ... "close" ...

### Badger Discusses Evidence With A Policewoman

Policewoman *voice-over* Here sir! This might be what you're after ...

*A slight pause ensues.*

Badger *voice-over* Badly spelled ... Poor grammar ... These emails are the work of

yobbos ... Lucky they could find the keys to type with ...

Policewoman *voice-over* Um ... Sorry, sir. Sorry to be a "know-it-all". Before I joined the Force I took a unit at Wesley College. "How to think logically".

*Here the policewoman is heard to giggle.*

Badger *voice-over* ... and?

Policewoman *voice-over* We studied a poorly-constructed tract written by a man in Idaho in the USA. So, I remember it well. That spiel there (supposed to have been knocked-up by our victim Flint-Carew) was exactly that same one from Idaho. I'm positive of it, sir.

*Another pause ensues.*

Badger *voice-over* Interesting ... Thank you, Constable.

<p>Badger Interviews The Vicar of Lady Highgrove's Church (St Bartholemew's in Danube Square)</p>
---

Vicar *voice-over very put-out* Alright, Detective Inspector Badger. I shall tell you the absolute truth, since my polite summation of the situation seems not to please you.

Badger *voice-over firm* I'd appreciate your honesty. I am investigating the murder of one of your parishioners, Vicar.

*There is a pause. It is apparent that the Vicar has calmed down.*

Vicar *voice-over* Very well. What must be, must be.  
There were some rowdy colloquies. Shouting. The words thrown about were intemperate.

Badger *voice-over* Examples, please?

Vicar *voice-over* "Liar", "counter-productive" ... um ... "sinister" ... Oh and "two-faced". That sort of thing.

I'm not at all surprised that the dear dowager (Lady Highgrove) complained of it to you. I've been concerned myself.

Badger *voice-over*

You shared her low opinion of the behaviours of what she dubbed the "nest of vipers", then?

Vicar *voice-over*

Detective Inspector, you told me to be honest. Alright then! I'll tell you what I found.

One of these spats which was pitched at such a volume that it reverberated through my church dealt with (of all things) hyenas. Where one of my parishioners loudly extolled the feline qualities of the hyena another shouted back the canine tendencies. Quite a brawl.

*Badger makes a humping noise (as is his custom).*

Vicar *voice-over with urgent tone*

Detective Inspector Badger! I've not yet done ...

Something was said ... One of the gentlemen (I can't tell you which one what with all the shouting) ... It sounded so odd (given their professed stand) ... Creationism and so forth ...

I took to my computer and performed a search (as one does). Here! I'd even written it down. Wait a bit!

*[Slight pause]*

Listen to this, from page 435 of "The Origin Of The Species":

"... there is a struggle for existence leading to the preservation of each profitable deviation of structure or instinct."

Well! What do you think of that?

END OF SCENE



excitement.

Badger You? Sloppy?

Kamar I'm getting the wind-up. There are indoor competitions in which I'll naturally shine!

*[More giggling]*

Alright! Good! You've fixed it! Good ... So tell me (before I rush off) how do you get on with the replacement?

Badger No-one can replace you, Kamar. He's --

Kamar *excited, eager* You'll be up to the minute with all the news of orangutans and friendly with every gorilla on the planet by now.

*[Another delicious giggle]*

And very eye-able too: but I must not say that! Politically incorrect in every way. Cheerio then!

*Badger frowns.*

Badger *slowly, very thoughtful* Cheery -- Cheerio ...

*Giggling happily, Kamar replaces the handset and turns to his family. They disappear from view. The split screen remains as Badger replaces his handset: thoughtful and a little confused.*



*The split screen slowly dissolves.*

*Badger remains seated as at the beginning of the scene at the police station. He is musing: staring ahead unseeing. Into this brown study burst Simone and Courtney (both very sprightly).*

Badger *whispers, distrait* Orangutans ... gorillas ... very eye-able ...

Simone *bright* Had you forgotten? We're taking you out to lunch.

Courtney Owing to our appalling treatment of you and our efforts to

thwart your mind-blowing research. And to scupper your police work.

Badger *smiling* Of course. Hadn't forgotten.

Courtney Are you okay?

Badger *weary* Not quite ... [*Takes a long breath*]

If one cannot recall the name of an hotel that is fashioned in the manner of a circus tent on the southern coast of France, where does one go for the last word?

Courtney Have you ever seen a photo of it?

*Badger nods. Simone leaps around to stand beside him and begins to "help herself" to Badger's laptop.*

Simone So, if I show you a photo of it, that will suffice ... Yeah?

On the Web – search engine ... "South – France – hotel – circus – tent"

[*Clicks and works with the mouse*]

Ha! What about this? Hotel Splendide in Port La Roche?

Badger That sounds like it. Thank you.

Courtney *points at the screen* Looks classy. And the telephone number is serendipitously supplied.

Badger Good! This call may lead to the shock arrest of your prime suspect, Hurstbridge. (Hope that they understand *Anglais*.)

*Badger dials.*

Simone *pleased* That's a most welcome turn of events. Jeremy Hurstbridge behind bars: fabulous!

Courtney *pouting* Oh, I like him.

Badger *on the phone* This is Detective Inspector Douglas Badger of Littlemeeth, UK. I

must urgently speak with one of your guests in relation to a police matter. He is my Pathologist. Would you please connect me with Dr Selim Kamar. Probably indoors with his wife and children. He recently spoke of games ...

Thank you. Yes, I will wait ...

*Again (as before) the screen splits such that we can see both parties speaking.*

Kamar You've interrupted the Scrabble tournament. I hope you realize. Do you miss me this much?

Badger *brisk* Your replacement: exactly what is his name?

Kamar *surprised, giggles* **His** name? Boyo, you need your eyes tested.

Badger Your stand-in was supposed to be female?

Kamar Of course! Jane Rogers. Is she --

Badger *frowning* Rogers? Dr Jane Rogers?

Kamar That's correct. I hope that --

Badger *urgent* A very attractive woman in her mid-30s?

Kamar Well, you're looking at her, no doubt!

Badger I've been working since your departure with a certain Jeremy Hurstbridge: a largish young man. Seems to know his onions, of course.

Kamar *put out* No! No! That can't be right!

Goodness! This is unnerving in the extreme, Douglas!

I showed Jane around and she was looking forward to taking over. Very competent: very good at her job. A treasure.

If she's not at her temporary post in Littlemeeth then you'd better scuttle along and find out what's happened to her. And please telephone me back. I'm now quite worried, thanks to you.



*Simone and Courtney have lured Jeremy away from his post in the Littlemeeth mortuary, probably using Bethany as bait. Nevertheless, Badger and Simone stand at the window in the mortuary watching Jeremy (with Courtney) striding off. Anne and Peter watch the “floor show”.*

*Simone pretends to be a school ma’am in a bad play as she points malevolently out of the window.*

Simone *dramatic*

Unhappy man! You are found out!

*[Reverting to normal voice]*

I’ve always wanted to say that!

Badger *tired*

Simone, please leave this in my hands. I may not possess your talent for rodomontade, but still and all ... I am a police officer.

Simone

Whose best ever chance at fame has been torpedoed by the involvement of Thames Police Strategic Command.

Okay, point taken. I’ll meld into the background, then, shall I?

Badger *sighs heavily*

If you would be so kind ...

Anne *trying to smile*

What’s going on?

Badger

Were you aware that Selim Kamar’s holiday replacement was to have been a female: Jane Rogers?

*Anne and Peter both nod.*

Anne

Yes, of course. But that was kyboshed.

Badger *frowns deeply*

Do you know why and by whom?

*Again, Anne and Peter both nod.*

Anne

Yes. It was all very straight-forward.

*[Change of tack]*

Look! If complaints have been made against Jeremy, then I can tell you unequivocally that he very quickly pulled it together and

-

*Badger placating*            There are no complaints! I happen to deal extremely well with Jeremy. But the young woman ... I must cover every possibility.

*Anne nods and goes to her laptop where she clicks the mouse. Anne both speaks to Badger and at the same time navigates her way on the laptop.*

Anne                            An email arrived soon after Selim bounded out of the building. He'd organized Jane in absolutely the correct manner. There were no issues: none at all. Then **this** came.

*Badger leans forward to read. So does Simone.*

*Badger reads the screen*    Marius Engers, Home Office.

*[Stands back and whistles]*

Phew! Top of the trees ...

Anne                            You bet.

*Badger*                        But no reason given. Did anyone seek an explanation or was any offered?

Anne                            No on both counts. Jeremy waltzed in, as high as a kite. We were very impressed.  
  
Then ... After a couple of days he became morose and spiky.  
  
But all that was later explained away: "Love sweet, sweet love".

*Simone wisely*                It was all on account of a romantic mix-up over my sister Beth Pendlebury.

*Anne laughs*                 That's it! His believing that she was marrying another man actually affected his work. But all good now.



*Simone and Badger stroll along the High Street, absently looking at the shop windows. Simone has hooked her arm through Badger's.*

- Badger                                    You've made several accusations against Jeremy Hurstbridge in my hearing. Have you any genuine **solid** evidence to suggest that he's a wrongun?
- Simone                                    Of course not. It's just that he's a big teddy bear (on the surface). The least likely to have ever contemplated crime. Straightaway my suspicions were aroused.
- Badger                                    Then, this is all just airy-fairy nonsense?
- Simone                                    Naturally.
- Badger *stern*                            Simone, I need you to be a bit more serious about this. Accusing a man simply because he is built like an outhouse isn't good enough. It proves a distraction.
- Simone is not at all contrite but is enjoying herself.*
- Simone *big eyes*                        Sorry, Detective Inspector Badger.
- Badger gives a disparaging snort.*
- Simone *conspiratorial*                But just between you and me, I'm going out on a brilliant date tomorrow night with my web buddy (whom I've never ever actually met in person). I mean, we've chatted on Skype once or twice.
- He's a real man. A man's man. You'll like him!
- Badger *distracted*                        Mmmm?
- Simone *persistent*                        My dreamboat from far away. E-romance. We're going on our first real date tomorrow night, so I'll give you the low-down day after tomorrow.
- Badger *weary*                            No don't bother. I'd rather play the mushroom in the dark. If I'm desperate, I'll call upon my imagination.
- Simone *keen, excited*                    No, Detective Inspector. You'll be **agog** with thrill about **this** date. Trust me!

*Courtney now rushes up, out of breath.*

Courtney *panting*                    Have you told him yet? Your exciting news?

Simone                                Yes, but he couldn't be more faraway. His head and mind and heart are elsewhere.

Courtney                              Oh ... That's pretty piss poor. Pardon my French.

END OF SCENE

### **III, Scene iii:** Dining In Style At Night Time (Late, Tuesday July 5<sup>th</sup> 2016)

*At a very upmarket restaurant (complete with beautiful décor) Stephen, Linton and Nathan dine. Their table is enclosed and discrete.*

*They are apparently bon-vivants, with superb taste in all things gastronomic. The three villains are dressed smartly, are clean-shaven and well-presented. One would take them for a trio of business executives enjoying a celebratory dinner. They have reached the cheese platter course. Only Linton and Nathan seem to be happy; Stephen is moody and sullen.*

*Linton closely peruses the label on their bottle of wine. Owing to the sensitive nature of their conversation, the men must keep the volume of their voices down.*

Nathan                                It's **me** who should be maudlin. Not you, Steve. What a cock-up!  
*Stephen snorts.*

Stephen                                Quietly does it. Keep it on low frequency.

Nathan                                Yes, of course. But how could this happen? **Twins**, of all things.  
Did no-one have the vaguest idea?

*Nathan prompts Stephen by pushing the cheese platter in his direction. Stephen pushes the platter away, rudely. Prior to speaking, Stephen flicks his eyes about to check on possible eavesdroppers.*

Stephen *harsh whisper*        Put it behind you and move on. Passion and angst will not serve

at this juncture.

*However, both Stephen and Linton seem to require an explanation from Nathan.*

Nathan To my mind there was only **one girl** (a young woman, let's say). She had a very, very close relationship with Braydon F-C. Very close. She was being married the next day. She would do anything (**anything!**) to ensure that her affair with BFC would remain a secret. Would take her cricket bat and belt him up with it. Then leave him for dead with her tell-tale prints all over the bat. And on the eve of her wedding.

Linton *low-voiced* Leave it go< Nathe. Steve is right.  
Look at it this way. Those TPSC buffoons won't be able to work it out. Just leave it. No harm done.

Nathan Twins! We planted the fingerprints of the wrong twin on that fucking bat.  
Heavens above ...

*Nathan now tries to appear careless in case other diners have noticed his discomfiture. Nathan tops up the glasses of wine and tries to present a more convivial demeanour.*

Nathan *bright* Gentlemen! This wine ... It's a nice drop ... Please drink up.  
*[Change of voice]*  
The police will have to look elsewhere. So what? You're right! They won't be looking **for** us and they won't be looking **at** us.  
We three are all clean-skins: unknown to the fuzz and not featuring in any police file.

Linton *low whisper* And we now have only one more tiny, teeny task: wheel out Jim Hale. That's all. Straight-forward, simple. The man is probably the most hated man in London after that grisly slime-ball geezer on that hot TV car show. There'll be no end of likely suspects in

that homicide.

*Stephen maintains the napkin over his mouth, but his eyes can be seen.*

Linton                      Softly, now! He's not making it easy. Whenever and wherever we imagine that he'll surface, he does not do so. How do you hit a chap who chooses not to be hit?

Nathan *smarmy*            The man is vain and opinionated. I shall dare him to crawl out of his A1 apartment.

Linton                      Method?

*Nathan holds up his wine glass and allows himself to stare at the wine. He is smug.*

Nathan *quietly*            Using my abundant wit and charming bonhomie, I shall lure Mr Hale (or Mr Halveston or whatever the hell he calls himself) into the open air ...

Al fresco ...

