Copyright 2008 Scott Claringbold
First published by
Transmooky Press 2008
The right of Scott Claringbold to be identified as the author of the work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.
All characters in this publication are fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

Printed and bound by LULU 2008

Revised edition July 2010

For my son Bailey

PART ONE:

"There is no such thing as a failed experiment, only experiments with unexpected outcomes."

Richard Buckminster Fuller

Roxxi stood on her tip toes and kissed him gently on the cheek.

"So when will I see you again Loverboy?"

"Well the crim's don't usually work in shifts Tracy love."

Roxxi punched him playfully on the arm.

"Hey! Don't call me that in public, I've told you its Roxxi."

"But we're not in public," Jack replied.

"No well him across the road is copping an eyeful."

At that Jack turned to see one of his neighbours turn his head and hurry past.

Jack walked down the path to his car.

"Well I'm off to Paris on Thursday Smiffy so it better be before then."

"I'll see what I can do princess," he shouted back.

Roxxi adjusted her nightie gave a shake of her chest and closed the front door.

An hour later and Detective Jack Smith was sitting in his car watching the flats across the street. He bit into his bacon sandwich and observed the two men lurking nearby.

One wasn't your typical dealer, smart suit, coiffed hair and designer accessories. The other man however was most certainly a junkie, furtive, pallid complexion and dressed like the scarecrow from The Wizard of Oz.

The men entered one of the flats. Jack picked up his radio.

"This is Tango Whisky Seven, suspects are on site, I repeat the suspects are on site."

"Roger that Tango Whisky Seven, sit tight, back up is on its way." The radio squawked in reply.

"I can handle it, there's only two…."

"Repeat, sit tight, back….."

Jack thumbed the off switch.

"Tossers!"

He removed his gun from its holster, not exactly standard issue for a Metropolitan cop, climbed out of the car and headed over to the flat.

Counting to three Jack raised his size ten boot and kicked the door in.

"Police, stay where you are…"

The flat was dark, all the windows sealed. Jack stopped, his gun raised. There were no sounds.

He moved to the living room and nudged the door open gently with his foot. Jack saw the junkie slumped on the floor his back propped up against the sofa.

"Don't move arse-hole!" Jack spat but even as he said it he knew the man wasn't going to be moving again any time soon.

Smith made a quick sweep of the room but the other suspect was nowhere to be seen. He bent towards the figure on the floor. Suddenly he was aware of someone behind him.

He felt the needle plunge into his neck and the world spun crazily sideways.

"Wrong place to be copper," the voice whispered in to his ear."

Jack made a grab for the assailant but couldn't get his fingers to work. He stumbled and fell to his knees.

"Who…?"

"Don't worry I'm no one to concern you. In about ten seconds you'll lose control of all your bodily functions."

Smith began to spasm, foam dripping from his mouth. A puddle appeared under him and he knew that it was urine but he couldn't feel it trickling down his leg.

Jack crashed to the floor. He watched the smart black loafers turn and walk away.

He failed miserably to regain his composure as the darkness consumed him.

3 months later.

Jack could hear the voices but he couldn't make out who they belonged to just yet.

His head throbbed and his throat felt like sandpaper. He hadn't quite remembered how to open his eyes yet but he was sure that would come back to him sometime soon. He tried to talk but spluttered and coughed instead.

"Oh! God! Jack."

Jack opened his eyes, he couldn't focus but there was no mistaking that voice, Roxxi!

Roxxi grasped his hand. "Terry call for the doctor."

Topshelf Terry was here then. Topshelf and Jack had attended the boxing academy together; it was Terry who had christened Jack 'Southpaw' because of his devastating left hook.

Terry had always been tall, at least six feet six inches. Always came in handy when as

teenagers the boys had wanted ‘girlie’ magazines.

Terry came back in with another man. Jack tried to sit up but felt a hand firmly but gently push him back.

“What….?”

“You were brought in three months ago, the police found you in a flat, about ten minutes after you called in.”

“Three..months?” Jack managed.

“You had a lucky escape Mister Smith, you were injected with some chemical that shut down your body. It looks like it’s purged from your system now though,” Doctor Choudhury reassured.

“Need..to..call..chief…” Jack whispered.

“Forget it mate,” Terry moved over to the bed “They’ve given you a leave of absence, took your warrant card a couple of days after you were brought in.”

Jack sunk back into the pillow “Tossers!”

Roxxi looked at Terry and they laughed.

