

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

### Chapter One -

December 1973 - The Langham Hotel, London.

"I don't want to talk about it." Steed harshly replied.

"But Steed." Gambit hastily responded.

"No, Gambit." Steed angrily retorted.

"I'm leaving." Steed repeated to his younger colleague for the second time in their short conversation.

"Steed!" Gambit gently called after his colleague.

And with those final few words. John Steed weaved his way between the thorough-fair of scientists, dignitaries, Doctors, Dames, Sirs, Lords and Ladies from the ballroom and into the long hall. Not even taking the time to politely excuse himself from doing as such. But he just couldn't stay much longer. The young tall and dark curled-haired man, known as Michael Gambit, tried to keep up with his older partner but he was too quick.

"Steed! Steed!" Gambit called after him.

When Steed reclaimed his coat from the young male steward clerk at the reception of the hotel. Gambit was only just able to make it in time to join him.

"Steed what on earth's wrong?" Gambit asked, catching his breath ever so slightly.

"Do I have to repeat myself Gambit. I DON'T want to talk about it. Get back in there and I'll meet you at 9am as planned for the debriefing tomorrow. You can handle this. No need for me here as well." Steed angrily replied.

And with that Steed barged passed his young colleague and walked out of the hotel into the night. He was not even phased by the torrential downpour. He didn't even lift up his coat collar to avoid some of the rain. Gambit just stood there watching him leave. Not wanting to leave his post and fail his assignment. Gambit shrugged his shoulders and walked back towards the ballroom in search of Sir Robert Ulswater. He didn't even notice a tall auburn-haired woman walk passed him, as she frantically scanned the reception area for the gentleman that had just left.

August 1974 - The Berkley Hotel, London.

He was unsure. But he could just make out the traces of her face. Which was hidden from full view by an obtrusive plant in the far left hand corner of the room and the woman sitting opposite her. His heartbeat sped up. He half-listened to his old friend, Colonel Henry Fallstaff, seated at the table in front of him. He'd heard his tale many times before. How he'd argued with a street merchant in Burma many years ago, bartering for an anniversary gift for his wife. So he was able to focus more on the revealing face of the woman he had tried for so long to get out of his mind. The woman

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laughed. Her head tilted back, revealing her smiling face covered in shorter auburn hair, and wide brown eyes. It was her! She caught his breath. He choked at first, then managed a quick cough to restore his breathing. He rose as quickly as he could from the table.

"Terribly sorry Harry. But I really must make a call." Steed said. Barely able to make his voice heard.

He walked quickly towards the bar and hurriedly ordered a large brandy from the barmaid. He gulped its contents down. And proceeded to explain to the young woman to send a note to the gentleman sitting at table forty-six, "that he had to leave on urgent business and that he was sorry to leave so suddenly".

The young woman nodded courteously in recognition that she herself would deliver the message. And with that Steed handed the young woman a few pound notes and left the hotel. He made no attempt to look back at the woman whom he was trying to avoid.

## Chapter Two -

25th March 1975 - Lord Favercombe's annual charity bash, Surrey.

The music serenaded most of the intellectual guests, and those who it didn't chattered amongst themselves. Purdey stood talking with Elliot Sommers, a wealthy stockbroker from "The City". Who, unbeknown to most, a part from being extremely handsome, was also rather witty, and had a devilish sense of humour. Purdey liked him. She liked him a lot. She'd mis-placed Steed and Gambit at least an hour ago. And wasn't remotely interested in searching for them. They'd probably be doing exactly the same as she was. Flirting with a member of the opposite sex. Yes, she thought. That's exactly what they would be doing.

Gambit handed the blonde young woman opposite him another glass of champagne. He proceeded to discuss, in depth the richness and fruitiness of the particular glass of champagne they were drinking. And later added.

"Tastes exactly like the bottle I have at home." He paused and looked right into her blue eyes.

"Then again, it would do... 'coz they all taste the same to me." He said with a wink, and a smirk.

She giggled at that and responded with.

"Why Mr Gambit. I do believe you are trying to fool me."

"Not at all Miss Locke. I'm honest as they come." Gambit replied with another wink and a smirk.

She giggled again.

Steed on the other hand was doing quite the opposite. He stood hovering over by the champagne table. Picking up one of the bottles and eyeing its label. Grimacing to himself and placing the bottle back into the ice bucket on the table. Choosing another vintage instead. A much finer variety of grape. He carefully selected his glass, and slipped at the fizzy liquid.