I lean towards a dart dipped in a very vicious poison ... Skilfully applied to the unprotected portion of the neck ...

*The golden glows in the restaurant sparkle out as the scene mists up.*

END OF SCENE

**III, Scene iv: Yellow Post-It Notes In Badger's Garage**

(Late, Wednesday July 6<sup>th</sup> 2016)

*Badger has gone down into his garage (which is not too much of a mess) and has stuck a variety of yellow post-it notes onto a large piece of polished aluminium resting against a wall.*

*In glum reverie, he stands staring at the notes, hands deep in pockets.*

*A dog barks from above the garage. This sound stirs Badger out of his gloom. He hears knocking on the door. Quickly, Badger steps to a side door. He sticks his head around this open door such that he can see who is knocking at his front door. The visitor is Max, who evidences surprise at seeing Badger exiting his garage through the side door.*

William Is Expected But It Is Max Who Arrives.
--

Max                                      Detective Inspector Badger?

Badger                                    Yes?

Max                                      We've not met. I'm Max Jenner. I'm Leah Pendlebury's partner.

*Max strides smartly towards Badger, extending his hand. The men shake hands.*

Max                                      William is on his way. Wants to clear the air. Of course, he's hugely concerned about the twins.

Badger                                    Naturally. Stands to reason. Any father would be.

Max                                      Look! I'd like to pass something by you prior to his arrival, if I may.

*Badger heads back to the garage side door.*

Badger                                    Come this way. I do my best thinking down here.

*The two men wander into the garage. Max looks about, interested in the array of tools and machines housed herein.*

Max                                      Thing is, I play golf with a chap who's very switched on. His name is Perry Hancock. Works at making those prehistoric

models of animals they use in those marvellous TV shows.  
Edgware and his ilk.

Badger Oh yes. Very realistic they are, too.

Max I'm an architect by profession and fiddle about with construction models all the time. But this guy leaves me for dead.  
I'd call him a bloody genius, but he'll have none of it. Anyway, what I want you to hear is that one of his work chums died recently of a drug overdose. Apparently, it's all a load of bollocks.

Badger *surprised and confused* What? He's **not** dead?

Max Oh, yes. The work friend is absolutely dead alright. No ... He didn't **take** the drugs: they were administered.

Badger By a third party? As a deliberate criminal act?

Max Presumably. Jeremy Hurstbridge put me onto it. I'm sure that you'll know him: pathologist.

Badger *nods* Yes. I've worked with Hurstbridge. Solid fellow.

Max He's on his way here (so I understand). Something came up otherwise he would have been with me in my car.

*Badger shows a complete lack of any enthusiasm.*

Max Knowing both Jeremy and Perry, I got the two together. Jeremy had noticed some small needle marks. However, Perry put the moccas on that.

The short and the tall of it is that Daniel Angestan would have had the needle marks in a different part of his body had **he** drugged himself. Perry swears to it. Someone **else** plugged him full of narcotics; but everyone wrote it off as just "another druggie bites the dust".

*Badger frowns looking at the floor of his garage. Then he nods.*

Badger Right! I'll have to speak with Jeremy and with your golfing friend.

Max Hang about! There's more ...

Badger Well?

Max Yep. This Daniel chap was receiving packages on a regular basis from a bloke at that Sonix company ... The one that everything seems to hang on.

Badger *keen* Who?

Max A bloke who spouts on about glorious Evolution in print and even on the box: Jim Hale. Perry often spotted nicely done-up packages on Daniel's desk, so he says. And all from Jim Hale of Sonix Jujube (or whatever its bloody name is) ...

Badger Hmm ... This is quite intriguing.

Max Isn't it, though?

*Again, the dog barks upstairs and the sound of a car driving up on the gravel is heard. Badger nods.*

William Is Expected But It Is Jeremy Who Arrives.
---

Badger *hopefully* Ah, William ...

*Badger goes to open the side door when he pulls up short: Jeremy steps through the doorway. Jeremy steps forward to shake Badger's hand. Then he spots Max.*

Jeremy *pleased* Oh, hi Max.

*The two young men shake hands along with the obligatory pat on the shoulder. Badger pushes his hands deep into his pockets.*

Badger Well?

*Jeremy points to a small fridge almost hidden away next to a crowded work bench.*

Jeremy Is there any of that beer left that I dumped here?

Badger *tired* Sure. Knock yourself out, as they say.

*Jeremy strides over to the fridge, cocking an eye at Max.*

Jeremy Beer?

*Max pretends to be reluctant.*

Max I won't say "no" (if forced).

*As Jeremy passes a can of beer to Max, he passes another to Badger and takes one for himself.*

*Jeremy speaks as he and the other men drink straight from the cans. Jeremy takes a big breath.*

Jeremy Ah! That's found the spot.

Had a hit-and-run fatality to deal with. Just been ID'ed, so I rushed straight over.

*[Side note: We know that Linton and Nathan have told us that they plan to murder Jim Hale (using poisoned darts, of all things). Apparently, someone else has beaten them to it.*

*From this point on, the trio of Stephen/Linton/Nathan will fall apart, with each member cheesed off with the others.]*

Badger *full of sarcasm* Thank God for that.

*Jeremy points towards Badger.*

Jeremy *sounding important* The guy had worked for Sonix Jubatu.

Badger Another one!

Jeremy James Halveston. That's the name under which his employment contract was signed.

But ...

*The three men drink in silence.*

Badger                                    You were about to say ... ?

Jeremy                                    We had a Creationist previously, and this one was a Darwinist.  
Getting scary, huh?

*Badger sculps the remainder of his can of beer and stares at Jeremy, frowning.*

Badger                                    A hit-and-run, you said? Could it have been deliberate?

Jeremy *off-hand*                        Of course. This bloke would have had enemies: opinionated and  
loud-mouthed, he was (so his widow states as she sobs onto my  
manly chest). He was always bobbing up on the box or the radio,  
spouting his very extreme views on how Evolution will change us  
all in 30 years or so ...

Max *wondering*                        You said "James Halveston". I've never heard of him.

Jeremy                                    No, it was a shortened version. Jim Something I suppose --

Badger *astounded*                     Not Jim Hale?

Jeremy                                    "Jim Hale"! Yeah, got it!

*Jeremy becomes aware of the frisson of shock that his words have evoked. Jeremy glances keenly at both men.*

Jeremy *wily*                                Ah! I've said something interesting. Your faces are a dead  
giveaway.

Max *astounded*                        Well! Jim Hale dead ... Blimey!

*As Badger tries to speak as he stares at Max, the dog is heard again, along with a loud banging on the front door. Badger sighs.*

Max *winks*                                William! What's the bet?

*Badger trudges to the side door.*

Badger *calls out*                        We're all here, in my secret hideaway.

William Arrives.

*William soon enters the garage, but shakes hands only with Badger. He is silently offered a can of beer by Jeremy but shakes his head, rubbing his hands.*

William                                      No thanks Jeremy.

    Quite a party going on ...

*Badger goes to the aluminium sheet and removes all of the yellow stickers.*

Max *to William*                              How did it go? Is everything alright?

William *pleased*                              Yes, yes! She seems quite taken with him.

*Badger looks a question.*

William *to Badger*                              Your "ray of sunshine" has been conducting an internet romance for some time with a young British soldier stationed in Northern Africa: tank regiment.

Badger *smiling*                                Do you mean Simone?

William *nods*                                    She finally met her knight in shining armour in person for the very first time this evening.

*[Somewhat theatrical]*

Words cannot describe her affection. She's floating on a cloud.

Badger *waspish*                                I find it difficult to believe that your Simone would not latch onto the right words for **any** situation.

Max *laughs aloud*                              She calls you "The Badger".

Badger    Along with a host of choicer epithets if I know Simone.

*The two young men continue to drink and chuckle. They are relaxed and in good company.*

Badger *to Jeremy*                              Now don't you laugh: that young lady has **you** cast as the chief suspect. She holds that you are "dripping with guilt".

*There is general laughter as Jeremy touches his chest and appears stunned.*

Badger    Now I plan to start again with my sticky notes ... So long as no-one else turns up we can make a go of putting all this into

perspective. We have a new date to deal with.

*The men make themselves comfortable as Badger flips through his post-it notes in order to find the first in the logical sequence. As he does so, he hums a little.*

Badger *absently* My youngest son is serving in North Africa in a tank regiment, as it happens. Probably knows Simone's Lothario ...

*Badger fiddles about with the yellow labels as if shuffling cards that happen to stick together somewhat.*

Max *still gobsmacked* I'm gutted ... About Jim Hale, I mean ...

Badger Right! My first note (these yellow Post-It notes were created by mistake I believe) ... My first note had been the death of BFC of "nest of vipers" fame. But ...

Max But it should be ... The first note should be Perry's drugged-out work chum.

Jeremy Daniel Angestan. June 22<sup>nd</sup> – that's the last date that anyone saw him alive.

*[Suddenly furious with himself]*

God! I was *vile* to his poor sister. Maybe I should send chocolates and opera tickets to the dear lady.

*Jeremy thrashes about: opening and closing the fridge door, then touching anything as he stomps about. Meanwhile Badger writes on one of the labels.*

Badger What was the date of Angestan's death? Do you have that?

*Jeremy stops.*

Jeremy It would have been close to the last-seen date ... either late on June 22<sup>nd</sup> or very early June 23<sup>rd</sup>.

I was able to calculate that based on the condition of the body: plus it fits with the time he was noticed missing and when his body was discovered. That'll be pretty accurate ... You can't

always get that close ...

I'm going to drown myself in grog before I throw myself off a bridge.

Badger Easy does it.

*Badger slaps one yellow note onto the aluminium sheet. It bears the words "DANIEL – Curtis Projects" on it.*

Badger If he was murdered, then why?

Max *somewhat excited* Write another note, Inspector. Call on Perry and walk through the relationship between Daniel (at the prehistoric model shop) and his contact at Sonix Thingy.

Badger Why?

Max Because if this is Creationist versus Evolutionist, then you start with the person that hated Daniel (and his beliefs) enough to --

Jeremy Wait! Wait! Wait! Are you saying that this is tit for tat?

As in: "We'll take out your Evolutionist and then you'll take out our Creationist and then we'll take out --"

William But Jeremy that doesn't explain ... There's something really bothering me.

Jeremy Yes?

William Besides this "us" versus "them" scenario.

Badger Go on!

William Well, it's this Flint-Carew murder. The effort to put my lovely daughters in the hot-seat was too amateurish to be believed. Both girls had cast-iron alibis.

Louise was in a beauty salon being crimped and massaged and preened and foofed ...

At the same time, Bethany visited several emporia picking-up

pre-ordered goods in full sight of uniformed employees.

And neither girl has ever expressed so much as a hint of being devoted to Darwin or the Creationist set ...

*William spreads his arms wide.*

William                      None of it makes sense. It's insane in its stupidity.

*Badger is exhausted. He is seated and slumped forward, staring at the concrete floor of his garage.*

Badger *very tired*                      My issue is that Howard Gore blithely claimed that the company he worked for "dealt extensively with" (those were his words) Sonix Jubatu. Turns out that it ain't so. Gore fabricated that piece of information. I'm now very doubtful about Gore ...

I'd virtually signed him off as a non-starter. Now I have to revisit his entire testimony.

And make a more thorough job of your mother-in-law's list of vipers, William. I'm fairly kicking myself for not going deeper into that ...

I've interviewed the vicar of St Bartholemew's ... and the waiter who served Gore and BFC at the now-famous "last supper".

Then out of left field comes Max's startling revelations about Angestan. And your Jim Hale news, Jeremy. I'm trying to wade about in a heavy water/cornflour mix.

All I seem to do now is to plod from one startling new fact to the next, slipping deeper and deeper into the morass ...

*The other men move about in the garage: either to the fridge where more cans of beer are doled out or generally fiddling with the contraptions stored in the garage.*

Jeremy *big breath*                      Look, for what it's worth, I'll chuck in my penny's worth.

BFC was a key player at Sonix. Beth can tell you all the details.

He was a trusted subaltern to Roth. There was stuff that only he



*Badger comes out of his exhaustion, gazing keenly at Vin, who is walking slowly down the few steps leading from the interior of the house to the garage. The other men stop and turn, wondering who the interloper is.*

Badger *throbbingly*            Vin!

END OF SCENE

### **III, Scene v: Truth And Love (Thursday July 7<sup>th</sup> 2016)**

*Badger is shown into the cramped office of Marius Engers where the two men shake hands. Marius vaguely indicates a chair for Badger.*

Marius                            Thanks for the phone call, Doug. We've been up to our ears with security measures for this Summit Meeting in just under a fortnight's time. It'll be an immense bunfight, you know. Nothing of moment will come of it.

  Anyway, your little problem gives me a welcome break from the gambit of media turns and public protests.

  Where are you at?

*As they talk, Marius pours them both a Scotch-and-soda. They will consume these drinks as the speeches progress.*

Badger                            Officially, I'm not. That is, the stalwarts at Thames Police Strategic Command have --

Marius                            Oh don't mention that crowd of hyenas (please!) or I shall have to down a double Scotch. Do you want a bag of crisps or some pork crackling with your drink?

Badger *smiles, rueful*        No thanks, Marius. I've actually reached the deep-fried Mars bar stage ...

*Marius grins as he flicks an intercom switch. A disembodied crackle is heard.*

Marius *into intercom* Two Azerbaijanis. Thanks. And coffee.

*Marius flicks the switch again.*

Marius *stern* Officially, I'm to warn you off any further investigation: let the Thames Command handle it. But (of course) that will lead to the wrong person being nabbed under glaring headlines.

*[Change of tone: more confidential]*

Thus, **unofficially** I demand that you keep on with your hunt. If they get heavy-handed over at the Thames Command, call me.

*Badger nods.*

Marius Right! Back to this rotten case of yours ... Dirty as a pig's sty ... Can you see any light end-of-tunnel-wise?