“He’s going to be okay,” Roxxi said.

A couple of weeks later and Jack had been prodded, poked, met numerous specialists and was now pig sick of hospital.

Choudhury had told him he could look forward to going home soon.

At the moment Jack was sitting on a bench in the paved garden at the rear of the private hospital.

The hospital was several miles out of London and had been chosen by Roxxi. Jack was thankful that she had such a soft spot for him.

They had met years ago at a boxing event, back when she was sixteen year old aspiring model Tracy Jacobs.

They had hit it off immediately but were moving in different directions in life.

Jack 'Southpaw' Smith was an up and coming fighter while Tracy was into celeb parties and hanging out with soap stars.

Jack shook his head after all those hopes and dreams he had become a cop and she had become a celebrated adult film star.

Maybe it was time that Jack pulled her on to the same path as him.

They had been seeing each other on and off for years. Both of them had other partners at some point in time but they always seemed to end up back in each others arms.

Jack was seriously considering asking her to move in.

He sat enjoying the early morning sunshine. A car pulled into the car park. Jack couldn't quite see it for the bushes at the side of the garden but he thought the car belonged to Doctor Choudhury.

Another vehicle, an ominous looking black S.U.V. pulled in a few seconds later and parked up out of sight.

Jack got up and shuffled his way back to the building.

Smith heard snippets of the conversation between Choudhury and another man.

"…can't do that!..."

"….not a request…"

Jack reached the top of the garden steps and glanced down over the car par.

Choudhury was standing with two men. The men were neatly dressed, one in a suit and the other wearing a long dark coat.

Smith's cop brain clicked in to gear.

"Spooks!" he thought, "MI5 or 6?"

He wondered what Choudhury would have in common with national security types.

Jack was about to shout over when he heard a sharp 'CLUNK'. Instantly he knew the sound was a silencer!

Choudhury clutched at his stomach as a dark wet patch began to gather on his shirt.

The taller man in the coat grabbed Choudhury by the shoulders, opened his car door and bundled him into the back.

Jack couldn't believe what he had just seen.

"Hey! Hey you! What the hell….?"

The two men turned and saw him. A nurse came out of the building. She has seen Jack

through the window and thought he needed a little help.

“Get back in!” Jack screamed.

The men in the car park headed for their vehicle.

Smith felt a sudden sensation wash over his body as adrenalin pumped through him.

He leapt down the steps and began sprinting across the lawn.

The S.U.V. was pulling out of its parking space as Jack hurtled through the bushes.

He was running at a good speed for someone who had spent three months immobile.

He reached the side of the vehicle and grabbed at the door handle. The car pulled away and he grasped thin air.

Jack carried on running to catch up.

The guy in the passenger seat looked a little surprised to see their pursuer keeping in pace with them.

Jack swiped at the door handle again. The S.U.V. hit a higher gear but Jack's grip stayed firm.

The vehicle did a sudden right turn. The door began to groan and buckle and Jack was thrown to the ground as the car door came off in his hand.

The S.U.V. stopped and reversed. The passenger still had a look of disbelief on his face but that didn't stop him from aiming the gun at Jack's head and pulling off two shots.

The car screeched out of the car park.

The nurse and a male visitor came out of the hospital just as the shots were fired. They ran towards Jack expecting to find his brains lying nearby.

Jack sat up and picked the two crumpled bullets from his forehead.

"Owwww….!"

The nurse just managed to catch the visitor as he passed out.

Jack stood up and helped the nurse hold the man on his feet.

The nurse looked at Jack with her mouth hanging wide open.

"They shot you….in…the head!"

"It must have been empty paint bullets or something," Jack replied.

The cold titanium tipped bullets in his left hand said otherwise.

“Jesus Christ Jack you’re a bloody trouble magnet!” Chief Inspector Arnie Harris flopped down in his chair and stared at Jack. “It’s like a friggin’ episode of the X Files talking to you lately. Men in black, assassins….”

“But Chief….”

“Shut it Smith! You’re on a permanent leave of absence starting from now. Take my advice, go home and pull your bloody self together.”

Jack knew that was the end of the conversation so he turned and left the office.

“Tosser!” he muttered.

Smith thought about Choudhury. It had come to light that the doctor was a gambler. He had lost a small fortune to the wrong kind of people and they had killed him.

That theory niggled away at the back of Jack’s mind. There was something too convenient about it.

He knew deep down that Choudhury had been killed in a professional hit.