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"You're avoiding me aren't you?" She said in a low gentle tone directly into his right ear, just near enough for him to feel her breath.

He froze. It didn't register at first. Then he blinked and heard her speak his name.

"Steed?" She said quietly.

He turned his head to the sound of his name echoing through his mind and to blink rapidly at the woman who said it.

He couldn't breathe. He had forgotten how to breathe. The glass of champagne in his hand had almost fallen to the floor, if it wasn't for his fingers going icily numb. His eyes instinctively searched her own. He then managed to let out a breath.

"Erm...Mrs...Peel." Steed mumbled.

He felt weak. The colour drained from his face. His heart, he couldn't feel his heart beating. His ears were ringing. The serenading music seemed to be muffled. He could now hear himself breathing shallow.

"Every time I've seen you, you vanish. Why are you avoiding me? Am I not good enough to speak to anymore Steed?" Emma asked him, her brow furrowed in exasperation. Her eyes searching his for some clue or answer.

He didn't know how to react. He didn't know what to say. His usual rational brain suddenly faced with the one thing he has tried to lock away for so long. He was lost for words. But somehow he voiced these...

"I couldn't do it." He replied softly.

There he said it. But said that! Why did he say that? He didn't mean to say that. No, no, he did. He meant every word.

"What do you mean you couldn't do it? I haven't spoken to you in seven years Steed!" Emma's response was more heated than she expected herself.

Other guests around them turned to look at them, whispering amongst themselves.

"Seven years. Two months and six days." Steed replied calmly. He was desperately tried to soothe her growing agitation, as well as he could manage given the circumstances.

Emma stood frozen to the spot. Her mouth gaped a little as she looked into his eyes and took in the last few words he had spoken. Suddenly it hit her. She had hurt him. She had torn his heart from his chest that day. And here she was standing before him, as she had once done that dreadful day years ago, but now she was scolding him for it.

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He had avoided her at every given opportunity. The hunting party was the first time she could remember seeing him. He was talking to Lord Fitzherbert in the far corner. After riding for hours with the other gentlemen of the club. Sirs and Lords most of them inheriting their titles rather than earning it. Then he was gone, just as quick as if she had blinked. Then there was Melissa George and Freddy Wilson's wedding about six months after that. He was chatting to an old Army colleague, brother of Melissa's father. And then Sir Mark Cavendish's 85th birthday in Surrey. He'd been over by the patio doors choosing a glass of champagne on the table, then disappeared. Probably out of the patio doors she thought to herself. Then not forgetting the few evenings she had enjoyed with friends in town. She could have sworn she'd seen him out the corner of her eye once or twice. She was sure she had seen him talking to her friend Beatrice's elderly Aunt one evening as they celebrated her and her husband's 30th wedding anniversary. Then he was gone, no more, poof! Vanished! There were a few parties and gatherings she had missed for a few years after that, as her and Peter had moved their permanent residence to their villa in La Vallette du Var, in the South of France. But during the years upon her return to London. Due to the recent business upset at Knight's Industries. She has seen him maybe once a year. Give or take a few months. But he had never approached her. Never walked towards her. Never looked up and smiled courteously at her. Or dip his head in recognition. He just vanished. She had come to the realisation that he simply didn't care. That he chose not to seek her attention. Because he didn't need her.

"I kept away for your sake Mrs Peel." Steed answered in a low tempered, somewhat soothing voice.

Now she wasn't so sure of her thoughts at all. Standing in front of him. Looking into his soft grey eyes. They were slightly moist, just that tiny trace of dampness about them. Unshed tears of pain. How could she have thought it was because of anything else but that? He chose not to face her because he didn't want her to see him like that. He didn't want her to be burdened with the guilt. He wanted her to be happy.

"Oh Steed." Emma sighed. She returned his gaze. Mirroring his own emotion, tears began forming in her eyes. She blinked as quickly as she could trying to avoid the heaviness of the tears to escape and run down her cheeks.

He took her hand as he pulled her away from the group of young and old men and woman who had glanced their way on more than one occasion. He maneuvered them both through the several shallow huddles of intellectuals and dignitaries. They headed towards and out the large glass hatched doors that led into the gardens.

"Steed, where are we going?" Emma asked weakly. Feeling rather flushed and emotional.