Badger Alas no. I have a team of budding young sleuths dogging my every footfall ... To no avail.

Marius *amused* Ah! Don't tell me!

All young, keen and exuberant ... Just like puppies.



*The men have been provided with a deep-fried Mars bar each (on china plates), a tea tray (except that coffee is being served) and they still have their whisky drinks to finish. The Mars bars are sticky and provide some light relief as they speak.*

Marius *wound up* ... But the Pathologist (your young Dr Hurstbridge) is innocent of all involvement. I can personally vouch for him.

No, the problem was with Dr Rogers herself. She had to be moved on.

Badger That's what bothers me. And Dr Kamar is very curious, also. The point is: why (when all was totally in place) did Dr Rogers **not**

take up the temp post at Littlemeeth?

*Marius suddenly stands and goes over to the window. With a very thoughtful look on his face, Marius drums his fingers on the windowpane. He stares out of the window as he speaks, and his voice has somewhat of a distant quality to it.*

Marius This is in complete confidence. You are not at liberty to divulge any of the following information to your puppies-at-heel.

Jane Rogers ...

I received some disturbing information with regard to Dr Rogers and thus headed her off. She's now muddling along in a seaside village in northern Wales as a locum for a sour old sceptic ...

She's out of harm's way and that's where I want her. (Until we clear this up. Or rather until **you** clear it up).

*Marius falls silent.*

Badger *keen to hear all* There must be **something** that I can take from this ...

Marius I happen to be aware of your visit to Sonix Jubatu and of your interview with Anthony Roth. He is a first-class businessman.

Badger Yes, so I've been informed. And he struck me as the genuine article.

Marius Right. However, some of his underlings are keen to impress. They ensure that Roth's fiscal desires come to fruition. Such are the fruits of several years slogging away at Oxford or Cambridge or the London School of Economics ...

Whatever it takes, Doug ...

Now, one of these men (he is Clive Germaine) is (or was) having it off with Rogers. (I heard that bit of scuttlebutt from a reliable source). On your behalf I avoided the risk of compromise.

Badger Compromise? But the deaths started **after** Hurstbridge took up

his post. So how could you have known?

*Marius stalls. He wanders about and then sits.*

Marius *whisper*

The deaths are all got-up to look like they relate to whether or not God had a hand in the zebra's stripes or the giraffe's elongated neck or the duck's egg being waterproofed.

If Darwin's involved, I'll go "he"!

But Dr Rogers ... She manages a top-shelf database. Can point the finger at those cocaine chemists. They know it and they would like to take her and her database **out**.

Speak to her. Warn her to tread carefully. And to trust no-one (except you and I, perhaps).

I'll scratch the directions on this card: Jane Rogers.

And Clive Germaine, too. You may be lucky enough to find him ...

*Badger sits back looking angst-ridden as Marius scribbles the necessary directions onto a business card.*

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT III

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Badger                                    Are you formally requesting a police presence at your workplace and home?

Perry                                     Sure! A great big ugly ex-commando covered in tats and scars. Someone who can handle themselves and **looks** like they can (to boot).

I tell you: I'm scared shitless by this shipwreck.

*Badger jots a note.*

Badger                                    Then consider it done! One ugly gorilla on order. Now --

*Perry leans forward, keen and determined.*

Perry                                     You know all about the packages that were constantly sent to Dan by Jim Hale (who's now been run-down in cold blood). Great God!

Those packages were all very straight: Jim used resin replacement technology to form beautiful skeletal elements. Dan (like me) used them for modelling. Wonderful examples! Hale had contacts at digs in the very farthest geographical points. The pieces simply flooded in.

And reams of notes (printed from a laptop or written all over in Jim's untidy scrawl). We were in fossil heaven!

Sonix Jubatu (via Jim Hale) and my company Curtis Projects were involved in a superb marriage. Do you know that Sonix made one of those fabulous and expensive glamour ads that they show in cinemas? Dan's hands were actually featured in the ad!

Don't ask me to explain but I always felt that there was something other than just Lego instructions in the copious notes sent by Jim Hale to Dan.



*Badger sits in the passenger seat of a police car which is driven by a policewoman. Badger drags a list from his breast pocket. It is the list of the "nest of vipers" created for him by Lady Highgrove. Badger unfolds the list and then stares at it.*

Lady Highgrove *voice-over* Those in the "nest of vipers" at St Bartholemew's in Danube Square:-

Howard Gore, Braydon Flint-Carew, Michael Stenning, Roger Auchenflower, Mrs Delia and Mr Robert Nias, Clive Germaine, Elizabeth Prendergast and Margaret Stearforth.

*Badger frowns, tapping the list on his knee.*

Lady Highgrove *voice-over* They raved on and on and on about God being the supreme architect. They wanted to crush the prevailing beliefs in Darwinism and Evolution and fossils of feathered dinosaurs ...

*Close-up of Badger, thinking deeply.*

Badger *to himself, awestruck* I don't understand ... Clive Germaine ... Why is he on this list?

END OF SCENE

#### **IV, Scene ii: Badger Interviews M. Pinch And Delia (Thursday July 7th 2016)**

*Badger is seated in a pleasant office at Sonix Jubatu. This is the Human Resources centre.*

*A sign on the wall is clearly visible:*

**YOUR JOB IS IMPORTANT AT SONIX JUBATU**

**PLEASE REPORT ANY BULLYING OR OTHER HARASSMENT**

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*M. Pinch smiles at Badger (who concentrates on the list in his hand).*

Badger Clive Germaine?

M. Pinch *proudly* A great favourite! A zoologist who really seems to understand both humans and animals. One of the heroes of Mr Roth's "Strands of Life" program.

When he walks into a room, he knows everyone. A hand-shaker. Lifts the happiness quotient just by being there.

Badger Impressive ...

Margaret Stearforth?

*M. Pinch frowns. She scans through some pages on her laptop.*

M. Pinch *slowly* No. No-one here of that name. Perhaps you could provide me with her maiden name.

Badger If I come to that hurdle, I'll revisit you.

Elizabeth Prendergast?

M. Pinch *rare smile* Oh, yes! Our treasure! What do they say? You must always be congenial with the paymaster, the office snitch and the tea lady. Lizzie is everything to everyone. She dispenses worldly wisdom with every cup of tea (or coffee) that she pours. A mopper-up of tears and a comforter in crisis – that's Lizzie!

Badger Roger Auchenflower?

M. Pinch Mmmm. Roger is approaching middle age, unmarried, shy and nervous. His role at this company revolves around accounting: Accounts Payable. He is the sole support of his sickly father. Takes work home ...

You know the sort. Very active in his local church. Likes the manners of the Vicar there --

Badger And finds the stained-glass windows inspiring. Quite.

Michael Stenning?

M. Pinch He's one of the backroom boys. Researches things. Travels about quite a lot.

Do you know – I'm fairly certain that he belongs to the same church as Roger.

Badger Braydon Flint-Carew?

*Badger keeps his eyes cast downward. There are 2 seconds of silence. Badger raises his eyes. They bore into M. Pinch (who appears to be a scared rabbit).*

Badger *low-voiced,* The **late** Braydon Flint-Carew?  
*menacing*



*Badger sits alone at the desk of M. Pinch. She strides back to her desk. She is very angry.*

*M. Pinch is no longer pleasant with Badger. She glowers at Badger as she slaps some papers onto the desk.*

M. Pinch *cross* ... and that's why I can't understand your scepticism.

Here you are! Forms all filled out and signed. Holidays, just as I said.

*M. Pinch chucks the forms across the table at Badger.*

M. Pinch It was quite clear to all and sundry that Braydon was not at work and would not **be** at work because he was on annual leave. Therefore, nobody bothered Missing Persons since he wasn't considered to be missing.

*Badger stares hard at the forms wearing an inscrutable expression on his face.*

Badger These are genuine (these forms)?

M. Pinch *offended* Of course! What? Do you think I'm lying?

Badger *smooth* Perhaps somebody further up the food-chain asked you to organize these ... After the event ...

M. Pinch *playing to the hilt* That's an outrageous – Preposterous! We don't mess around like that at Sonix Jubatu!

*[Attack direct]*

Do I need to call in the company solicitor to support me, Detective Inspector, in light of your very aggressive style of interview?

Badger *unfazed* Not quite yet, Ms Pinch.

Let's try a different tack then.

Would you be so kind as to tell me the name of the person who was seconded into Mr Flint-Carew's position?

*M. Pinch quickly makes use of her laptop once more, clicking the mouse and keying a few keystrokes.*

M. Pinch *reluctant* Yes, that would be Delia Nias.

*Badger silently pulls the "viper's nest" list from his top pocket and runs a finger down it. Badger flicks his big finger on the list, looking satisfied. It seems that the interview has ended. However, Badger fires in a last question as he stands.*

Badger Mr Robert Nias? I assume that he's Delia's husband.

M. Pinch Certainly. Mr Nias is the spouse of Delia Nias. He is a schoolteacher by profession. No connection to our company at all.

*Badger nods. The interview is closed.*



*In a very tiny room in the Sonix Jubatu building (such as a businessman would use to make private phone calls) Badger interviews Delia.*

Badger I have learnt from others that you are a devoted church-goer,

Mrs Nias. Tell me about the congregation of St Bartholemew's in Danube Square.

Delia *proudly*

Godly people, Detective Inspector. Godly people.

*Badger nods.*

Badger *as if musing*

The vicar seems a very pleasant chap. The stained glass presents a stunning (one might say almost surreal) ...

*[Changes to hard, calculating inquisitor]*

How many of you work for Sonix?

Delia *caught on back foot*

I'm afraid that I don't understand your question, Detective Inspector Badger.

*Once again, Badger retrieves the list which was given to him by Lady Highgrove. This he hands to Delia.*

Badger

I've been fortunate enough to have received the full co-operation of M. Pinch (your Human Resources lady). She has confirmed that everyone on this list currently works for (or has recently worked for) Sonix Jubatu. All except for Maggie Stearforth and Howard Gore, that is.

*[Becomes somewhat theatrical]*

But you all regularly attend St Bart's ... every Sunday ...  
Sometimes oftener ...

*Delia's hand shakes as she holds the paper and glances over it. She is visibly shaken and licks her lips nervously. Ashen-faced, Delia pushes the paper back to Badger.*

Delia *whispers*

I am reluctant to speak further on this matter until I consult with my solicitor.

*Badger abruptly stands.*

Badger

You are certainly well-advised to do so, Mrs Nias. Your Human Resources lady has a solicitor at the starting gates – ready to

jump into action.

I'd like you to accompany me back to the Littlemeeth police station where we can put this plan in train.

*Badger goes to the door and gestures to Delia that she should join him. Delia stands, speaking as she does so.*

*Delia off-hand*                      It's all lies anyway.

*Badger raises his eyebrows. Delia stands before Badger, facing him.*

*Delia disgusted*                      Howard Gore and Clive Germaine are hand-in-glove. If Gore claims to be unaffiliated, he's telling porky pies, Detective Inspector.

END OF SCENE

**Spoiler!**

Explanation: Clive Germaine needs to be set up by the guilty party.

Gore is obviously working zealously to bring that about.

We will have to wait until further on in the script to understand why such a man as Germaine should be involved with the "fruitloops" in the NOV. Note that Badger has already wondered about that.





man: Mr Flint-Carew, who was among your acquaintance.

Lady Highgrove

That's right.

Badger

I have to congratulate you, by the way. Your appraisal of a certain section of the congregation (at St Bartholemew's) was masterly and I thank you.

*Lady Highgrove nods.*

Badger

But I must admit to being puzzled by your reaction to something that your son-in-law remarked.

Lady Highgrove

Oh?

Badger

Yes. You exclaimed the word: "Poppycock!"

Lady Highgrove

I often do so. DI Badger, where does this lead?

Badger

You see, William (on your outburst) responded with "Cheetahs and gazelles". You immediately countered: "Of course".

*Badger shrugs artistically. There is a pregnant pause. He looks at the octogenarian expectantly and she returns his look with uncertainty.*

Lady Highgrove

Perhaps you would not be in difficulty had William merely said: "Cheetahs".

Badger

How so?

Lady Highgrove

Well, I can't truthfully vouch for the "gazelles" but everyone certainly slammed-on about cheetahs. Naturally.

Badger *heavy frown*

Really? I'm so sorry but I seem to be at a bit of a loss ...

Lady Highgrove

Obviously! I thought you would have got it at a stroke.

*Badger stares at Her Ladyship, slowly shaking his head.*

Badger

I'll have to ask you to explain it to me.

*Lady Highgrove breaks into a smug smile and appears not to be about to oblige Badger.*

Badger *leans forward*

I insist.

Lady Highgrove

But Detective Inspector Badger ...

I might be elderly – I **am** elderly (let's not beat about the bush).  
However, my brain is still as sharp as a tack.

Did you not experience a thrill of delight on learning that the victims were all connected with the same company (in one capacity or another)? And that that company's name is "Sonix Jubatu"?

*The air could be cut with a knife. Badger stares, frowns and draws breath. The lady seems to be trying to force an answer from him by osmosis. She gives another of her smug smiles, shaking her head.*

Lady Highgrove

Look here!

*Lady Highgrove pulls a cardboard coaster and biro towards her and writes on the coaster. This she then passes to Badger.*

Badger *reads, all at sea*

ACINONYX JUBATUS

Lady Highgrove

What do you think of that? It's very close, is it not?

*triumphant*

*Badger looks down. He cannot make it out.*

Lady Highgrove

"Sonix Jubatu" and "Acinonyx Jubatus" ... The latter is the scientific name for the cheetah ...

