

THE SUMMER OF 66

Dan Wheatcroft

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NOTES

Bill: Old Bill-nickname for the British Police

Bobby: British Police Officer – nickname

DG: Director-General

Fitty: British for 'an attractive woman'

GCHQ: Government Communications Headquarters

Governor: Met Police speak for Boss

Browning 9 milly: 9mm pistol

KGB: Soviet Secret Police

Kip: Sleep

Met: Metropolitan Police (London)

Naafi: Shops for British military

Nick: Police Station

NKVD: Forerunner of the KGB

Obs: Observations or surveillance

OCD: Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

Plod: Nickname for uniformed Police

P&SS: Police and Security Services

RV: Rendezvous – a meeting

Skipper: Met Police speak for Sergeant

SOE: Special Operations Executive

Sunray: Radio speak 'Commander/Leader'

Two bob: Two shilling piece

Two and six: Two shillings and sixpence

Wellies: Wellington boots (rubber waterproof boots)

“Do you understand what I have not said
and what you have not heard
in this room that does not exist?”

Yongsoo Park, from the book *Boy Genius*

Chapter 1

1966

The green door across the street bore only the number seven. Gallagher stared at it then glanced down at the piece of paper in his hand that proclaimed '7b'.

Each end of the black painted sign above the adjacent shop declared it was number five, between which he learned from the gold script that JD was a gunsmith. He crossed over the cobblestoned roadway to the side entrance of Harrington's Hardware. No number displayed. Behind him? The windowless brick wall of Farralland painters, decorators, light removals and short term storage with its accompanying barb-wired wall and sturdy metal gates.

He was beginning to think he'd been set up. "You're taking the piss, aren't you?" he'd told his boss when given the news. With a straight face, the man assured him it wasn't a joke. Six months with a Home Office statistical unit. "Here's the address," he'd said, handing him the bit of paper, torn from a notebook.

At the green door, a closer examination revealed the dim, dirt outline of a lower case b, now plain to see on the finely cracked paint. He checked the ground, no sign of the missing letter. He took one last look at the note in his hand, crushed it and returned it to his pocket then pushed the buzzer. The door clacked and yielded a small gap. He pushed it open and a voice called, “Make sure you push it shut so it clicks then come on up.”

He climbed the steep, bare wood, creaking stairs that carried the compact hallway upwards, the memory of a former central carpet plain to see. At the top, a slim chap greeted him, light ginger short wavy hair, pale complexion with a hint of redness in the cheeks, suit trousers, a tie, shiny black shoes and his shirt sleeves rolled up tight. He introduced himself as ‘Sandy’.

“Are you a jock, Sandy, only I’m not picking up the accent,” Gallagher idly asked, as he followed him down the narrow corridor.

Sandy stopped and turned. “What makes you think I’m Scottish?”

Gallagher felt he’d made a faux pas and replied, “Nothing, I just wondered, that’s all.”

They entered a room to their right, several large desks, each with a phone, wire basket paper trays and a chair. Dark green filing cabinets filled any available space apart from a small Formica topped kitchen table that supported a kettle, various mugs, several teaspoons, a sugar bowl and a bottle of sterilised milk. A dubious-looking tea towel hung from a suction cup on the wall. “Chaps, this is Gallagher.” Three faces stared back at him from beneath fluorescent lighting.

“What’s your first name?” the fat guy asked him, adding, “My name’s Winston. I don’t like it being shortened.”

Gallagher: “John, but I prefer to be called ‘Gally’.” They shook hands and the others joined in. “Clive,” the little fella with the receding hairline told him. “Ralph,” the fifty-year-old bearded pipe smoker offered, blowing a cloud of mildly aromatic smoke into the air.

He was shown his desk, next to a window which provided him with a view of the works yard opposite. He pointed at the nodding dachshund that guarded his phone but Sandy cut him short.

“It belonged to Alf. It was a sort of lucky charm for him.”

Gally released an understanding half-smile, tapped the dog’s head and watched it nod and wobble to and fro. “Retirement?”

“No, he had a heart attack, in that very chair actually. Follow me. I’ll introduce you to Reg.” Sandy was off again, into the corridor and two doors up. A quick knock and they found its occupant poring over a file at a table next to the window; an ancient, green slimed drainpipe outside added much sought after colour to a bleak, damp stained brick wall.

“Reg is our researcher,” Sandy smiled. “Reg, this is Gallagher, the new boy. I’ll leave you to it. When you’ve finished, bring him back to me. I’ve got some things to issue him before he meets the ‘Old Man’.”