Jack woke up in Roxxi's bed. Roxxi had left a couple hours earlier. She was filming a scene in an alleyway and the director had wanted to get an early start to avoid onlookers.

Smith pulled himself out of bed and grabbed a t-shirt. He headed to the kitchen and set about making himself a cup of tea. The doorbell rang. Jack sauntered into the hallway and opened the front door.

A man in black leathers and a motorcycle helmet stood on the top step. Jack's muscles immediately tensed.

"Delivery for Jack Smith," the courier held up a small box wrapped in black plastic.

"Ermm.." Jack was thinking, 'Who the hell knows I'm here?'

"Yeah sorry mate, where do I sign?"

The courier pointed where he needed a signature.

Jack headed back into the kitchen to get his cuppa. Just then he heard music. He thought it was from a neighbour's or a passing car.

'Wait a minute!' he thought 'Not music…a ringtone.'

It was coming from the parcel. He ripped open the plastic and tore open the flap of the plain box. Inside was a top of the range mobile phone and it was ringing.

Jack picked up the phone and pressed the answer button.

"Hello?"

"Ah Mister Smith there you are!"

Jack shook his head and frowned.

"Who is this?"

"All will be revealed in time Mister Smith. Patience is a virtue," the voice answered.

Jack walked through to the front room and peered through the window blinds. Whoever was calling had known the precise time to call. Were they watching him?

“Do I know you?”

“Let’s say our paths have crossed before…briefly,” the voice replied.

“It’s you, isn’t it? From the flat!”

“My apologies for the unfortunate occurrence that transpired that day Mister Smith. Not my usual impeccable manners.”

“You stuck a bloody needle in my neck and pumped me full of god knows what!” Jack shouted.

“And yet again my apologies. It was a fight or flight situation and I chose fight.”

“So talk. What the hell did you do to me?”

“I think we should meet face to face,” the man answered.

Jack stood outside The Obsidian. A large structure made of dark glass and curved angles. Thousands of Londoners walked past it every day and like Jack they didn't have a clue what it was used for.

Jack noticed the three cameras swivel his way and a metallic voice announced,

"Please push the door Mister Smith."

Jack entered the building. Immediately he was met by a burly security guard. The guard was carrying a small hand held device which he waved quickly up and down Jack's body. The device let out a demented shriek.

"If you can remove any weapons you're carrying Sir. They can be collected from Reception on your way out."

Jack had a pistol tucked into the waistband of his trousers. He pulled the gun and handed it to the guard.

"Can't blame a guy for coming prepared," he tried to joke with the guard. Obviously not one for small talk the guard ignored this and pointed to his left.

“Please take the elevator to the twelfth floor.”

Jack climbed into the lift and punched the button.

He was aware of the camera in the top watching him and he tried to appear relaxed, his hands laced behind his back he whistled a little cheerful tune.

The doors opened and the two men from the car park stood waiting for him.

The taller man nodded down the hall.

Jack got out of the lift and keeping an eye on the men he scoured the corridor.

There was only one door at the end. Jack walked down the hall and entered the room.

A man in his late forties sat behind a desk. It was the man he had seen entering the flat those few months past.

The man flashed a dazzling white smile and stood offering a hand.

Jack deliberately stood out of reach and fixed the man with a steely glare.

The man, unflustered, ushered him to take a chair.

"Please sit."

"I'll stand thanks," Jack replied "And enough of the small talk what the hell am I doing here?"

The man sat back down in his plush leather chair.

The door opened and the two men from the corridor entered the room. The larger man seemed to be carrying a cat.

"I believe you have met my associates Benson and Grainger."

Smith relaxed a little as he didn't think Benson was going to get the cat to claw him to death. He surveyed the room and for the first time noticed a rat in a cage on one of several shelves to the side.

"And I'm Xander," the man introduced.

"I don't care if you're bloody Elvis, what's this all about?"

"It's best if you have a visual demonstration," Xander gestured to Benson who handed over the cat. Xander

took the cat and opened the door of the cage which held the rat.

Dropping the cat inside, he quickly closed the door and stood back.

The cat sensed it was getting a free meal and licked its teeth in preparation of sinking them in to the rat.

The rat however had other ideas. Smith watched as its muscles bulged from its fur. The rat leapt at the cat and grabbed onto its side with all four paws. It sunk its teeth in to the cat's neck and started to take chunks of flesh out of it. The cat tried to throw the rat off but within seconds the blood gushing from its neck caused it to flop lifelessly on to the cage floor.