*Open-mouthed, Badger stares at Her Ladyship with his eyes riveted. She smiles and nods, triumphantly.*

END OF SCENE

#### IV, Scene v: Beth Is Interviewed By Thames Police Strategic Command

(Friday July 8<sup>th</sup> 2016)



*The jape here is that at the end of the scene the camera will turn 180 degrees such that we (the audience) realize that instead of toughs from Thames Police Strategic Command, Beth is being "interrogated" by three Easter Island statues (moais). However, the statues are made up to be around 1.84 metres tall and appear to be dressed in business suits.*

*Thus, Beth and her mouthpiece (Simone) will appear to be answering questions fired at them by these stiffys. The sisters will address a spot to the right of our camera (that is, not speak directly into it). Both ladies seem to be frustrated and appalled by the apparent questions being "asked". The conversation is rapid-fire.*

*The location is the Littlemeeth police station. Badger is not present.*

Beth                                 Oh, this is absurd! The reason that I slept on the couch was that the house was full of family and visitors. My eldest sister Leah and her partner took our room (Louise and my room, that is) and so I kipped on the couch. My twin Louise was obviously with her new husband.

For the very last time, I was **not** having any kind of dalliance with Mr Flint-Carew.

Simone And furthermore, my client has explained to you every movement she made from Wednesday morning right through to Saturday night. Every step! She was either in someone's view or was travelling between point A and point B in the full glare of public scrutiny.

In addition, my client has furnished you with a full, frank disclosure of her twin sister's movements during that same timespan.

*Beth fingers the manilla folder (refer ACT II, Scene vii) with contempt. She shoves it away from her.*

Beth Yes! I got along fine with Braydon. He was a very thorough person. For instance, he could only look at all the minute details: he didn't really comprehend "big-picture" stuff. I kept him on the ball in that direction. These notes are forgeries: they are rubbish.

Simone *scathing* How many times does my client have to point out to you that the finger-prints on the handle of the cricket bat were Silica mock-ups. That fact has been duly confirmed by your own backroom boys.

Don't you ever *read* the newspaper? Just recently in the House of Commons a discussion was undertaken to discuss these new-fangled false prints. The up-shot is that finger-prints may no longer be used in police investigation since they are now so easy to replicate by crims.

Beth Why don't you chat with Detective Inspector Badger? He's come up with all kinds of --

Simone You have admitted that the handle of the cricket bat had been scrupulously rubbed down before Louise's look-alike prints were placed on it. That's the stupidest mistake for a crim to make. And you've admitted that both Beth's and Louise's alibis (for the day of his demise) means that they could never have met with the





*Badger and Jane sit together on the rocks. Jane has rested her head on Badger's shoulder.*

*In the background children frolic with adults and teenagers.*

*Jane sighs and pulls a little apart from Badger with her knees crooked such that she rests her head on them. Badger idly chucks smooth pebbles out across the sand.*

*When Jane raises her head, it becomes instantly obvious that she has been crying. She wipes her face with her sleeve.*

Jane *miserable*

I was over the moon when I heard the thrilling news that I was to fill-in for your Path at Littlemeeth. Working with you again! I was transfixed with joy.

And then ... Bam! It all came crashing down on me ... And so you find me in this benighted hell-hole.

Badger

That proved a shock for me, too.

Jane

Doug, I've been thinking about you a lot lately. If you must know ... romantically. Is that a tremendous jolt for you?

Badger *stoic*

It is.

Jane

I mean ... Well, I feel as if I'm in all sorts of trouble but not sure what for ... And (when at my lowest ebb) I wonder if being with my soulmate wouldn't fix everything up for me ...

Yes! I'm aware that what we did was almost naughty ...

Your credo disallows the pathologist and the police inspector from snuggling up together under a duvet in a picture-postcard village inn. One night of unbridled passion because it was raining, and we were both tired and lonely ...

Badger *smiles wryly*

That was quite a night. I remember it a bit, too. Now and then. If you must know ...

Jane I recall it constantly. We could have run amok in Littlemeeth, you and I.

*There is a short silence as Badger continues to throw pebbles. Jane is crying onto her knees. Then Badger stops, slapping his knees.*

Badger Due to the exigencies of my investigation, I cannot revisit that --

Jane *brisk* Oh, tosh! When this case is closed, I'm going to whisk you off to some secret hideaway and have my way with you. Again and again and again!

Badger *amused* I'll certainly make myself available, then.

Jane You just better!

Badger *careful* But word on the streets is that you're in a very close liaison with Clive Germaine. Hmm? What about that?

Jane *shocked* Bollocks! I mean -- where on Earth did you hear that porky? Not from anyone who knows me ...

Why? What does Clive say?

Badger I have been unable to speak with Germaine. He's gone underground without a trace.

*Jane sniffs, wiping her face again.*

Jane *forlorn* Doug! I want to kiss you ... Hard and on the lips ... Until we run out of breath.

But I can't, can I? Because you're wearing your stern "Detective Inspector Badger of the Force" face. Passion under control.

As soon as I saw you strolling along the sand towards me this poor sad lonely body yelled: "Rumpy pumpy!" True!

*[long sigh]*

Oh poop !!!!

*Badger cannot think of a suitable riposte. Jane laughs at her own words. Badger and Jane hug, share*

*a fond kiss and then break apart. They are both chuckling.*

Jane Oh, Dougie dear Doug.

None of this makes much (if any) sense ... Clive was a wildlife warrior just as I was – **am!** He trooped off with the “Strands Of Life” people any number of times ... to New Guinea, Cuba, Greenland --

Badger “Strands Of Life” ... That’s the unit formed by Anthony Roth to act like Greenpeace, Save the Planet and so on. Do I have that right, Jane?

Jane Absolutely!

*[Visible despair]*

Oh, Doug! How could Mr Engers have believed that I was banging Clive and that **that** would interfere with my work?

It’s so unfair! He’s now gone and put an indelible stain on my professional status. Incredible!

Badger Marius Engers wanted to protect you rather than anything else, my dear. This is not an insult to you.

Jane I can’t fathom what --

Badger Three people connected to Clive Germaine (in some respect) have been murdered. Marius has exhibited some pretty snazzy ESP in predicting trouble for you. So rather than want to slaughter him, you should thank him.

Jane *angry tears and heavy sarcasm* Thank you, Mr Engers!

*Jane stalks angrily along the beach. Then she returns to the rock, sniffing. Without warning, Jane positions herself such that she is nestled beside Badger but is facing him. Taking Badger in her arms, she kisses him with great passion. Badger has his arms around Jane and returns the kiss with fervour.*

*Then Jane reluctantly drags herself away, to sit beside Badger once again. As Jane does so, Badger idly strokes her arm.*

Jane *contrite*                      Sorry, Detective Inspector Douglas Badger (owner of my heart and soul).

Badger                                Please. I understand your distress. You've made me long for the end of this business more than –

Look! If it's any help ... I suffer professional slights on a regular basis, courtesy of the stone effigies that populate Thames Police Strategic Command.

*Both Badger and Jane watch the waves and the frolicking children.*

Badger *sighs*                      Tell me about your replacement at Littlemeeth.

Jane                                    Jeremy Hurstbridge?

Badger                                Do you know much about him?

Jane                                    Of course.

*[Wry smile]*

He came top in his year for Forensic Analysis: with neither chemical aids nor new-age analytical tools he can dissect any corpse you care to throw on the table and identify injury or disease in any organ ... Very gifted ... A natural Pathologist ... I think that he would have caught Jack The Ripper had he been alive in those dark Victorian times.

*Badger pouts slightly. Jane takes Badger's hand in hers.*

Badger                                That's impressive.

Jane                                    Rather! However, he's not a deep-thinker like me ... As I am, should I say?

Badger                                Oh?

Jane                                    Whenever some poor sod is wheeled in (zipped-up in his body

bag and ready to be chucked onto my butcher's block) I always wonder.

Action Man Jeremy tends to insist on sign-off: "Move on"!

Look! I'm not in any way, shape or form implying that he's not a great Path ... It's just that he doesn't have (as I do) a post-op mulling-it-over kind of attitude.

I'm not explaining myself, but I know what I want to say, Doug.

*[Big breath]*

This is the thing ... You probably don't know of this but some of my colleagues and I are beavering away behind the scenes. We have a database of drugs along with possible dealers focusing on drug-related deaths.

Every chemist leaves a tiny hallmark when a batch of illicit crack hits the streets. We're trying to home-in on the dealers via the pathetic remains of the sick side of London that washes through our morgues.

*There is a silence. Jane kisses the back of Badger's hand. Badger seems to be deep in thought.*

Badger I should imagine that you are thus able to assist the police with this data ... in their enquiries ... Is that correct?

Jane Yes ... And they have always been of huge assistance to us. Even your stone effigies at TPSC have willingly come to the party. A great instance of working hand-in-hand I guess you'd say.

Badger Here's an academic question for you, then: suppose I have a high-end consumer (top-shelf shit). This apocryphal chap goes on the straight for six months and then unexpectedly O.D.'s in one last almighty stand ... Then what conclusions might I draw from your data?

Jane I would test his body fluids and compare the results against our

standards.

Badger What would a match reveal?

Jane I might ("might"! ) be able to identify the source of the stuff.

Badger *very thoughtful* ... And under some slight pressure said source might ("might"! ) give to me the name of his customer ...

Jane *really surprised* But you already know who that is! Surely: the corpse!

Badger *shakes head* Not in this instance. Our boy (from our academic question) was helped on his way ...

*[Kisses the back of Jane's hand]*

Oh! And in the event that you are **not** the perpetrator of these murders, then I'd like to propose marriage to you. Promise!



*Jane walks with Badger back to his car.*

Badger Please, please stay here in relative safety. You are well hidden. And I hope – beyond the reach of the felons.

When I can, I'll come and rescue you.

*Jane pouts, downcast.*

Badger No! Really Jane! This business is running amok. I have no idea what will be the outcome.

*They hold hands. The wind is whipping at their hair. They stare at each other, smiling. Badger and Jane share a kiss, then Badger departs in his car, leaving Jane bereft as she watches his car drive out of sight.*

END OF SCENE

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**IV, Scene vii:** We Revisit The Yellow Post-It Notes (Sunday July 10<sup>th</sup> 2016)

*Badger is now facing the aluminium sheet in his garage. It is covered in yellow post-it notes, memos, labels, photos and other bits and pieces. Badger is busily and industriously grouping and regrouping the pieces on the aluminium sheet.*

*Simone strolls into the garage via the short stair-case. Badger glances at her, smiling.*

Simone                    I've sent Vin off for supplies, since two bachelors always get it wrong.

Badger *drawls*            One bachelor and one widower, to be exact.

Simone                    Right! But exactitude makes it no better. It all amounts to "empty-fridge" syndrome no matter what you call yourselves. You know that there ought to be a service like an ambulance with flashing lights and a wailing siren that pulls up at the door and a little man in a crisp blue and white uniform rushes up and hands over sticky toffee pudding. And a pannikin of clotted cream as a side dish.

Life would be worthwhile and totally bearable under those conditions.

Badger *grinning*            We don't stretch to that height of sophistication in these backwoods.

Simone *sniffing*            Hence my requesting your son (not a hint of "ordering", mind you!) to rifle through the local corner store for Neapolitan ice-cream.

*[Takes a breath and changes tack]*

You have it figured out?

Badger *sadly*                Not really ... No. No idea.



stands about with his supporters but the bride is delivered up to him at the altar as if she is a kind of offering meant to propitiate the gods.

*[Gives an embarrassed laugh]*

Sorry, I'm getting carried away ...

And so ... Assume for a moment that I'm a disinterested bystander: how does the modern man propose to a lady these days? It used to be a flashy ring, flowers and down on bended knee. Does that still hold good?

Simone *matter of fact* God no! We were hard at it when he came to a roaring climax at which time he shouted:

*[Imitates a man speaking]*

"Agh! We have to get hitched! What d'you say?"

Badger *appalled* Oh my Lord! I'm sorry that I asked!

Simone *shrugs* But you **did** ask. The upshot is that I said "Yes!" so you'll become my father-in-law. I'll call you Father Badger or better still Dadger.

*Badger grimaces and makes a humping noise.*

Simone I know it's a fair cop.

*[Indicating the aluminium sheet]*

Talk me through this lot. It will take your mind off Vin's animalistic tendencies.

Badger As if anything could ...

*Simone points to the item on the board related to Daniel Angestan.*

Simone This one. Tell all.

Badger Daniel Angestan was affiliated with the Darwinists. He was murdered: it was cleverly intended that the death look like a



*[Becoming more definite]*

All that I can come up with is that in nine days' time London will be the host city for a Summit Meeting based on future plans for the preservation of wildlife. This is not a "Did-God-create-the-albatross?" fest nor a forum for devotees of Charles Darwin. Several large companies have ploughed millions and millions of pounds into this world-wide project which is being sponsored by Sonix Jubatu. It's all about good will and good feeling and good publicity. It's about our fast-depleting stock of wildlife irrespective of who or what created it.