He clasped her hand tighter as they stepped down the ten or so stone staircase into the large mazed garden below. He turned his head left, then right, trying to find a small and discreet place to talk. The maze of large beech hedges and ivy trellises, zig-zagged to the right.

"Steed?" She pleaded.

Not a sound. He didn't say a thing as he led her towards that particular covering. After a few moments they came to another small stone staircase. They walked down it. And there they found at the bottom of the steps a large stone seat with a small walled fountain behind it. Quiet enough for them to talk. He let go of her hand.

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### Chapter Three -

"Steed. Please?" Emma asked, in a gentle soothing voice, with a slight crack to it, caught up with emotion.

"I just couldn't Mrs Peel. I couldn't see you like that." Steed replied, hesitantly.

"Like what Steed?" Emma pushed cautiously for a response.

"It hurt...Mrs Peel...to see you...to see you so happy...being with him...and not me." Steed tried to form the words clearly but it came out in choked tones. He couldn't look at her when he spoke. His back turned away from her. As he walked in circles, pacing around the area not walking near her.

She inhaled deeply at his words and breathed a sighing, "Oh, Steed."

She was in shock, felt the horror, and realisation that it was her fault he felt this way. She dropped to sit on the stone seat. It's cold feeling enveloped her and mirrored her bodies responses. It was her fault he was jealous of a man she married long before she had met him. A man, her husband, who didn't know her anymore. A man who spent more time, pleasure and enjoyment flying or constructing new alloy designs for aeroplanes than with her. A man, her husband, who only spent time with her at functions, when there was a need to be on show together.

"I knew the moment I saw you again you would know. And I didn't want you to see that in me Mrs Peel. I didn't want you to see that in me at all." Steed responded honestly.

He managed to form more coherent sentences now. Perhaps it was made easier because he wasn't looking at her. The steady stream of the water fountain was the only sounds he could hear as he began to explain.

"I am a honourable man Mrs Peel. As you well know. I know you had no other choice to make. He is your husband. But your departure... it shattered me...I became numb...void of life, of feeling, no thought at all to my actions...only my work to keep me going, but even after a year or so I gradually became bitter and vicious...getting myself into a lot of trouble with the Ministry...addicted to prescription drugs and alcohol...killing men needlessly...so I left...I took six months leave of absence and took off across the water...trying to get you out of my mind...I thought it had worked until I saw you again the other year, at The Langham Hotel... with him. I couldn't bare it... so I left...It's the first time I've walked out on active duty...but I couldn't take it. Seeing you so happy there with him." Steed sounded so harsh as he spoke.

"Steed. Please." Emma hesitantly tried to respond. Tried to say something to stop him from hurting, from unburdening himself and his pain. From his reluctant jealousy that was her doing. Her fault he felt this way. She tried to speak again but was silenced once more by his words.

"But that's my problem Mrs Peel, not yours. It's something I've had to accept." Steed replied. Finally having the courage to turn to look at her.

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He saw her sat on the stone bench, tears pouring down her face. Her hair gathered around her hands covering her face.

"Mrs Peel!" Steed exclaimed, concern in his voice.

He walked over towards her. Standing just above her. Unsure of himself. Or how to behave. Should he sit next to her? Should he put an arm around her? Should he comfort her? Did he have the right too? (No, she's a married woman. You can't. You promised yourself you wouldn't), he said in his mind to himself.

## Chapter Four -

"Mrs Peel?" Steed quietly and tenderly spoke, trying to coax a response from her sobbing form.

"Oh Steed." Emma breathily responded.

Steed sat next to her on the stone bench. Trying desperately not to drape his arm around her, to bring her closer to him, to comfort her. Instead he took off his dark jacket and arranged it around her shoulders. He didn't know what else to do. But he knew if he were to touch her all of his resolve would be lost.

"I'm sorry...so, very, very sorry." Emma managed to voice her thoughts at last.

"Oh Steed...what else could I have done?...He's...my husband." She said turning to look at him.

He turned away. Couldn't look at her.

"Rightly or wrongly...it was the only decision to be made." She honestly said.

Her intellectual, and rational mind rearing its ugly head.

Steed sighed.

"I know Mrs Peel. I know." Steed responded. He clasped his hands in front of him looking at the floor.

"Steed I never wanted to just leave your life like that. Why do you think Peter collected me from your flat that day? I needed to say goodbye. You have to understand...he is my husband. But he knew that too, he knew, I had to say goodbye." Emma began to explain the reasons for her and her husband's actions. She had to make him understand, before she lost him forever.