"What the fu…?" Smith managed incredulously.

"In short Mister Smith you are the rat. You were injected with the same serum as old Dusty here."

"Are you kidding me?"

"No, no joke. I represent an organisation as old as time it-self. It's quite difficult to explain. In some quarters megalomaniac

despots fund trials into genetic manipulation. In others would be dictators hire militias to help bring down governments and in still others governments themselves throw money at us to keep them in power."

"You some kind of mad scientist?" Smith sneered.

"I came in to possession of the serum from some friends over the golden pond. By all accounts from the hundreds of 'volunteers' they tested it on there is only one survivor. And you, Mister Smith, are the only other."

"So you've turned me in to what? A super soldier? Like Captain America."

Xander chuckled. "Not quite, however from the account Grainger gave me you did stop two bullets with your forehead."

"You lot are off your heads. What did Choudhury have to do with anything?" Jack asked.

"A case of wrong place at the wrong time. We asked him to run a few tests on you so we could determine the effect of the serum on you," Xander replied as a matter of fact.

“So when he wouldn’t comply you offed him instead? And the same with the bloke in the flat, when he wouldn’t take your poxy serum.”

“I don’t expect you to understand the methods we have to go to Mister Smith. Remember the organisation I represent has remained for centuries and with the right procedures will endure for many more,” Xander explained.

“I should bust you right here and now for what you’ve just admitted to,” Smith spat the words.

“That is if you were still a policeman. I’ll be sure to give Commander Burgess your best regards when we tee off on Sunday morning.”

Jack wobbled a little at that statement and Xander smiled at Jack’s reaction.

Jack threw his palms down on the desk and leaning forward he whispered menacingly.

“Listen knob-head I’ve had enough of this crap. I ain’t going to be your pet rat so you can slice and dice me and find out what makes me tick! Now I suggest you crawl

back into the shadows and keep the hell out of my way."

Jack turned and Benson reached into his jacket making no attempt to hide the fact that he was going for a gun. Jack lashed out with a vicious jab that caught Benson in his solar plexus doubling him over in a sudden sharp agonizing pain.

"Idiot!" Jack shouted and motioned with his thumb towards Grainger. "Your boy here tried to shoot me and I ate his bullets."

Jack tugged the door open and stormed off down the corridor. No one ran out to follow him but he decided not to use the lift and walked briskly to the stair well.

After twelve floors he wasn't even out of breath as he reached reception. The guard noticed him coming through the door and stood up.

"Mister Smith you forgot your property."

Jack rubbed at where the bullets had hit him in the head and smiled inwardly.

"Keep it. I don't need it anymore!"

He left the building and walked out in to the warm sunshine.

High above him in The Obsidian Xander watched as Jack crossed the road.

Xander turned to his colleagues. “Plan B then,” he announced.

Mingling with the afternoon shoppers a sudden truth hit Smith like a bolt from the blue. Everything he knew was a lie. The Prime Ministers and Presidents didn’t rule their lands. The Organisation did.

That thought troubled him for the rest of the day.

Jack smiled at Roxxi across the room and catching his gaze she beamed back at him.

Maria nudged her friend. “Hey what’s with Jack? Has he had a romance transplant?”

Roxxi burst out laughing. “I dunno, he’s been different lately. He’s even asked me to move in.”

On the opposite side of the room Terry handed Jack a beer. “I can’t believe what you’ve just told me mate!”

“It’s true” Jack replied, “Every word of it.”

“So you’re what? Invincible! Like Bruce Willis off that movie.”

“Not invincible but close to it.” Jack nodded.

Roxxi and Maria came over and sat next to their partners.

“So Jack when is your new flat mate moving in?” Maria asked.

Jack looked at Roxxi. “Couldn’t keep it to your self any longer babes?”

Roxxi lovingly placed a hand on his cheek and looked into his eyes.

“I’m just so happy.”

“Awww!” Maria gushed.

Terry shook his head. “That’s the beginning of the end for you matey boy.”

Maria playfully cuffed him on the back of the head as Jack and Roxxi kissed passionately.

Outside Jack’s flat the two removal men began to unload the van. Roxxi gave some instructions to the older man, Ivan, as to where she wanted pieces of furniture.

Opposite the flat a familiar S.U.V. sat with Benson and Grainger watching the proceedings.

Benson climbed out of the car and surveyed his surroundings. When he was certain the path was clear he walked over to the van, removing a small device from his pocket.