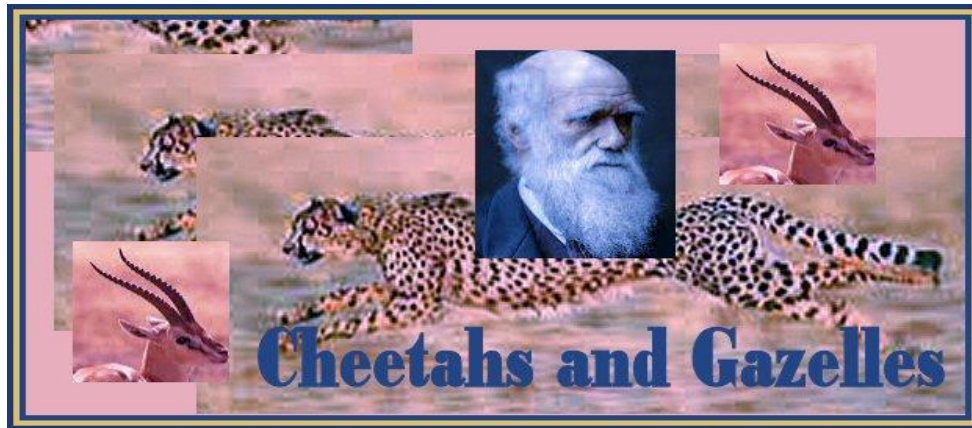
END OF SCENE

END OF ACT IV

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## ACT V

### **V, Scene i:** The Mysterious Tattoo (Monday July 11<sup>th</sup> 2016)

*The speeches in this scene are all heard in voice-over. The location is a busy morgue in London and we are able to hear the noise. Nathan's casually-clothed body has been discovered in the river. The only identifying feature seems to be an ornate tattoo on his right hip.*

*We (the audience) see the bustle of people in the morgue but not yet the mystery tattoo, nor Nathan's corpse.*

Male #1 <i>voice-over</i>	Creepy! That's just creepy!
	What are we looking at? A Brazilian native bearing a grudge?
Male #2 <i>voice-over</i>	I've never seen these jiggers except in films ... Incredible! It would be instant death, I suppose ...
Male #1 <i>voice-over</i>	Grotesquely so!
	But his ink is smooth. Nice. Classy.
Male #2 <i>voice-over</i>	Yes, that's artwork. Real culture. Suave with a capital "S".
Male #1 <i>voice-over</i>	Get a photo of that – what would you say? Gothic scorpion? – Get that out to the usual bods along with his mug shot ... You

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never know, someone may recognize it ...

Male #2 *voice-over*

Hey! Now that I take a better look ...

That's ... That's something to do with motorcycle riders, I think ...

I saw that very same design on a bloke in a bar ... He was drinking with bikers and a couple of them were shirtless. And the bloke had low-slung jeans ... I swear that he had this same tat on his hip ...

Male #3 *voice-over*

You saw --

Male #2 *voice-over*

No! I never saw **this** bloke ... But what I mean is ... That tattoo is definitely our best lead.

Male #1 *voice-over*

Great! Get it out there, then: quick as you can! And mention that lethal feathered dart at the same time.



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END OF SCENE

**V, Scene ii:** The Drug Laboratory of Stephen, Linton And Nathan (Monday July 11<sup>th</sup> 2016)

*Previously seen in ACT I, Scene i.*

*At a small battered kitchen table (covered in manufactured counter surface and littered with the usual kitchen mess) sits the deceased Linton. He leans back in his chair, a large knife protruding from his blood-stained chest. Linton has taken the precaution of wearing a leather waistcoat under a heavy-duty overcoat.*

*The camera will have to run down his body to the floor, and pick-out (clearly) an ornamental pipe used to fire a blow-dart.*

*Recall that Stephen was running a boutique drug laboratory from his house wherein Nathan and Linton met with him.*

*As in previous scenes, the kitchen is littered with the tools of the chemist's trade. The camera will hover about, moving 360 degrees around the room.*

*At the start of this scene (until advised) the following voices are heard as Linton (dead) is the only occupant of the kitchen.*

Policeman *voice-off* But the call we received came from this phone.

Nervous man *voice-off* It was stolen from my car. I've reported it to you chaps. They smashed the passenger window and stole it from the front seat.

*[Pause]*

It was parked-up at Cadbury. Been up to Scotland in the train so left the car near a friend's place. Got back to where I parked it and chucked everything in – into the car, I mean. Just plonked it in, with the phone on the front seat, I guess. Locked it and then tore in to let my pal know that I was collecting it. (To save him

from worrying, you know.)

*[Pause]*

Christ! I would have only been gone 10 or 12 minutes. It's not damaged, is it? The phone, I mean.

Policeman *voice-off*

Not to my knowledge. Probably been used to make several overseas calls, though (I don't doubt). That's what they do these tykes.

Look, you can seek restitution from your phone company. We'll give you a chit to quote in your compensation claim to them.

In the meantime, we need to hold onto this unit for a bit longer. The constable will give you all the necessary paperwork (receipts and so on). Just trot along with her to the desk.

Nervous man *voice-off*

Alright ... I suppose ... Thank you ...

Badger *voice-off*

And the prints?

Policeman *voice-off*

Yes, Sir. Several matches. Mostly drifters and squatters. Bit of petty theft. I think that they simply wanted to be funny and shocking: you know, Sir – nick somebody's mobile phone and clock-up some expensive calls. And snap a whole lot of filthy photos on it. No faces ... Nothing to identify them.

Badger *wryly voice-off*

Not unless Thames Police Strategic Command has expanded its database to include tits, groins and bums, that is.

Policeman *voice-off*

I shouldn't be surprised. One of the "ladies" had a small tattoo on one of her breasts but the photo was really blurry. I doubt it would stand up in court.

Badger *stern voice-off*

Get out an APB: I want the squatters warned that if they nicked any of these drugs, they must dispose of them immediately. In a used needle receptacle. Who knows what this tosser was hatching! That's your top priority.

Policeman *voice-off*      Sir!



*Badger and Jeremy are now working away in the kitchen along with many SOCO people. The speeches are no longer in voice-over.*

Badger                      Okay. Drug deal gone wrong?

Jeremy                      Looks like it.

Badger                      Or a bad batch ... Somebody didn't agree with something that didn't agree with him ...

Is this the chemist, busy brewing his evil concoctions when he lets his potential killer indoors?

No signs of break-in. They talk as the chemist continues to work. They argue. Or maybe not ... Maybe the killer simply waited for the right moment and then struck.

Jeremy                      It was clean and quick. The murderer knew exactly where to stick the knife in and he used some brute force.

Badger                      "He"?

Jeremy *nods*                Yes. I'm bucking for a man: a strong man used to physical exertion. Commando-trained, maybe? Or else a butcher or ...

I know we've had this conversation before, but I haven't seen a female come even close to this. Even one in the middle of an epileptic fit ...

That's one very serious knife wound through many layers of clothing. He'd have died quickly, like I said.

Badger                      And then (calm as you like) our strong arm let himself out and wandered off. The neighbours neither heard nor saw a thing. There have been men coming and going over the last few

months, but nothing of note.

Then along come the squatters with their stolen phone. They gain access through the open back door. Presumably they came here to have raunchy sex (photographing themselves as they went) and then kip. But John Doe here is awaiting them with a knife sticking out of his chest. Their screams were heard by half the street.

Jeremy At least they had the decency to phone the police.

Badger Dumped the cell phone and then scarpered.

*Badger wanders about in thought, watching the others searching diligently for clues.*

Badger Jeremy, I've been to see Jane Rogers in Wales. She told me of a drug database. I think that that might be a very good place to start.

Jeremy You're thinking --

Badger I'm wondering if there is a link between your poor murdered druggie (Daniel Angestan) and this man.

*[Takes a big breath]*

I desperately want there to be a link.

Jeremy *stern* Not scientific. Want nothing. Expect nothing. Let the evidence speak in its own voice.

However, leave it to me. I'll do that legwork for you – about the database.

Badger *bitter irony* Dr Hurstbridge, if I am able to pin the murder of Angestan onto this tosser, then I can hand the whole thing back to the TPSC boys and let them kick it about.

END OF SCENE

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**V, Scene iii:** Badger's House (Late, Monday July 11<sup>th</sup> 2016)

*It is night time, with the moon providing some light.*

*Outside Badger's house, a furtive figure (Stephen) can be seen to flit quickly from the moonlight into the black shadows.*

*Our camera then follows this black-clad figure as he climbs into the house through a window.*



*Stephen has silently crept into the house, into the sitting room. We can hear Badger snoring rhythmically; as well as the sound of a cheap wall clock ticking. Stephen looks about, uncertain how to proceed.*

Stephen *loud whisper*      Bessie? Bess? It's Steph ...

*Stephen continues to creep about. Just as he leaves the sitting room, Vin jumps him and a violent scuffle ensues, with much grunting and angry shouting.*



*Badger wakes suddenly. He is immediately concerned and alarmed at the sound of a scuffle. He snaps on his bedside light, looks quickly at his alarm clock (it is just after midnight) and mutters to nobody in particular.*

Badger *flustered*      What the hell ... ? Coming! Coming!



*Back in the doorway to the sitting room. We find Vin standing over Stephen, who cowers on the floor (very defensive). Vin has no obvious bruising; Stephen has a bleeding nose and a mouse under one eye.*

*Badger arrives on the scene, tying his dressing gown. Badger looks harassed and concerned.*

Badger *to Vin*                   What's this?

Vin *stern*                         An intruder, presumably.

*Stephen quickly looks from Badger back to Vin and then back to Badger.*

Stephen *re-assuring*         No, no! I've come to talk to Bessie. This is her house, isn't it?

Badger *shocked*                Bessie? My Bessie?

Stephen                         Yes, that's right. Bessie Mills as she was. Your missus, I suppose now. My sister at any rate. Is she here?

*Badger is totally at sea. He looks at Vin helplessly. Vin (however) sees the funny side.*

Vin *amused*                    Are you my long-lost Uncle Stephen, then?

*Stephen nods quickly, hoping that this will avoid further punishment. Vin drags Stephen to his feet.*

Stephen *relieved*             Where the hell did you learn to fight like that?

Vin                                Army. I'm Vin Badger (Bessie's youngest son). Glad to meet you. Sorry for the dust-up.

*Stephen and Vin shake hands.*

Vin *indicating Badger*        And this is (was!) Bessie's husband. This is my father, Douglas Badger.

*Stephen is nervous about shaking Badger's hand. And Badger is extremely reluctant to do so.*

*However, a handshake of sorts is effected between the two men.*

Vin *kindly*                     I have to tell you that your sister (my Mum) passed away two years ago. She developed a lump in her breast that metastasized. Unfortunately.

*Stephen is appalled by this news. He appears about to stagger.*

Stephen *groggy*                Is it alright if I sit down? That ... That's hit me for six.

*Badger signals to Stephen that he should sit in one of the armchairs. Stephen flops heavily into a large velvet-covered lounge chair.*

Vin *harsh*                        You won't get any sympathy here, mate – uncle or not. Had you

bothered to keep in touch with your sister over the years ...

*Badger quickly leaps into action, as Stephen appears to be about to expire. Badger goes to Stephen and drops a friendly hand on his shoulder.*

*Badger to Vin*                      Could you whip up some cups of tea, please Vin? And some bikkies (whatever's in the tin) ...

*Vin nods solemnly and then exits. Badger sits opposite Stephen who has begun to cry.*

*Stephen unsteady and tearful*                      They've got my place under quarantine (the ruddy police have). Who knows why! But whatever is the matter, I can't go home. That's why I was hoping that Bessie could help me. Put me up for the night. I don't have anybody else, see.

*Badger*                              You're more than welcome to stay here for the night, by all means. You are family ... But I'll need to know more about this. You see, Stephen: I'm a police officer. A detective inspector.

*Stephen looks horrified as tears continue to roll down his cheeks.*

*Badger wisely*                      Yes ... I thought that that might make all the difference.

*Stephen*                              I don't have much choice. If I can find a bolthole to hide myself then I'll be safe.

*Badger kindly*                      I can't turn a blind eye to criminal activities. However, there's no immediate need to lock you up tonight. Let's make a deal: I'll give you a bed for the night and then we'll go from there. A bath, a feed, a comfy bed ... Only because you're family, mind.

*Stephen breaks down completely, sobbing uncontrollably. Badger pats his knee.*

*Badger comforting*                      Look! I'm just going off to help Vin. And then we'll sit around and chat over a hot cup of tea. Won't be a tick ...

*Badger shuffles off out of the room, leaving Stephen weeping.*



*The three men sit at ease in the sitting room, with tea and biscuits to keep them going. Stephen has composed himself by this time.*

Stephen                    So (as I say) I've had a variety of names. Managed to gain useful employment as a hospital pharmacist somewhere or other on this planet. Wherever the wind blew me. I am fully qualified, by the way. But I strayed from the "good people". Call it corrupt companions if you like ... It still amounts to the same thing. I went off the rails.

And before you frown at me with your self-righteous po-faced demeanours, gentlemen: I always ensured without fail that my stuff was pure and clean. Nobody got sick and nobody died from my pharmaceuticals unless they O.D'ed.

Badger *curious*            Let me understand: were you working from home in this illicit drug trade of yours?

*Stephen looks warily at Badger and nods slowly.*

Badger *intense*            In the kitchen was it? In Myrtle Grove, perhaps?

*Stephen stares at Badger.*

Badger *whispers*            Number 19?

*Stephen gulps. He then takes recourse to his cup of tea and reaches for another biscuit. Badger leans back in his chair.*

Badger                    So, now we have it ...

The reason why your home is currently a crime scene is that a man was discovered therein with a really nasty knife wound to the chest. My friends at Thames Police Strategic Command have not yet leapt into action at Myrtle Street. But give them time ...

Stephen *aghast*            What man?

*Badger decides to finish there.*

Badger I shall obtain the post-mortem photos for you on the morrow. It's late and I'm sure that you're as tired as I am. So! Bed! We're more or less the same size. I have some new jarmies which you may care to try out. And also some clean clothes for the morrow.

Stephen Thanks, mate. That's very kind. Nothing but civility and bonhomie at La Maison Badger, eh?

Badger Vin will show you around the house. Your uncle can sleep in that spare room which Kelly likes so much. I'm confident that you'll be able to shift his mess off the bed.

Vin Sure! Consider it done.

*Badger is encouraging in his generosity and warmth. Stephen seems both relieved and docile.*



*On the following morning, Stephen is found in the Badger kitchen. He is avidly eating a large English breakfast (sausages, bacon, fried eggs, fried tomatoes and 4 slices of buttered toast). Stephen is dressed in some clean smart casual clothes provided by Badger. Stephen has bathed and shaved: he now looks quite presentable and has regained his lost equanimity somewhat.*

*Badger walks briskly into the kitchen. He is dressed for work. Wordlessly he passes a sheet of A4 paper to Stephen. It bears the post-mortem photograph of Linton on it. Stephen glances at the sheet and nods. He continues to eat as he speaks, evidencing a complete control of his emotions.*

Stephen That's Linton Bilt. B-I-L-T (no "U"). An extraordinarily gifted hitman. Not enamoured of reasoned thought. Acted (or rather "reacted") on impulse. No planning. And has proved himself unable to heed clear instructions.