"I know how much I have hurt you. I could see it in your eyes that day. But please, Steed. You have to understand it was my only choice." Emma turned to look at him.

Steed's head still hung to the floor, his large hands clasped in front of him, only moving to massage them for warmth. He didn't speak a word.

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"Oh Steed. I've tried to talk to you, tried to explain. Tried to come face to face with you again. But each time I came close. You left. I've wanted to tell you for so long Steed."

"Tell me what exactly? That he is your husband. Yes, oh, yes. I know that. That it was your only choice. Yes, my dear. I do know that too." Steed's tone was dry and slightly full of spite.

"Oh Steed. No." Emma gently replied whilst shaking her head.

"Oh, and pray tell what have I missed?" Steed retorted.

"Because...Because I thought... I only realised when it was too late...that it wasn't the choice I should have made...because I knew, I now know...I was in love with someone else...And have always been." Emma managed to say somehow shakily.

Steed's head shot up. His eyes wide in freight, shock. He turned his head and looked into her eyes. Pools of glistening tears sprung from them. Falling down both her cheeks. He was lost for words. She reached up with her left hand, and touched his thick dark, wavy, slightly greying hair. She carefully ran her fingers around the tips of a few hanging curls. Her fingers traced them neatly back into place. She began running her fingers down the outline of his face, slowly feeling the early growing stubble. And she then turned her hand around and carefully stroked his cheek once more.

The air stood still. The sound of the fountain water behind them felt like it was a distant trickling stream. He could feel her breath on him. The touch of her fingers and hand had a galvanic effect on him. It caught his breath and he had difficulty exhaling.

Emma's eyes searched his. The look she gave him melted any chill he had previously felt in the cold night air. She looked down at his lips, back to his eyes, then his lips again. She tilted her head and body towards him. He felt her breath. It sent waves of intense pleasure throughout his body. Her hand was still gently caressing his cheek. He looked into her eyes, her cheeks, her mouth. He concentrated on her moist lips as they moved nearer to his. He motioned himself nearer towards them and dipped his head, eagerly waiting for their touch. He closed his eyes when they made contact. Savouring the moment. So light, so tender, so warm. Their kiss deepened.

The gentle nature of their kiss seemed to change within a few moments. Their breathing had quickened, matching the growing intensity of their heart rates. Her hand had left his cheek and was holding the back of his head. His hand came round to grasp at her waist. Tongues rolled and sucked. They were breathless. He broke free of her lips to kiss the corner of her jawbone, down the side of her neck, the tops of her shoulders. Sucking. Their breathing became tighter, heavy, as they continued their embrace.

"Oh God...Steed." Emma managed to say somehow between breaths.

He brought his hand up to her face, holding her head gently. And responded with, "I've never wanted you more."

He looked straight into her eyes, as he moved his lips again to hers.

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Chapter Five

Two shots rang out.

Then one, two..three, four more in quick succession.

Screams were heard in the distance. Panic erupted inside the mansion.

Steed's head turned away from kissing her, after he had heard the final two shots. His hands were gripping her waist. He was pressed tightly up against her, they were standing up fully clothed with her back to the wall next to the fountain. They were breathing harshly.

"Did you hear that?" He breathed.

Two more shots were fired.

Then they heard screams and what sounded like glasses breaking.

He stepped back from her body.

"I have to go...stay here...please...for me." Steed said directly and urgently to her.

He looked at her as he released his hold on her and stepped back to break their physical contact.

"Steed wait...I'm coming with you." She replied quickly.

As they climbed their way to the top of the stone staircase. Steed looked at her and pointed in the direction of the house. He signalled to her with his pointed finger that he was going to follow whoever it was on foot in the garden. She impatiently shook her head. Steed's eyes grew dark and his expression changed. He grasped her shoulders as he said to her in a hushed whisper.

"Please just go to the house. I need to know you're safe. Please, for me."

He'd never said that to her before. Never. The entire time they had worked together. He has always let her help him. Always knew she would battle any foes that stood in their way.

"Please Emma." He said it more forcefully this time, and he slightly shook her shoulders the once for emphasis.

"Ok." Was all she could reply with.

Two more shots were fired, the sound coming from inside the maze. He took off in that direction as quickly as he had let go of her shoulders.