Billy was struggling with a cabinet at the back of the van.

“Can I help you with that mate?” Benson asked.

“If you don’t mind that would be great,” Billy answered.

Benson took hold of one end of the cabinet and lifted it down from the van. As he did the door swung open. “Oops,” Benson slipped the device into the cabinet before closing the door.

“Thanks,” said Billy as Benson put the cabinet down.

“You’re welcome,” Benson walked away.

Ivan came out with two mugs of tea. “Cuppa Billy,” he shouted.

The men stood by the cabinet and sipped at their drinks. Roxxi came out with a plate of biscuits and engaged the men in animated conversation.

Benson crossed the road further down and made his way back to his vehicle.

Climbing beside his friend he took a black remote off the dashboard.

Benson grinned at Grainger. “Showtime,” he sniggered and flicked the switch.

Jack had filled Terry's car with as many of Roxxi's clothes as he could.

They were about a mile away from Jack's flat when the fire engines went screaming past followed moments later by police cars.

Jack felt a sudden chill. He told Terry to floor it and his friend duly obliged.

Minutes later they turned into the street and Jack could see the smoke billowing from outside his flat.

Jack jumped out of the car and ran towards the commotion. A young policeman was trying to keep the onlookers back. He placed a hand on Jack's chest. "Sorry sir you'll have to keep back." The cop said.

"It's my flat, my girlfriend!" Jack shouted.

The policeman called over to a colleague. "Get the Sarge, this is the owner."

Sergeant Jennifer Parsons came over. She knew Jack from past incidents.

"Detective Smith."

Jack grimaced. "It's just Jack these days Jenny. What happened? Where's Roxxi?"

Jennifer looked at Jack and gently put a hand on his shoulder.

"I'm sorry Jack. I have some bad news."

A few nights later and Jack was sat on the sofa hugging Roxxi's favourite bear Mister Ruffles. The smell of her perfume wafted in the room.

Jack knew that there were five stages to a grieving process. Denial, anger, despair, depression and finally acceptance. But at the moment he was really struggling to get past anger.

Billy, the younger removal man, had survived the explosion.

Smith still had friends on the force who had managed to smuggle him transcripts of the lad's statement.

Upon reading it Jack knew that the description of the helpful man in the long coat was Benson.

It might not stand up in a court of law but it was all the proof he needed as to who was responsible for Roxxi's death.

Jack stood at the graveside long after the other mourners had left. He'd kept his composure during the church service but now the tears were falling like rain.

It had taken him far too long to realize what he wanted out of life.

Now the only woman he had ever loved was dead and laying in a coffin six feet below him. She has been buried as plain old Tracy Jacobs.

Jack took off his gold watch. It had been a present from her all those years ago.

Tracy had presented it to him at a boxing tournament little more than sixteen years old he had ignored the advances of the girl.

He read the inscription on the back of the watch. 'To Southpaw luv Tracy x,' the blood began to boil in his veins. Jack dropped the watch down on to the casket. Tracy was gone. He curled the fingers on

his left hand in to a fist. Jack Smith would join Tracy in the grave today.

It was Southpaw who turned around and stalked across the cemetery grounds.

PART TWO:

"NO MORE TEARS NOW; I WILL HAVE MY REVENGE."

Mary Queen of Scots

Grainger jolted back into consciousness. He struggled to remember where he was for a second. He was aware that he was soaking from the shoulders up. Or should that be down? As he realized that he was hanging upside down.

Several very large bright lights were trained on him. He screwed his eyes up and the motion made him wince as there was a flash of pain across the left hand side of his face where his jaw was broken.

Whoever had tied him up here knew what they were doing. The lights disoriented him and what was that noise? It sounded like demented hellion beasts scraping through his soul.

Grainger saw the shadowy figure come into view and he panicked for a second.

The noises stopped.

"Hello Mister Grainger," the voice announced.

Grainger's shoulders visibly relaxed as he realized who it was.

"It's you," he chuckled.

“What you smirking at tosser?”

“Nice bravado Smith. Let’s get this over with, I won’t tell you anything,” Grainger stated.

“I don’t need you to tell me anything pretty boy,” Smith sneered in reply.

“Hahahaha! Very good, now be a good cop, untie me and let me down.”

Smith grabbed the hair on the back of Grainger’s head and bent to whisper in his ear. “Like everyone keeps me reminding me, I’m not a cop anymore!”