*Badger raises an eyebrow.*

Stephen Self-nominated ringleader mastermind and head honcho of my operation. Trouble was that he was overstretching his talent, given his vastly limited grasp on reality. The fact that he is

deceased surprises me not one scintilla.

*Badger swiftly passes another sheet of A4 paper to Stephen. This one has Nathan's post-mortem photo on it. Stephen continues to eat in meditative fashion as he glances at the second sheet.*

Stephen                    That? That's another one. Nathan Sligo. Brainy, urbane ... The face of the Troika to be wheeled-out in front of the public. A good man to work with (if that makes sense). I am saddened by his demise.

*Before Badger passes a third sheet of A4 paper to Stephen, he quickly glances about.*

Badger                    I'm nervous to discuss this one in front of Vin. For whatever reason, Vin has exactly the same scorpion tat in exactly the same spot.

*Stephen looks at Badger, nodding.*

Stephen                    You can talk about it until your bum drops off – but they will have taken a vow to stick up for each other and never to discuss the nature of that pledge. Worse than the Masons.

*A third A4 page bears the photo of Nathan's Gothic scorpion tattoo. Stephen nods when he sees this. Badger collects the A4 sheets. Stephen has shifted slightly from co-operative underdog to street-smart sophisticate (with a low opinion of coppers).*

Stephen *knowingly*        Doug, Doug ... Your son is in cahoots with my buddy.  
                                      Makes you think ...  
                                      *[Winks, then change of tack]*

                                      Were they **both** found in my kitchen – Bilt and Sligo?

*Badger shakes his head. He passes back to Stephen the A4 sheet featuring Linton.*

Badger                    A strongarm took care of Bilt with a serious hunting knife. Could this have been Sligo?

Stephen                    Not killed by Sligo ... No ... Nathe was not up to Bilt's weight. Anyway, Nathan's methods were more in the jungle line ...

*Badger now swaps Linton's photo for Nathan's in front of Stephen.*

Badger                                    This other bloke (the one you call Sligo) was killed instantly by a poisoned dart in the back of his neck. Then his body was dumped in the river. Well, that's how we assume he got there.

Stephen *harsh laugh*                The old dart in the neck, was it? How bloody ironic!  
You see, **that** was Sligo's speciality. Funny that he went that way. How is it now: "Hoist with his own petard." Hamlet? Must have been one of his pupils.

Badger                                    Let's get this straight. Sligo would not (could not) have killed Linton. And Linton likewise would/could not have killed Sligo.  
Then ... If it wasn't **you**, Stephen ...

Stephen *frightened*                Hey! No! Wait a bit ...  
That's – I live and die by my Oath ... My promise not to --

Badger                                    Fine! Then another person has killed your mates and is no doubt gunning for you.

*Stephen shrugs (having regained his equanimity).*

*He has finished his breakfast and now sips from his cup of tea. Stephen now evidences no emotion.*

*Badger watches Stephen with a hard expression on his face. Stephen has changed from a lost man whimpering in fright to a clever operator (afraid of no-one).*

Badger                                    Okay.  
I'll ring in those names to my fellow bizzies ... Tell some salty tale about recognizing them from the old days. Linton Bilt and Sligo ...

Stephen *sneers*                        Nathan Sligo. Sure ... Do that.

Badger *stern*                            And you'll stay here to assist me with my enquiries upon my return. Obviously, there's to be no funny business. I cannot permit you to enter my garage (which has been transformed into

a crime investigation centre).

Furthermore, I may have to charge you with your drug-related activities. But not yet ... Not yet ...

Stephen *smug*

I have a choice between staying here (in some comfort) with my brother-in-law and nephew. Or I could be running about at large where the goons who killed my partners desire my phizz to be mounted in the trophy room to complete the set.

Is it in any degree likely that I'll fly the coop?

*Stephen delivers a cute but questioning look.*

END OF SCENE

#### **V, Scene iv:** At The Pendlebury Home (Tuesday July 12<sup>th</sup> 2016)

*It is a lovely summer day. Lady Highgrove has been driven over to the Pendlebury home to ensure that Beth is okay. Lisa, William, Jeremy, Beth and Lady Highgrove are taking afternoon tea in the conservatory. From the window, Lady Highgrove's patient chauffeur (Paul Sligo) can be seen strolling about. Paul keeps his hands deep in his pockets as he trundles along aimlessly, whistling as he goes.*

*The peace is broken as Simone and Vin dash into view. They romp, laugh and shout as they play with the garden hose. It is very boy/girl: they are young and in love. They squirt each other. As Simone shrieks and squeals, Paul smiles.*

*The hose is turned off. Vin and Simone are breathless and laughing helplessly. Both are dripping wet.*

Vin *shouts*

I think you should get your wet clobber off before you catch cold.

Simone *laughs*

No way! My mother will be watching us from the window. She'd have a pink fit if I romped about topless.

*Vin chuckles as he heaves himself out of his wet polo shirt. He advances in a meaningful way towards Simone, who backs away. Vin has a distinctive scorpion tattoo on his right hip. This is exactly the same tattoo found on the late Nathan Sligo's hip.*

*Our camera focuses on Paul. On seeing Vin's tattoo, Paul's expression changes from amused delight to frowning uneasy disbelief. Vin takes in Paul's change in expression and his face hardens. Vin squares his shoulders, facing-off against Paul in a macho way. Paul's eyes flick from Vin's face down to the superb tattoo.*



*Inside the conservatory, Lady Highgrove watches her driver through the window as she speaks to William.*

Lady Highgrove                    I was just about to use that time-honoured excuse about leaving before one scoffs all the chockie bikkies when --

*Lady Highgrove hesitates. William joins her at the window. They (and we, the audience) can clearly see the chauffeur taking off his jacket and shirt under Vin's stern gaze.*

*Lady Highgrove emits a very heavy sigh and looks downtrodden.*

Lady Highgrove *whispers*    Tsk! And so we go. It was ever thus ...

William *concerned*            Are you alright, Old Thing?

Lady Highgrove *sighing*      Oh dear ... My driver is once again removing his kit ...  
This exercise will no doubt be in relation to his one and only tattoo.

I've come to believe that most people are decorated with ink as a form of self-expression. But Sligo bears his as a badge of honour (or so it would appear).

William *astounded*            What on Earth ... ?

Lady Highgrove                    For all that he's an excellent driver, one can't sack a man simply on the basis of his body ornamentation, can one?

William *lost* His tattoo?

*Jeremy quickly joins Her Ladyship and William at the window.*

Jeremy *keen* What's this about a tattoo?

Lady Highgrove From time to time my driver disrobes in order to display to an unidentified party his glorious tattoo in the style of a black Gothic scorpion. Some kind of secret society I understand.

*Without a word, Jeremy dashes off. Through the conservatory window we see Vin and Paul go into a vigorous hug. Jeremy can be seen running into view.*

Lady Highgrove *heavily* Ah, yes! And this is how it invariably ends: a masculine hug  
*sarcastic* denoting good fellowship, along with a special handshake.

My driver and your future son-in-law, dear William. No wonder that my health is so fragile!



*Out in the garden, Paul stares without expression at Jeremy's mobile phone. William, Simone and Vin stand about in close background.*

*Paul nods slowly.*

Paul *solemn* Yes ... He's my elder brother Nathan Sligo. He attained the rank of captain in the British Army. I've not seen him for many years ...

He slipped off the radar, I guess you'd say ...

END OF SCENE

## **V, Scene v:** Sorting Out Who Did What To Whom (Tuesday July 12<sup>th</sup> 2016)

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*As mentioned, Stephen cannot be permitted to enter Badger's garage. In Badger's mind, Stephen may be involved in one or other of the crimes (even though he denies this). Thus, Stephen will not see the photograph of Howard Gore until the morning tea party.*

*Once again, a collection of people gathers in Badger's garage.*

*One by one they are introduced to the scene until the full complement is in attendance. From the very beginning of the scene, there will be an unintelligible babble (voices off) until we are ready to begin the genuine conversation.*

*In order of appearance: Vin, Jeremy, William, Paul, Beth and Simone (carrying Paul's discarded kit). Both sisters find seats for themselves whereas the men stand. Badger himself will arrive later, as advised. Throughout these "arrivals", Vin will continue to shuffle the post-it notes about, talking to himself as he does so.*

*Vin murmuring*                      One Leslie Smart (not his real name) contacted my uncle (at the races) in order to sign up Linton Bilt (now deceased) with a view to hiring him in his role as hitman.

Uncle Steve completely refused to be involved. Something about his Pharmacist Oath or Promise, it's called.

*Simone scathing*                      He was cooking crack, for God's sake!

*Vin*    That's why Dad won't let him anywhere near this garage. He can't be allowed to spy out this sensitive information (related to the investigation).

*Beth*    But evidently ***we're*** okay.

*Vin turns slowly away from the aluminium sheet to look unseeing at Beth.*

*Simone nods*                              And the other man in the troika is Paul's late brother Nathan. Same tattoo (but obviously we aren't at liberty to discuss that sensitive subject.) Paul is long-time chauffeur to the Dowager Lady Highgrove, our grand-mother.

Beth                                      Also grand-mother to Anthony Roth who hired all these victims (directly or indirectly).

Simone *sugar-sweet smile*                      It all fits so nicely ...

*Vin nods slowly. He looks back at the aluminium sheet, very thoughtful.*

*Then Vin turns towards Paul, who is still stripped to the waist. Vin looks interested.*

Vin *smartarse*                              A bare-chested chauffeur ... The Dowager Lady Highgrove would appear to be a raver.

*Paul is amused as he realizes that he has somehow lost his kit. However, Simone has it. She holds up Paul's shirt, tie and jacket. Paul looks relieved and then strides quickly to her. With whispered thanks Paul dresses himself as the following speeches are made.*

William *sounding bored*                      Could we trouble you, Vin? You had reached the part in your narrative where your uncle was approached by a man calling himself Leslie Smart to take out Angestan, Flint-Carew and Jim Hale.

Vin    Uncle Steve refused to have a bar of it. Bilt took over. Linton Bilt and Nathan Sligo immediately set about with the first two murders. However, they were beaten to the punch with Jim Hale. Their plan was the poisoned darts. Someone else rammed a car into Hale before they could even fire one dart.

*This declaration causes a frisson of shock to ripple through the group.*

Vin    They quickly concluded that a drug overdose would come as no surprise to the world at large in relation to a known drug abuser. Simple and undetectable, had the dose been administered as Angestan would have done.

Jeremy                                        The latest puncture wound was inconsistent with previous wounds, both in position and angle. The deceased had been a habitual user with clearly-defined habits.

William

Wait! Something has just occurred to me.

According to Steve Mills, Leslie Smart hired Bilt and Sligo to act as hitmen. But their efforts were so amateurish ... the way they tried to tie-in my twins! ... A complete shambles.

My gut is telling me that Smart no longer trusted his hitmen. He simply took out Jim Hale before they could ... Mmm ...

I was just wondering ... In Inspector Badger's absence ... Would it not be advantageous to run an official check on this Bilt's bank account, looking for recent sizeable deposits? That might identify who this Leslie Smart really is, surely?

*Jeremy's mobile phone rings. It is a call from the mortuary. Jeremy is required immediately back at base. He argues for a moment and then gives in, hurriedly excusing himself to everyone. Before leaving, he rushes over to kiss Bethany, and to pat Simone on the shoulder.*

~~~~~ Meanwhile ~~~~~  
 ~~~~~ as Jeremy's activities progress ~~~~~

*Vin dives into his pocket for his phone and begins to speedily effect the call that is mentioned in his following speech. As he does so, the remaining men huddle at the board, whereas the sisters remain in their chairs until otherwise advised.*

Vin

Sure! Great idea! Call him now.

Yeah, hi Dad. We're all here in the garage, thrashing it out.

Listen! Could you somehow organize to have Linton Bilt's bank statements checked for a really large amount? We (that is you) need the name of the depositor. Hey! Try Nathan Sligo as well.

Oh! And I was thinking ... That list you have from Simone's Granny: from the church. Are you able to photograph it and



Hale and Mr Daniel Angestan. Is it possible for me to review them?

*[Listening intently]*

Oh, I see ... Who ... ? Could you spell that please?

Thank you!

*Simone ends the call and scribbles hastily onto the post-it note. She then goes to Vin. The group of men continue to mutter away in a deep background drone.*

Simone                      Someone has beaten us to the punch.  
  
Did you get hold of that list from your Father? The "cheetahs and gazelles" people?

*Vin checks his phone.*

Vin                              Er ... Yeah!

*Together they peer at the photo displayed on Vin's phone.*

Simone *squinting*              That one there: is that "Clive Germaine"?

*Vin and Simone continue to peer at the phone.*

Vin *drawling*                      Y-e-a-h ... I guess ... I guess that's what it is ... "Clive Germaine".  
You're right.

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT V



Vin Pack? What for?

Badger *holding the door open* I'm 10 minutes from jumping into my car and heading off for Wales (the northern strond of same).

Vin *surprised* Wales? Again?

*Badger goes back to Vin and drops a hand heavily on Vin's shoulder.*

Badger Listen Boyo!

You are getting it off with your beautiful fiancée. And good luck to you on that score, my bonny boy.

Meanwhile, our favourite forensic whizkid has his sights set on one of her lovely sisters. Another sister still a bride. A fourth sister has just joyously announced that she and Max are expecting.

Get my drift? I seem to be the only bloke around here missing out!