Emma looked at his running figure and down at her long flowing dress. He was right. What good could she do now. Seven years out of the field of espionage. And wearing a light green satin puffed out dress in heels. She took off her shoes and ran at a steady pace back to the mansion.

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### Chapter Six -

Steed made his way to the entrance of the maze. Tall ivy trellises either side of the entrance overlapped into a decorative archway. Luckily the maze itself was not too large, 30ft in diameter, a mixture of trellises and hedges....twisting and turning in a circular pattern...it looked a wonderful sight from a height. He heard a branch snap to his right. He crouched down and pressed his body against the ivy bush...trying to hide himself from view of a potential assailant. He kept low as he moved himself to a position so he could see behind the trellis...nothing at either side. He stood up and decided to go left into the maze...

Emma heard a few footsteps to her far right of the stoned pathway leading towards the mansion. She instinctively followed. Luckily her bare feet gave away no noise. As she found herself at the edge of the pathway, hidden under a large over-hanging branch she saw a few worn stone steps...carefully she walked down them. At the bottom of the steps, was a small stoned wall that housed a decorative unused and dry water fountain. It was a small lions head with a small stone bowl under its mouth. She looked to her left and followed the dirt pathway fifty or so paces, leading off to what looked like a small group of trees...she could see a faint silver glimmer of light...she carefully walked towards it...as she came nearer, she heard no sound but fell to her knees in pain...her ears stinging...within a few seconds she lay unconscious at the foot of a large oak tree.

Steed hadn't heard his attacker but felt the sharp blow to the base of his skull. He was in the centre of the maze lying unconscious. He had been out cold for fifteen minutes or so. Gambit gently called his name as he was shaken awake.

"Steed? Steed? It's me Gambit. Are you alright? Steed?" Gambit asked in hard, hurried tones.

"What happened?" Steed awoke with a throbbing in his head that felt much worse than a simple hangover.

"You were caught on the head." Gambit responded.

"By whom? Or by what?" Steed inquired holding his hand against his head and then down to see the blood clinging to his fingers.

"Probably the same men Purdey and me are looking for." Gambit advised him.

"How many were there?" Steed asked, hoarsely.

"Three! They all dispersed into the garden after the first few rounds of shots. Then Purdey and I took chase."

"Have you caught any of them?" Steed asked. His head aching more so than before.

"Unfortunately no." Gambit cautiously replied.

"They were gone as quick as they came." Gambit said.

"Any ideas on who they were?" Steed asked.

"None. We best get back to the mansion. See why Lord Robertson was their chosen target." Gambit said helping his colleague to his feet.

"Dead?" Steed asked, grimacing slightly as his head spun when he stood upright.

"Dead." Gambit replied.

Steed walked unsteadily at first then more solidly back through the maze with his colleague back to the mansion. Occasionally touching his head that "ached like the devil."

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As they neared the mansion he saw Purdey talking to some of the guests. And heard cars pull up on the driveway. Police and ambulance he thought to himself. He walked towards Purdey and she turned away from the older woman she was talking with to look at him with concern.

"Steed you're hurt." Purdey exclaimed.

"Only my pride. Anyone got a stiff drink in their hand? I could use its medicinal properties." Steed said trying to reassure her he was ok.

"Of course."

"Here."

"Have some."

Three young gentleman said to him in succession. They graciously handed him their large brandies in their hands.

"One at a time chaps. I think I can only stomach the one at the moment." Steed said whilst taking a glass from a young blonde haired man.

They ruefully smiled at him, as the shock on their faces dispersed only for a fraction of a moment.

"What's happened Purdey? Who were they?" Steed enquired after gulping down a few mouthfuls of his brandy.

"Three young men. One with black hair, one fair haired and one blonde. Mid-thirties. Between six and six-two the lot of them. Are you sure you're ok?" She said to him a touch of concern displayed across her face again.

"I'll be fine Purdey, it's just a scratch. Anyone got any facial recognition of any of them?" Steed replied.

"We'll have to interview everyone before we know that for sure. There's over 100 guests here today. Could take quite a while." Purdey replied frowning slightly to herself and him.

"See that it's done as quickly as possible. The slightest clue will help us catch them." Steed said to Purdey.

Purdey nodded in agreement.

Steed began scanning the room left to right for her. His head still throbbed relentlessly. And the blood was still stickily festering slowly from his wound. He couldn't see her. He tried standing on the tips of his toes to see over the top the heads of some of the guests. Nothing. His brow furrowed slightly.