Southpaw swung the wrench in his hand. There was a squelching ‘pop’ as Grainger’s knee separated from the rest of his leg.

Grainger screamed. “You…bloody psycho…”

“At least you get the chance to beg for mercy. It’s more than you gave Roxxi.”

“That was an accident. The girl got in the way. It was just meant be a warning.”

That admission made Smith even angrier. Suddenly the pulley that Grainger was attached to started to lower.

Grainger's head was submerged in a tank of water.

He tried desperately to control his breathing. His breath came in quick shallow gasps.

Smith gave it ten seconds then hoisted the man back up.

Grainger spluttered as fresh air rushed to fill his lungs.

"How did you find me?" Grainger muttered.

"Been following you for about six weeks now. A few nice evenings out with Miranda, jogging every morning through the park, visits to various establishments carrying out your bully boy duties. Yes you lead a very busy and a very nasty life."

"Look..it wasn't my idea. Xander wanted you on board. Your bird, she just got in the way man."

Southpaw cracked Grainger in the jaw with his fist. A stabbing white light of pain shot across Grainger's eyes.

"GET ME DOWN!"

“OK!” Smith shouted back.

Smith pressed the button and the pulley descended again.

Grainger thrashed about, shouting abuse. Smith ignored him and checked his watch.

The water covered Grainger’s head and he wriggled furiously. Bubbles burst to the top of the tank as he fought for air.

Southpaw dropped the wrench and headed for the door.

Grainger slowed in his attempts to get free and as Smith closed and locked the warehouse door Grainger gulped his last breath.

Smith slugged down the scotch, he put the glass down and grabbed the side of the bar with both hands.

The rage and anger inside had subsided for the moment. He had been a copper for the last fifteen years and he had ‘nicked’ hundreds of toe-rags. However from the countless junkies, thieves, dealers and several murder suspects he had seen in the

back of his car he had never wanted to kill any of them.

It hit him then that with his actions of the past couple of hours he would never be allowed to be a policeman ever again.

It had taken him about ten minutes to get to the Saint George. He'd used the back alleys and discarded his black hooded top, making sure he was wearing a bright coloured t shirt when he got to the pub.

This was a haunt for the uniforms when they got off their shift and he could see a couple of familiar faces across the other side of the bar. Buying himself a beer Southpaw wandered over and engaged his former colleagues in a chat.

Although he didn't really feel like joking and laughing with the guys he knew that when Grainger's body was found he was going to have a cast iron alibi.

Benson had proved a little more elusive to catch on his own than his former partner.

Smith had sat outside The Obsidian for a week before mentally chastising himself for being so stupid. The reason he hadn't seen Xander or Benson enter or leave the building was because they were using an underground access.

Once he'd figured that out it still was not as easy as he thought it was going to be.

Benson had boasted on several occasions that he was ex Special Forces. The truth was that he hired himself out to several Middle Eastern militias. Benson was nothing more than a glorified thug.

He had however picked up some good tips along the way. Like right now. Smith watched the S.U.V. leave the tunnel and pull on to the road. The vehicle then headed back toward the city. Smith followed puzzled.

About a mile down the road the S.U.V. pulled up in to a car park. Benson climbed out and surprised Smith by getting in to a silver Astra.

The Astra pulled out of the car park. Smith turned the car round and mingled in with the traffic behind it.

Smith kept as far back as he could watching for tell tale signs that he'd been spotted but none came.

After fifteen minutes of heading away from the centre of London, Benson made yet another stop. This time he sat himself behind the wheel of a very nice looking Jaguar. This was his pride and joy.

Benson had taken the car from a businessman who had crossed The Organisation.

Smith felt that he couldn't follow him anymore tonight. Benson was already heading for an open area and Southpaw was worried about being spotted.

A few nights later. After a vehicle change of his own Smith had finally found Benson's end destination.

The house was about an hours drive out of London. It was a big detached house with a long driveway.

Smith knew that he wouldn't be able to take Benson down here. He was going to have to catch him during one of the vehicle swaps.

Benson checked the mirror again. He didn't know how to spot anyone tailing him really but he liked to give the impression that he knew what he was doing. He figured that he could fake enough to deter anyone from trying.

He pulled up next to the Jaguar. Benson climbed out and ran his hand over the top of the car lovingly.

As he put the key in the ignition he was suddenly aware of a very loud ticking. His first thought was 'BOMB!' Benson tugged the seat belt off and jumped out of the door. Peering through the rear window he noticed a brown paper parcel on the back seat.