If you need me, I'll be snuggled up under a duvet with a scrumptious lady (a doctor no less) in a perfect picture-postcard village inn.

No longer tired ... no longer lonely. And my bloody phone will be very firmly switched off!

*Badger disappears inside. The back door slams behind him. Vin scratches his head (looking a bit lost). Then he chuckles (pleased for his father).*

END OF SCENE

**VI, Scene ii: Jeremy's Proposal Goes Amiss (Saturday July 16<sup>th</sup> 2016)**

*External. Badger's house.*

*Jeremy stands in the garden in which stands Badger's house. Through a window, we can see Louise busily moving about in Badger's kitchen.*

*We see Jeremy act like a weightlifter. He boldly marches into Badger's kitchen (depositing the bunch of flowers on the bench) and sweeps Louise into his arms. He kisses her with gusto then immediately sinks to one knee. Holding a small ring box in one hand he reaches for her other hand. Just as he blurts out his speech, he realizes that her ring finger is already occupied. This throws Jeremy utterly.*

Jeremy *heartfelt*                      Will you please do me the greatest honour and make me the very happiest of men? I love you more than ... -- wha'?

*Archie saunters in, highly amused. He takes in the situation immediately.*

Archie                                      Sorry mate. Valiant effort on your part and all that -- but the lady's already spoken for. But all said that was a bloody fine job!

*Still on one knee, Jeremy blinks in absolute shock. He does not move, even though Beth now sweeps into the kitchen.*

Beth *overjoyed*                      Lill! Oh, I'm so so so very sorry that your honeymoon was cut short.

OMG! But it's been all murder and mayhem here.

*Beth runs in to hug her sister. There is a fond embrace. Jeremy is unable to move.*

Beth *surprised*                      Jeremy! What on earth are you doing down there? You haven't lost a contact lens or something, have you? Don't move everyone until Jeremy locates it!

Louise *laughing*                      Baney! This man (whoever he is) was gallantly proposing marriage to me. All too late!

Archie *chuckling*                      He's busy popping the question to the wrong girl.

*[Reaching out to drag Louise away]*

Listen Toots – let's leave them to it.

Jeremy *appalled*

But ... I could have sworn ... You're identical!

Louise

Tell you what ... Rather than being my husband, you can be my brother-in-law. How's that sound?

*The married couple laugh as they saunter off.*

*Jeremy is still in his kneeling position. As he makes to rise, Beth presses on his shoulder.*

Beth

No stay there!

Go through the question-popping all over again, please.

And in case you're worried the answer will be "Yes".

*Jeremy rushes through his speech at record pace.*

Jeremy *at speed*

Will you please do me the greatest honour and make me the very happiest of men because I love you more than life itself. Say "Yes" or I'll have to do the dreadful deed to myself.

*Beth laughs.*

Jeremy

Come on girl. I could do myself an injury propped up here in this position for so long.

Beth *giggles*

I said "Yes". Do you want me to write it down?

Jeremy

I kissed your sister.

Beth

Kissing the bride for good luck. Now you may kiss the fiancée.

*Jeremy rises. He pushes the ring onto Beth's finger. She approves wholeheartedly. They go into a huge pash.*

END OF SCENE



Does he possess a teddy bear, do we know?

Beth

Swirling a balloon of brandy in his hand!

Anyway, they're all upstairs in your kitchen (Vin) playing merry hell. The family that is (not the TPSC nasties)! I'm guessing that we'll soldier on in Badger's absence – with the morning tea!

*Beth walks straight up to Simone to hug her. She then kisses Vin on the cheek. Vin appears very surprised by this action.*

Beth *overjoyed*

However, it's not all bad. The "Man from the House of Death" has finally proposed. He was accepted. Which all makes me an engaged woman!

*Simone's face lights up. She fairly leaps at her sister. Vin laughs.*

Vin *imitating Badger*

Congratulations and best wishes to you both. I couldn't be happier. Vin and the beautiful Simone and now you two! This is ... This is the best news, really it is!

I must tear upstairs (three steps at a time) to heartily shake Jeremy's hand.

*Vin takes the steps in a couple of strides and is soon out of sight.*

Beth

Come on, then! Let's haul ourselves back into Badger's dining room. I think that's where they're setting up. What a damn shame that he's not here, though! Lill has been agog to be introduced to our very own DI.

Never mind ...

Hot cup of tea and some scrummy cakes are calling ...

*Simone and Beth are met on the steps by Courtney, Louise, Lisa and Archie.*

Beth *to the newcomers*

He's not here. Done a runner. Find the most rustic hideaway on the map and that's where he'll be.

*The four new arrivals are disconcerted. Courtney recovers quickly.*

Courtney *confident and airy*

Doesn't matter.

I know where everything is.

Vin has started packing away all of Badger's brainwork. But before he goes beyond the point of no return, I know that you expressed a keen interest in the ploddings of the village policeman. So here it all is.

Lisa

Goodness ...

Doug won't mind us barging in like this, will he? Any excuse for a snoop.

*Courtney and Archie are investigating the board which is now half bare.*

Louise *put out*

I'm not really interested in all this stuff. I simply wanted to meet the Detective Inspector.

*Archie is transfixed by Badger's work area.*

Archie *to Courtney*

Oh, yes! This is what I imagined. Every possible lead ... Every possible motive ...

Louise *to Lisa*

The TPSC pulled the pin on my Italian *vacances* ...

On my bridal tour. My honeymoon, no less.

To what end?

They are a pack of time-wasters. Their questions were tedious, ludicrous and – Nothing that they asked had any relation to anything that was remotely connected to anything!

I've come home to be quizzed by the Detective Inspector only to discover that he's bolted to a secret country retreat.

If I happen to look peeved, then take it as read. What an appalling nuisance!

*Archie continues to show real interest in what is left of Badger's post-it-note board.*

*Archie to Courtney* Phone numbers! This is just like one sees on the TV. "Murder in the Sand Dunes".

*As they chat, Lisa and Louise drift back upstairs.*



*The interior action has switched to Badger's dining room.*

*Around Badger's dining table sit Simone, Lisa, Beth, Louise, and pregnant Leah. Standing about (as is the habit of males when chairs are at a shortage) are Stephen, Vin, William, and Jeremy.*

*The table is loaded with countless treats. Cups of tea and coffee are doled out from the ladies at the table. Everyone hoes into the delicious spread. They all chatter about mundane things.*

There is a breakthrough.

*Courtney can be heard to bound up the steps. Then she bursts into the morning tea party.*

*Courtney* Listen everyone! There's been a huge and dramatic breakthrough.  
*Inspector Badger* will be able to solve the case and save the Summit Meeting.  
That'll certainly put egg on the faces of those TPSC tossers.  
They've only gone and nabbed the wrong bloke!

*Everyone gasps as surprised Archie enters the room. He carries a photograph of Howard Gore.*

*Courtney bossy to Archie* Tell them what you just told me. About Howard Gore.

*Every eye is on Archie. He shrugs.*

*Archie* That wasn't his name. I knew the man as Simon Arkingale. So ...

So ... not sure if this helps ...

Steve and Vin might not be aware that I'm a dentist by profession ... And this chap visited me a couple of times.

As I said the patient identified himself as Simon Arkingale.

*Courtney does a creditable imitation of someone recognizing a face from a photograph.*

*Courtney urgent*

Archie did the biggest of big double takes when he accidentally spotted this photo.

Archie! Tell them what you called him!

*[To the other assembled guests]*

Listen to this!

*Again, Archie shrugs. He gives a half-hearted laugh.*

*Archie blushes*

Well, of course I was always polite to his face ...

But the dental nurse and I shared a joke ... I used to refer to him as "Fruitloop".

And before you ask, I realize that I am going to step way over the bounds of dentist/patient confidentiality.

However ... There are so many people who've been murdered ... Using a false name and so on ...

*Archie thankfully receives a cup of tea and a plate (scone, jam and cream). These he puts aside but within reach.*

*Archie*

This man (the one I knew as Arkingale) needed psychiatric help. Really! He was a nutcase. And if you were to ask me if he was capable of murder then I'd quickly respond "Yes".

Fifty percent of the time, his beef was that the Creationists were crazies who refused to see what was in front of their very eyes.

They (he claimed) ought to be thrown into a lake full of crocodiles.

Simon Arkingale came down heavily in favour of Idi Amin Dada on that one.

William He was **against** the Creationists, was he? That's strange ...

Archie Only sometimes ... That's what you have to grapple with. Like ... Like debating (when you have to support one argument and then switch over to support its polar opposite).

He would get so fired-up that his mouth bubbled (when applauding Evolution).

But then if one supported the adherents of Charles Darwin (say in a discussion), why! ... About-face. He totally changed sides. Now he would rant in fine fettle about how irreligious the Evolutionists were. God definitely existed and He had taken the role of a Grand Designer to ensure that His invention (that is Evolution) would chug along exactly according to his plan.

William Ah! We're back to "cheetahs and gazelles" again.

Archie I'm convinced that this man was conflicted by his inability to fully accept either of these incompatible beliefs.

As a committed Christian he could not accept the scientific reality of Evolution. Yet every day he learned of new fossils found, new theories expounded – he completely broke down in my surgery (as so many poor souls do) and wept unrestrainedly.

It was the discovery of feathered dinosaurs fossils that finally sent him right over the edge. I'm fairly sure of it!

Yes, he needed urgent psychiatric help. I laid the groundwork for him to see a professional.

And yes! Without that professional help he was certainly twisted enough to commit murder. No question.

Simone *puzzled* But Archie ... He was at your wedding! Beth and I were

harangued by him. Didn't you see him?

Archie *pouts*

Sorry ... no. I would certainly have recognized him and spoken to him if I'd see him ... But ... no ...

Simone

Well then. He might have recognized **you!**

Archie

No! I'm sure he visited me during my bushy beard and ponytail days. Straight out of Fright Night I was – if you remember.

*Stephen reaches for the photograph. He immediately starts in recognition.*

Stephen

Leslie Smart. That was his mono. I know this man as Leslie Smart. Racecourse tout.

Vin

Leslie Smart? But you heard Archie call him Simon --

Stephen *shakes head*

He probably has a slew of *noms de guerre*. To me he was Leslie Smart. That was his mono. He hired my mates to take out one of each: a god-lover and a god-hater.

Vin *shocked*

When was this?

Stephen

Races (like I said). He was a punter.

*Vin is about to speak.*

Stephen

I overheard you talking about "Gore". His bank accounts. But ... Now that I know that "Gore" is really "Leslie Smart", then I'd be nosing into his **betting** accounts (were I you).

*[Winks broadly]*

Word to the wise, Vinnie. Word to the wise. Follow the money ...

*Simone reacts quickly to these revelations.*

Simone *urgent*

Dad! We must contact The Badger and let him know all this.

Vin

Can't be contacted. He has switched off his phone. Besides, I don't know where he's staying. So no phone calls. Like I said, he's incommunicado.

Simone Right! Then let's try his friend in high places – that Marius Engers bloke. Will his contact details be with everything else in the garage?

Vin I think so ... It rings a bell ...

*With all possible speed, Simone and Vin tear down to the cellar, with Jeremy in hot pursuit.*

William That's the best we can do, I suppose. Engers can stage-manage from his lofty height.

Courtney Oh, Pa! It used to be **you** who was at the centre of everything. Now you've drifted off into being just a bit player. How galling for you!

William And when **you** drag home a partner or fiancé or what have you, I won't even be that.

Courtney *sly* Ah ... But you'll have grandkids. And then your role will be making paper planes like you did for us.

William *smiling* I'm up for it.

END OF SCENE

## **VI, Scene iv:** The Summit Conference (Tuesday July 19<sup>th</sup> 2016)

*The Summit Conference is being held in a London venue. It is big, bold and electro-charged.*

In 1986 William defied regulations and piloted a Jaguar GR-3 in order to flush out his enemy. During this flight, William was repeatedly stabbed with a dagger. However, his flak jacket took the brunt of the attack. The flak jacket and flying helmet were kept by Lady Highgrove.

So, when Simone decides to “armour up” for the Summit Conference, she opts for Beth’s cricket bat, helmet and pads along with her father’s famous flak jacket (which still bears the scars of battle).

Roth receives protection.

*Simone bursts into a stairwell in this venue as Roth and his henchman make their way downstairs to the huge conference room.*

Simone *urgent*                      Anthony! Thank God we found you!

*Anthony is nonplussed. The henchman no less so.*

Simone *urgent*                      Don't you recognize me?

I'm your cousin, Simone! Surely you remember me.

In company with a sturdy and ultra-reliable tank regiment  
corporal

*Vin (breathless) steps into view.*

Anthony *appalled*                      What the hell are you playing at, Sim?

Vin *taking charge*                      Lord Highgrove! Marius Engers asked us to escort you both into the Summit Meeting. One of your subordinates has gone rogue, Sir. Our aim is to not frighten the crowd. But in order to keep the conference running smoothly --

*Anthony points at Simone.*

Anthony                                      Well, as soon as the assembly sees **that**, there'll be a stampede.

Simone *affronted*                      This is the flak jacket which your Uncle William wore in 1986 when he was attacked in that Jaguar aeroplane. Famous case. And these are Beth's cricket things. I'm here to protect you from almost certain death.

Anthony *snarky*                      And I haven't yet reached the stage when I'd ask my little girl cousin to go in to bat for me. (No pun intended).

The tank-boy's assistance will be accepted, however.

*[Directly to Vin]*

How to proceed now, Old Cock?

*Before Simone can fire back at her cousin, Vin (service pistol at the ready) shepherds the two men down the stairs. Vin tries to be supportive of Simone's spurned gallantry.*

Vin *calling back*                      Sim! Rear-guard, sweetheart. You can do it.