"You haven't spoken to a woman with auburn hair wearing a light green satin dress have you Purdey?" Steed inquired to his young blonde haired colleague.

"Should I have?" Purdey responded, somewhat puzzled.

"I told her to meet me here." Steed advised her.

"I say Gambit. Have you come across a woman with auburn hair wearing a light green satin dress?" Steed called over to his younger colleague who was interviewing a group of young woman to the right of the glass patio doors.

Gambit raised his head and looked over to Steed.

"A woman with auburn hair? No, no, I don't think I have. Why?" Gambit replied questionably.

"I told her specifically to come straight here." Steed's tone dramatically changed to annoyance.

"Friend of yours Steed?" Purdey asked. A touch of jealous in her voice.

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"As a matter of fact yes. It was Mrs. Peel. Mrs. Emma Peel." Steed advised a touch of annoyance in his voice.

"Mrs. Peel?" Purdey said, in a high-pitched tone, slightly resembling shock.

"Really? Not the Mrs. Peel?" Gambit had heard his response and walked towards Steed.

"The very same. We took a walk in the garden. When we heard the shots I told her to meet me back at the house. If she's gone after those men. And they have taken her." Steed's anger rose in him as his free hand clenched into a fist.

"We'll get someone to search the grounds Steed. Don't worry. She'll turn up." Gambit reassured his colleague as he saw his growing agitation.

## Chapter Seven –

Steed was being attended to by a young male paramedic, taping a gauzed thick pad to his head.

"It'll need stitches sir. We better get you in the ambulance." Said the young man to Steed.

"No. I won't be going anywhere until she's been found." Steed forcefully advised the young man, scolding him for even suggesting it.

Half an hour had passed. It was 12:38am. There were numerous police officers, agents and only a handful of paramedics on the scene. Gambit was talking with the chief police officer and a fellow colleague of the ministry. They nodded in agreement as more men were called for by both parties to search the grounds for clues, and to take statements from the numerous guests who were increasingly looking agitated and weary.

Another hour passed. Twenty or so officers and agents had gathered the guests into the ballroom each taking a separate statement from every person attending the event. Steed was seen to be a little more alert, drinking from a glass of water. He was seated next to Purdey at one of the tables in the main reception area of the mansion, away from the constant drill of voices in the ballroom. Steed's head ached violently, but was gradually easing in its intensity as the pain-killers given to him were taking their desired effect.

Steed's hand rested on the table, as he tapped his fingers in annoyance that no news was being filtered through to him. On Mrs. Peel's whereabouts, or news of the men who had killed Lord Robertson.

It was another half an hour before he was interrupted with news from the gentleman who was heading the investigation and Gambit who both came over to speak with Steed.

"Well?" Steed enquired forcefully.

"Nothing concrete as yet Steed. We've found quite a few footprints over in the maze where you were attacked, and to the side of the house. A few bullet casings were taken from inside the house. Forensics are still in the library taking samples from the crime scene." Chief Warner explained to him, reading from the list from the notepad in his hand.

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“And what about Mrs. Peel?” Steed asked sounding aggravated.

“Well, this is the strangest thing. Going from your description of her. A tall woman with auburn hair, wearing a long ankle length light green satin dress. No one remembers seeing her here, or with you during the evenings events.” Chief Warner cautiously told the more senior member of the ministry the news he was not expecting.

“What?” Steed replied with a surprised and somewhat shocked tone.

Steed thought hard about his reply, before saying.

“But Mrs. Foster and Lord Blakely saw us talking by the champagne table. Haven’t you taken their statements yet?” Steed urgently said, attempting to gain some sort of positive response from the situation.

“I’ll ask my lads if they have, won’t be a minute Steed.” Chief Warner responded and walked back into the ballroom.

He emerged five minutes later with Mrs. Foster and Lord Blakely themselves.

“Steed, how’s the head. Dreadful business this.” Lord Blakely said to Steed as he stood in front of him.

“Oh, I’ll be alright after bit of rest Alistair. Now, have you spoken to the officers and given them your statements. Both of you?” Steed enquired whilst looking at Lord Blakely first, then to Mrs. Foster.

“Oh yes, Steed. As soon as we could. If it wasn’t for Alistair here getting a large whiskey and orange for me. I would have had difficulty in speaking. It’s awful this, just awful. I’m quite on edge with the whole thing.” Mrs. Foster responded rather quickly, and nervously.