It was then that Southpaw hit him. Benson fell sideways at the blow. Trying to climb back up to his feet Southpaw grabbed the back of his head and slammed it against the

Jaguar. Benson could taste blood in his mouth. He lunged upwards at Smith trying to catch the man off balance but Smith ducked and jabbed Benson in the stomach. Benson doubled over and met Smith's knee as he went down.

Benson woke up strapped to his own kitchen table. He tried to get up but the restraints kept him in place. He heard the TV in the other room.

"Smith?" he asked.

Southpaw came through from the living room. "Hey look who's awake. Have a nice sleep?"

"What the hell are you doing Smith? You have something to do with Grainger's disappearance?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," Smith smiled and took a bite from the chicken leg he was carrying. "Nice pad Benson."

"Glad you like it. I'll let you know if I ever sell it. Although I don't think you'd be able to afford it."

Smith laughed.

"So how are you going to do this? Drown me in a water tank. Starve me to death. What?" Benson asked.

Smith flopped down on a kitchen chair beside the table.

"Drowning would be too quick. Starving wouldn't be messy enough," he gripped Benson's mouth in a vice like grip. "You murdered my girlfriend in cold blood. You and your bloody Organisation are going to pay mate!"

Topshelf Terry put the phone down.

"Who was that?" Maria asked.

"Just a mate. Look I need to nip out for a while."

"Is everything ok?" Maria asked concerned.

"I hope so," Terry kissed Maria on the cheek, grabbed his keys and left the house.

Smith put the mobile back in his pocket. He looked at Benson. The man hadn't tried to break his bonds.

"They'll come for me you know. Grainger and I are not the only ones who work for Xander."

"They won't need to come for you Benson. I'm taking you to them."

Terry sat on the roof of the building opposite The Obsidian. He looked through the guns scope. This was going to be a piece of cake.

Southpaw had been a bit scary on the phone. Terry had said he'd wanted to help but didn't want to get on the wrong side of the law.

"Trust me," Smith had replied. "The cops are going to have a much bigger mess to deal with than a few paint bullets on a camera."

Terry knew Southpaw was gunning for revenge. He bit his lip. This was the least he could do. Roxxi had been his friend too.

Southpaw shoved the larger man in to the back of the Jaguar. Benson flopped on to the back seat. His eyes suddenly went wide with fear. It took Smith a couple of seconds to realise what had spooked the man. Smith picked up the package and held it up to Benson's face. Benson tried frantically to bury himself further into the plush seats. Smith laughed and ripping the parcel open

he took out the large iron clock and showed Benson. The man just had time to roll his eyes before Smith smashed the clock off the top of Benson's head.

Terry clicked the mobile phone off. Smith had given him the go ahead. Terry aimed the gun and lined up the shot. He squeezed the trigger gently and a second later the first camera was dripping with red paint. Terry swung the sight to the reception area. The guards had stood, one tapping the monitors the other looking out through the window. Terry aimed at the second camera and fired. The shot missed by a half inch. Terry cursed and steadying he shot again.

Half a mile away from The Obsidian and Smith pulled the tarpaulin from over the car. Benson roused from his slumber and realised he was tied by a webbing of chains to the front of his car. He tried to move but the chain bit into his forehead holding him tightly against the vehicle. He tried to talk but Southpaw had taped his mouth. Smith removed a lipstick from his pocket. It had

been Roxxi's favourite. Viciously he tore Benson's shirt open and scrawled something over the man's chest. Smiling Smith put the lipstick back in his pocket and tapped the man on the cheek.

"Enjoy the ride," Smith said and then climbed into the car.

Terry had taken out the last camera and then did a runner. As he jumped from the last step of the building opposite The Obsidian he sent the text to Smith.

Southpaw glanced at the mobile's screen for confirmation, smiled a particularly nasty smile and revved the car's engine.

The peace of the back streets of the city centre was rudely shattered as the Jaguar roared through them. Benson was screaming but no one could hear him under his gag and the noise of the engine. Smith had deliberately chosen the area. No cameras and less chance of being spotted.

He would be at The Obsidian in the next minute or so.

Xander spoke loudly into the phone. “I don’t care if it is just kids messing about get someone down there to take a look.”

He slammed the phone back down. Walking over to the window he looked out at the little ants below. He noticed the vehicle approaching fast and although he couldn’t make out any specifics a cold chill shot through him.