*With an ill grace, Simone dutifully follows her fiancé and the two other men.*



*The stage is brilliant. The backdrop is richly presented in electrifying, ever-changing colours. The huge letters emblazoned across the backdrop spell: "Strands of Life".*

*Holograms featuring stunning wildlife shots appear on stage.*

*Exciting recorded music blares out. A whizz-bang light show floods the auditorium.*

*We hear an immense burst of applause. Anthony is on stage, using the microphone. We only hear odd snatches of his words.*



*Meanwhile Paul Sligo (the chauffeur) and William have located Howard Gore.*

William *softly*                      Got him! Next to the man next to the lady in the black dress.

Paul *softly*                      Yes! I see him.

*The two men circle round and approach Howard Gore from behind. Vin has found Howard Gore from the other side. He also approaches. Simone (looking really scared) has been ushered out of the way.*

*The three men charge forward to disable Gore, who is carrying a sawn-off rifle in an oboe case. Gore grits his teeth and makes an enormous effort to escape the grip of the three men. As he struggles, Gore roars out an indistinguishable rant.*

*Fortunately, the kerfuffle is drowned-out by the noise of the music and applause.*

*During his seizure, Gore finds superhuman strength. Escaping from capture, Gore throws himself at the crowd in a blind rage, heading straight towards Simone.*

### Simone Wins Through.

*Without a second's pause, Simone smacks Gore over the cheek with her cricket bat at full force.*

*Gore's eyes roll upwards, he sinks to the floor. Gore is out cold.*

END OF SCENE

## **VI, Scene v:** The Stovepipe Inn, Thistlegrove, North Wales

(Saturday July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2016)

How did the Pendlebury party find Badger and Jane? Answer: Badger was paying for the naughty week with his plastic card. He was easy to trace.

And harking back to something said by Selim Kamar: we shall see a large burlap tote bag bearing on it a representation of a gorilla. This will hang from a hook in plain sight.

*Vin drives with William as his front seat passenger. Also in the car are Simone and Courtney.*

*The car pulls up at the Stovepipe Inn. The ambience is lovely. Everyone comments on this as they exit the car (along with their various bags, parcels and plates of food).*



*Now Vin and his party are seen trooping upstairs. The staircase is narrow, dark and old-fashioned.*

*Vin knocks at a door. We hear a vague groan from inside the room. Vin opens the door such that the visitors may enter.*

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*The bedroom is enchanting. Badger and Jane (both naked) are snuggled together in bed under a charming duvet. They are very surprised to be receiving visitors. Conversation begins immediately as Simone opens the heavy curtains. William plonks himself down on a wooden chair.*

Vin *bright*                      Good morning, Dad! We felt compelled to bring you all the news (not knowing how long you were to remain in hiding).

Badger *groaning*              "In hiding" no more (apparently).

*Courtney and Simone smile at Jane, who is only marginally embarrassed at being discovered "in flagrante".*

Jane                                Hello. I'm Doug's friend Jane Rogers. And since last evening when Doug popped the big question and was accepted, I'm his fiancée. I hope that you all approve.

*There follows a chorus of approval. Vin (grinning broadly) steps quickly around to Badger's side of the bed (in order to shake his father's hand) at the same time as Simone slips over to kiss Jane. Then Vin and Simone swap over. Both Badger and Jane receive fond kisses.*

Simone                            I'll introduce everyone, shall I? Jane, this is Doug's youngest son Vin. And I'm his fiancée Simone Pendlebury. My youngest sister Courtney insisted on coming along ... and the gentleman over on the chair is our father, Air Chief Marshall William Pendlebury. (Just William, of course).

*Courtney heads over to the bed to give both Badger and Jane a fond kiss. William likewise drags himself out of his chair to congratulate Badger and Jane. William then resumes his chair.*

William *sympathetic*        Look! Is this just a tad incommodious for all of us to intrude into your ... ah ... solitude? Would you like us to clear out? Maybe meet downstairs?

Jane                                No, this is alright. Girls – are their enough chairs?

Courtney                        Yes, thanks. This is the prettiest room. Well done!

Simone *to Badger*            Oh! And you'll want to know that your Jeremy is now affianced to my sister, Beth. Well, we all expected that I suppose.



Simone                                   Dad! Shut your eyes or avert your gaze or something for a minute, will you?

*As William complies with his daughter's instruction, Simone hands the blouse to Jane, who nods. Quickly, Jane dons the blouse.*

Jane                                       Thank you, Simone. That was very thoughtful.

Simone                                   That's alright.

Dadger, you'll have to stay bare-chested.

*Badger (as is his manner) merely grunts.*

*The door opens. Vin (bearing a tray of drinks) and Courtney (carrying a tea tray) enter. The business of handing out drinks and food continues with the conversation over these activities.*

Vin *very pleased*                       The Stovepipe Inn possesses a wide range of spiritous liquor. With that in mind, their policy is that the guest is always right. Oh, and they wondered if you still needed your breakfast. Since I could gobble down a wild goose's danglers (so hungry am I), I've given your breakfast the nod.

Hope I did right?

*With assistance from Vin, Badger receives more pillows (discovered in the wardrobe). Now he can sit up. Simone assists Jane likewise. Both Badger and Jane express their thanks: "That's better!" The drinking and eating continue.*

Badger                                   Come on! You've driven all the way to north Wales from Littlemeeth in order to apprise me of the outcome of my case.

Did the Easter Island maois get it right?

*Simone, Vin, and Courtney all respond firmly in the negative.*

Simone                                   You heard that they arrested Germaine?

Vin                                       It was Howard Gore (the real villain).

Uncle Steve and Archie (Louise's husband) had background information. Howard Gore (who'd used several *noms de guerre*)

turned out to be contrary.

*Badger appears very surprised.*

Courtney "Conflicted" is the word of choice. Step up to the mark, Tankboy!  
My cousin Anthony Roth was anchor-man for a huge Summit Conference. Gore was going to kill him. Actually, whilst Anthony was on stage. Isn't that phenomenal? A sawn-off thingummy-dooover hidden in a violin case.

William *explaining* A sawn-off rifle in an oboe case, Courtney.  
The conflict in Gore's brain was literally driving him mad. He could not balance his fierce adherence to what the Bible taught (Genesis) with the overwhelming proof that Evolution was the guiding light.

*Jane nods. She understands.*

Simone Your friend Marius Engers assembled our various talents. He not only approved of our involvement but also provided a battle plan.  
Vin and I escorted Anthony to the podium. Then we joined Dad and Paul in the audience where Gore was spotted.

Badger *frowning* Paul? I'm not sure ...

Courtney Paul is our Gran's chauffeur. He's in some sort of secret male society with Vin. Must protect Vin at all costs and Vin must protect him.

*Badger snorts.*

Badger *disgusted* Don't tell me! That bloody sea creature tattoo on your hip. Does your life centre on that ink monster?

Vin *jaw set firmly* Scorpion. It's a scorpion. And I can't discuss it with anyone. Not even with **you**, Dad. End of subject.

Courtney *thrilling* Anyhow, tattoo or no tattoo, there they were. Howard Gore

realized that it was all up for him as Dad and Paul and Vin jumped on him. Three grown men.

But then!! --

Simone

Gore's brain finally fried. He had a massive seizure (like an epileptic fit) and managed to break free from the grasp of those three strong men. Whereupon --

Courtney *excited*

Owing to her looking like an escapee from a freak show, Simone had to stand out of the way. To avoid a stampede or something. Gore ran away – and what do you think? Of all the directions that he could have taken, he chose to run right into Simone.

Vin *proudly*

My girl showed not one second of hesitation. She whacked Gore across the face with her sister's cricket bat. Hit him for six. He fell like a bag of spuds.

Jane *amazed*

Simone had the forethought to take a cricket bat to a Summit meeting?

Badger *proudly*

Yes! She's a modern-day Boadicea is our future daughter-in-law.

Courtney *lost*

Who's Boadicea? Is she a lady cricketer?



*Badger (now dressed) and William are alone in the bedroom. They both stand, with fresh drinks to enjoy.*

William

They've gone for a stroll about the village. But I'd rather stay to chat with you.

*Badger nods.*

William

Well?

Badger *sighs*

I was shown the red card (as you know). Marius pulled every string but those bizzies at the Thames Command wouldn't

budge.

And frankly – Well, none of it made any sense to me, anyway. I doubt if I could have ...

Howard Gore! My God!

I'd decided that he could not have been the killer long since.

What do **I** know, it seems ...

William                   It all came out at your morning tea.

Badger                   Which morning tea?

William                   The one you missed.

My new son-in-law Archie Monro and then your brother-in-law Stephen Mills. They told what they knew. We listened. Suddenly your eager puppies were able to resolve all issues and solve the whole case. Just like that.

*Now William will fill in all the gaps.*

William                   One of the main issues which we all stumbled over was this.

Why was such a man as Clive Germaine hanging around with the nest of vipers when he seemed to be such a fierce Darwinist? What could he possibly gain thereby?

*Badger looks a question. William continues.*

William                   The TPSC wanted a suspect. Clive was a suspect and so he must be the culprit. QED.

Clive Germaine was therefore arrested due to his having supposedly contacted Winona at Curtis Projects asking for the important correspondence between Daniel and Jim Hale.

But it wasn't **Clive** who asked for it. It was Howard Gore masquerading as Clive.

*Badger is lost.*

William

Let's stretch back to my first question. Clive and the nest of vipers. The thing is ... Well, we forgot in our rush to understand ... Clive is a zoologist. He has a little secret. That is that he and Daniel and Jim Hale were working on a paper. A research paper. They were studying behaviour in cadres of primates where "exclusivity" was the keynote. Jim Hale thought that the "vipers" might be excellent for their research. Humans behave like tribes of monkeys which shut all the other monkeys out of their endeavours.

In any event, Clive did not need to see the copious notes because he was already privy to them via Jim Hale.

Clive went into hiding because he would be the next stiff (or so he thought) and *not* because he had murdered anyone.

**Now** it's QED!

Badger *amazed then  
rueful*

Trying to take it all in ...

Had I stayed put where I was then I would have been at the Summit Conference ...

Instead of which I was shagging like a love-sick schoolboy playing truant. Ought to be shot! Fine detective I turn out to be ...

William *laughing*

What could you do? You'd been stood down.

Now those idiots at the Thames Command have had to deliver a very grovelling public apology to Mr Germaine. You might be pleased to hear that Marius is to organize a high-level inquiry into the activities of the TPSC.

Furthermore (by way of a delightful anticlimax) Lady Highgrove's "nest of vipers" seems to have settled down to concentrate on the Lord's works. She is more than satisfied.



|                            |
|----------------------------|
| <h2>The Bridal Dance.</h2> |
|----------------------------|

*The external location for the wedding dance is a slightly raised wooden dancefloor in front of the marquee. Benita Pendlebury is the flautist. Benita is the daughter of George and Sarah Pendlebury. The five Pendlebury sisters dance in an almost medieval fashion. They are all graceful and very lovely.*

Courtney *voice-off*            Now don't spoil it! We've been practising for weeks!

BETH:

*Firstly Beth (an unbelievably beautiful bride) dances alone. Beth performs a stately step-dance.*

LOUISE:

*Beth is then joined by Louise (matron of honour). The twins dance with linked arms.*

LEAH:

*Then the heavily pregnant Leah circles them with light steps (as easily as she can).*

SIMONE & COURTNEY:

*Simone and Courtney follow. Their dance is more vigorous as it involves skipping steps.*

THE FIVE PENDLEBURY SISTERS:

*The five sisters perform an intricate figure dance which would have been performed in earlier centuries. Leah has by far the least strenuous role. The flute accompaniment is superb.*

*Those watching the dance clap at the grace and beauty of the bewitching ladies.*

THE MENFOLK JOIN IN:

*Courtney urgently signals to Jeremy that he is to join the ladies. Uncertainly (and urged on by other men) Jeremy does so.*

*The three bridesmaids and matron of honour then lead Beth towards Jeremy (who remains unsure of what to do). Beth winds her way around and around her new husband as she dances. Jeremy is utterly entranced. Meanwhile, Courtney ushers the other required gentlemen onto the stage.*

*Leah has Max in her thralls, followed by Louise and Archie. When Simone leads Vin onto the floor and dances enchantingly around him, we spot Badger grinning broadly in huge enjoyment. Badger's partner at the wedding is his fiancée, Jane Rogers. Nearby to Badger we will spot Selim Kamar and his wife.*

*Lastly, Courtney drags a reluctant William into the dance. Lisa can be seen (with tears in her eyes) loudly applauding her husband and five daughters. It will be beyond marvellous to watch the five smiling men standing about as the five sisters cavort around them. Courtney gives William cheeky smiles. She is utterly wonderful!*

Lisa *voice-over*

A long time ago, in another age George Villiers (the Duke of Buckingham) promised that William and I would have a brood of strapping sons. He spoke those words on our wedding night. King Charles II was William's best man (if you can get your head around that).

A brood of boys ...

But you know what? I wouldn't swap any of my enchanting daughters for those promised boys. Not by a long shot ...

*Eventually, the applause dies down and Benita (the flautist) gives way to the DJ. Everyone noisily invades the dancefloor, dancing in a more modern style.*

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT VI

END OF FILM

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## **IMPOVERISHED AND POORLY**

**aka**

## **BROKE 'N' ILL**

Priceless rare monotreme fossils are vanishing.

Meanwhile Cooper is asked to give a DNA sample.

**Jeremy Hurstbridge** from "Cheetahs and Gazelles" is concerned at the disappearance of his younger sister Winlagh in Broken Hill, NSW Australia.

Ed Swan picks up a 12 year old cold case to investigate:

that of a pharmacist (murdered execution-style).

"Swannie" also gains an assistant: Constable Blaike Penfold.

Along with a couple of gifted indigenous locals.

All this while a new disease called F-PROTA has taken over where COVID left off.

The race is on for Ed, Blaike, Cooper and Jeremy to solve the mystery.