“Mrs. Foster, Angela?” Steed asked, trying to interrupt her.

She looked down at him, eagerly waiting for his questions.

“Have you seen the woman I was talking with earlier?” Steed asked her a little calmer trying not to upset the worried grey-haired woman in front of him.

“Which woman?” She asked him questioningly.

“The woman with auburn hair, she was wearing a long ankle length light green satin dress. We were talking over by the champagne table earlier in the evening. You and Alistair were near us at the time.” Steed asked her, in a more heated tone in his voice to emphasis his point.

“No, no. I don’t remember seeing you talking with anyone like that. In fact I don’t remember seeing you much at all actually.” Mrs. Foster replied honestly, feeling a little subdued by his tone.

“And you Alistair? What about you?” Steed turned his attention to the older gentleman next to him.

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“I’m sorry Steed. I don’t recall either. Was she a friend of yours?” Lord Blakely replied, a touch of concern in his voice.

“A very dear friend.” Steed said whilst he twisted his face in confusion.

“Well, I’m sure she’ll turn up Steed.” Lord Blakely replied, trying to reassure his younger friend.

“I do hope so Alistair. I do hope so.” Steed shook his head in irritation.

Steed got to his feet and walked towards the ballroom. Determination spread across his face. He grabbed an ice bucket from the table nearest the entrance of the ballroom, and a heavy spoon that was placed in the punch bowl. He weaved his way through the crowds of standing guests, to the end of the room. He stood on a chair and proceeded to bang the spoon loudly on the ice bucket.

“Attention! Please may I have all of your attention! Excuse me! Quiet please!” Steed loudly and abruptly shouted as hard as he could.

The muffled voices soon tempered to a quieter hush. As all eyes were focused on the tall dark haired man dressed in his formal wear covered in spots of blood, and who had his head bandaged in gauze.

“Now the events of this evening are a terrifically hard thing to overcome. But with all your assistance and support we will soon locate the men who have killed Lord Robertson. I have only one question, and then I’m sure it won’t be much longer before the police and my fellow colleagues can formally release you all to retire to your own homes. Which I’m sure all of you are eager to do so. But there appears to be another person missing from the guest list. A woman with auburn hair, wearing a long ankle length light green satin dress. Has anyone in the room seen, or spoken with a woman of that description?” Steed ended his speech by glancing at as many faces in the room as he could.

Silence. Then hushed muffled voices. No one came forward. No one said a word. A few seconds, turned into a minute.

“Please, the sooner you come forward. The sooner you may all return to your homes.” Steed said again, urgently, searching for a response.

Nothing. No one uttered a single syllable.

Gambit came up to Steed looking up at his friend and colleague. He offered him his hand, signaling him to come down from the chair.

“I’m sorry Steed. Come on.” Gambit said whilst trying hard to not show the elder man the look of worry spread across his face.

“But she was here Gambit. I know she was.” Steed said jumping down from the chair and looking directly at his colleague.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

“Carlton. Here, come here.” Steed said at the young ministry man.

“Yes, Steed?” Carlton came to Steed’s side.

“I want you to call headquarters, and as to be transferred to Lloyd Pullman. I want you to ask him to contact me as soon as possible.” Steed said quickly to the young man.

Steed glanced at his watch. It was now 2:16am.

“Not a problem Steed. I’ll do it right now.” Carlton rushed off towards the main reception area searching for the nearest phone.

Chapter Eight –

It was nearing 2:53am as Steed impatiently waited by the telephone. His annoyance had been felt earlier by Purdey and Gambit, so they had decided to leave him alone for the time being.

Gambit and Purdey stood talking with Chief Warner. The men had adequately searched the grounds a few times, and the forensics teams were taking their samples from the gardens, and the library. Another few hours and they would be leaving. The decision was made not to remove the body of Lord Robertson until all the guests had left. Only around twenty or so were still to remain. Some having been categorised as first-hand witnesses of the incident, and those who knew the last known movements of Lord Robertson. Lady Robertson sat sobbing in a corner of the ballroom, a few young women around her trying to give some comfort.

“I just can’t believe it...I can’t believe he’s gone...who would want my Harold dead...he’s retired...hasn’t worked in five years...who would want to murder a simple chemist?” Lady Robertson spoke in fractured bursts between sobs.