The building was looming up ahead of the car and Smith accelerated. He had to judge this just right and make sure he was clear at the precise moment.

Xander tried to raise security but they had gone off to look for whoever had vandalised the cameras. Xander ran to the lift and pressed the button for the ground floor.

Benson knew what was about to happen and deep down he believed that he deserved it. It wasn't going to make it any less painful though.

Smith jumped clear with about twenty feet to go. He picked himself up and managed to sprint a few good yards before the car smashed through the glass front of the building. Glass rained down on the figure of Benson. Several shards fell and sliced into his body piercing organs and arteries. He gurgled on his own blood still unable to open his taped mouth.

Xander ran out into the reception area just as the car came through the window. He threw himself to one side as the vehicle barreled along and after hurtling through the seating area and monitors of the security guards station it came to rest against the wall. Xander picked himself up just as the guards came back into the corridor.

"Are you ok sir?" one guard asked.

Xander pushed him aside as he made his way towards the car. The guard noticed the body strapped to the front of the car for the first time.

"Sweet Jesus!" the guard muttered. Xander read the single word scribbled on Benson's chest with lipstick 'UNORGANISED'. At that moment Xander felt someone burning a hole in his soul. He looked up and over the street to see a dark figure watching him.

"Smith," he whispered

Two people emerged from the stairwell at that point, a man and woman. Both were smartly dressed. "Sir, let's get you out of here," the woman said taking Xander by the arm.

Xander stood rooted to the spot staring out across the street. The woman followed his gaze but saw nothing. "Sir, let's go," she repeated.

In the distance the sirens wailed.

Smith had stood and watched as the car crashed through the glass. He'd felt sorry for Benson for about a second before he

reminded himself what the scumbag had done to beautiful Roxxi. Southpaw watched the ensuing commotion and had felt happy with the outcome. He had put the fear of God in to Xander and that thought justified his actions.

Terry switched on the news. "…drunk driver has crashed into a building in the centre of London. Reports indicate that the owners of the building can not be traced and apart from the dead driver no one else has been injured. More news as we have it."

Maria said something but Terry was too engrossed in the report to hear. "What love? Sorry I was miles away."

The next morning and miles away was where the man on the dock wanted to be in the next several hours. Bernie wandered down the marina.

"Damn it boy! You've taken the wrong name again," he muttered to himself as he read the sheet in front of him. Simon was always taking the wrong names. Bernie

would have fired him years ago if he hadn't been related to him.

Bernie was sure he was looking for a woman but the only person he could see was a man in his mid thirties. The man was wearing shorts and a patterned 'aloha' shirt.

"Excuse me," Bernie said. "I'm looking for someone called Jacobs."

The man turned around and removing his hat he ran a hand over his shaved head. "That's me," Smith said holding out his hand. "Jacobs, Tracy Jacobs. My parents always wanted a girl," He joked. "Please call me TJ."

The boat cruised out of the bay about an hour and a half later. Smith watched as the city faded away behind him. Tracy had always wanted to go on a boat trip, just the two of them. He glanced down at the photo in his hand. Smith kissed the tip of his finger and placed it on Roxxi's lips. "For you sweetheart," he whispered and left his troubles behind him.

For now!

southpaw smith

AFTERWORD

I've always wanted to be a writer. Over the years I've written and created comic book characters and stories but not being able to draw has really hampered my progress. One of my creations, Rabid, is mentioned briefly in this story as the only other survivor of experiments with the serum. Marc Olivent and I created Rabid ten years ago and he seems to be enjoying a revival as he is set to join other heroes in various crossovers during 2008 and 2009. So keep an eye out. Southpaw Smith was originally going to be the British counterpart to the America based Rabid but he gradually took on his own personality and this book grew out of that. On creating Southpaw I knew exactly who I wanted him to look like. Jason Statham. Having watched films like Mean Machine, The Bank Job and Crank I visualised Jason as Smith and wrote this little story for him. I hope one day he gets to read it.

Scott Claringbold August 2008.

Thanks to the following people who made this possible:

Marc Olivent for the cover art. A very talented artist.

Mal Earl for the inspiration, another great artist.

Tommy Hoodless for the support.

Mam, Dad, Steven and the rest of my family who put up with my endless supply of new characters.

Everyone who took the time to read the draft and tell me what they thought. Thanks guys!

And most of all thanks to you dear reader for taking the time to read this little book, I hope you enjoyed it.