Reg nodded and removed his glasses. “Cup of tea? I’ve only tea bags I’m afraid. I can’t be arsed to mess about with a tea strainer anymore.”

“Not a problem, I prefer them myself.” He took a seat at the table. “Why didn’t Sandy ask me for some

identification? I know it's only a stats unit but still, it's Home Office and I would have thought ..."

"He'll have watched you on the CCTV. You didn't see it? The monitor's behind the door in the office, on the cabinets." Reg dragged two tea bags out of a Tetley box, dropped them in the mugs then covered them with boiling water. "So, glad to be here?"

"Not really. I don't know bugger all about stats."

Reg laughed. "They didn't tell you? It's probably your boss's sense of humour, Hansen's always been a bit dry. Good bloke, mind."

He was intrigued. "You know my governor?"

Reg stirred both mugs then dumped the teabags in the bin at his feet. "Milk? Sugar?" Gally nodded then shook his head in turn.

Reg smiled. "Yes, of course I do. I've known him for years. He speaks quite highly of you."

Gally was becoming confused. "You *are* talking about Superintendent Hansen from Special Branch?"

"Who else?" Reg put a coaster down on the plastic table cover followed by the mug. "Let me ask you a question? You got yourself in a bit of shit didn't you

and thought this was a punishment posting?" Not waiting for a reply he continued, "Bert Hansen did you a favour. You'll be out of the way of those that don't wish you well." He sipped his tea, "Biscuit?" Gally shook his head. Reg carried on. "We're not just a stats unit. Winston and Ralph take care of most of that stuff but the rest? We do whatever comes along, field work mainly, apart from me, I get all the intel. We're slightly beyond MI5, or Box as we prefer to call them." He quickly reflected."Having said that, perhaps more to the side if I'm truthful. Anyway, it matters not from their point of view because there's very few of them know what we're actually about and those that do are ours anyway."

"So, what you're telling me is there's only me, Sandy and Clive operational?"

"Correct. What more do you need? It's more than sufficient for the everyday stuff and if needed we can always call on the Farralland chaps."

"The crew across the road? Painters and decorators?"

Reg smiled sagely. "Highly professional painters and decorators, all from the military and handpicked."

“So, you’re telling me this gets dangerous occasionally?”

“Well, Sandy will arrange for you to have a gun *and* if you're a good lad you might even get some bullets to go with it.” He sipped his tea then opened one of the filing cabinets, slid out a file and sat down with it at the table.

"Now, Gally. You don't mind me calling you Gally, do you? Bert said you preferred it." Another sip. "This file is the reason why you're here. I can give you a brief overview but the detail has to wait until you've seen the Old Man."

Chapter 2

Sandy beamed at him. "Right! Here's your identification card." He handed him a small buff coloured business card upon which was written 'Farralland Contractor'. Beneath, it bore the name, 'Andrew Hunter'. A telephone number occupied the reverse. Gally was less than impressed. He'd been expecting to get one with his photo on it. He'd combed his hair specially.

"What name were *you* given, Sandy?"

"Alex Hunter and Clive's says Adam. Oh, and don't phone the number unless you really need to. You'll get the engaged tone for forty seconds then they'll answer and ask for the 'word of the day' which you'll find posted on the notice board daily, in the main office, top right-hand corner."

"What is it today?"

"Take a look and you'll find out. Follow me!"

They climbed the stairs and entered a storeroom next door to the toilets where Sandy showed him the locker in which he was instructed to keep a suitable travel bag in readiness for any overnight stays they might have to

conduct. "We call them our 'ready kit'," Sandy informed him, straight-faced.

"Ingenious title," Gally dryly observed as they turned and left.

Passing the main office, they took the internal security door, descended steep steps and emerged directly into a workshop. A man in his sixties raised his glasses and called from the far side, "Hello, Sandy. Grab a pew. I'll be over in a tick." Gally occupied himself by staring at the dishevelled sofa that looked as if the springs could do with some urgent refreshment.

"Right, young man!" JD of gunsmith fame said, standing close behind Gallagher and startling him. For a man in his sixties, he was remarkably quick and silent on his feet. "Follow me, and I'll get you sorted out." He slid behind a short counter and produced a ledger. "Just sign there." He pointed at an entry.

"Do I know what I'm signing for?" Gally asked him.

"I don't know. I assumed you could read." JD replied.

"But shouldn't I actually be given what I'm signing for first?"

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