“Oh Lady Helena, shh now, don’t over think things.” Said one young portly lady.

“The police will fine those men. Don’t upset yourself further.” Said another young dark-haired woman, who kneeled at her feet holding her hands.

One young police officer came over to speak with Chief Warner.

“All the grounds have been searched a third time sir. There's no new evidence. Any more orders?” He enquired.

“No, Jenkins, I think that will be all until morning. Go and tell the men to come inside for a break.” Said Chief Warner to the young officer.

The phone rang in the reception room. Steed was alerted to attention, as he was sitting crouched holding his hands in front of him.

“Steed. Pullman, what on earth have you been doing? What took so long?” Steed angrily voiced in irritation at being kept waiting this long.

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

"I went for a drink Steed. No harm in that. I've only just gotten your message." Replied the middle-aged man at the other end of the phone line.

"No time for that now man. When did you last see Mrs. Peel? What was her last known whereabouts and movements?" Steed hurriedly asked.

"Caught the last flight to her Villa in the South of France, Steed. Oh, around 1:30am I think it was. She left her office at around 7pm. Went straight back to her flat. Left around 1:00am. I followed her to the airport myself." Lloyd advised.

Steed paused at first, as he was too shocked. Then he urgently asked Pullman.

"What! Are you sure? Sure it was her. You saw her go inside the airport? Alone? Was her husband with her?"

"She was alone Steed, I saw her myself. Peter's in Mexico on flight training. He's been away for over a week now. Look Steed what is this about? Is everything ok?" Lloyd seemed unsure what caused Steed's sudden impatience for wanting to know the whereabouts of Mrs. Peel.

"Look Lloyd, I don't know what's happening here. But I need you to go to the airport and get some information about the flight she took. Will you do that? Now." Steed said irritated now, as nothing seemed to make any sense to him.

"Steed, it's 3am. What is this about?" Lloyd enquired, a little irritated himself now.

"Don't ask questions. Just find out if she took that plane. Get Jacque in France to get down to her Villa. I expect a call as soon as he is there. I need you to make sure she's at her Villa." Steed ordered.

"Alright Steed. Alright. I'll be in touch." Lloyd hung up the phone.

Steed's head began pounding again. He screwed his brow together in confusion, and anger. His hand rubbing at the pain in his head. *She was here with me. I know she was. She can't be in France.* He thought to himself.

## Chapter Nine –

"Yes, yes, that's right. Mrs. Emma Peel. Flight 4621 to Nice, 1:30am flight. Right ok. And champagne too you say. Right ok. I've got that. Thank you, Gerry. I owe you one." Lloyd replaced the telephone receiver back into the cradle as he finished writing the last few words on his notepad.

He lifted the telephone again, dialling overseas to France and to the home of Monsieur Jacque Pierre.

"Jacque its Pullman. Get down to Mrs. Peel's place pronto. When you get there confirm she's there by calling Steed on this number. 0201-6872089. All security precautions are necessary at this point." He spoke urgently in French, into the phone. Not stopping for breath.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"No problem Pullman. I'm on my way. I'll check in within the hour. Goodbye." Jacque replied in French.

"Goodbye Jacque." Pullman ended the call.

Pullman lifted the receiver again to contact Steed. He should be pleased with this news at least.

"Steed." Who had answered the phone after two rings.

"Steed. It's Pullman. The manifesto has been checked, she boarded, Flight 4621 to Nice, 1:30am. Sat in seat 6c First Class and ordered Premier Cruz Champagne. There is even a receipt to verify as well as flight attendants who will confirm it. They landed at 2:30am our time. She got a taxi from there to her Villa. It's almost an hours drive from the airport. She should be at her villa by now. And I've sent Jacque there a few moments ago. He should be getting back to you within 45mins or so. All security checks will be carried out. He will call you from there. Alright?" Pullman said, reassuringly to Steed.

Steed sighed down the phone. Silence. He traced his fingers around his brow again as he tried to take in the news. Confusion. Worry. Was he really just imagining this? Had she been here at all? But her kiss in the gardens. No. She had been here. And he was determined to prove it.

"Pullman. Thanks for the update. I'll expect Jacques call. I'll let you know the outcome." And he replaced the receiver sighing to himself once more.

His head ached again. He had a bitter taste of iron in his mouth. Probably his own blood he thought. How on earth is this happening? More importantly why? Gambit and Purdey came walking over to him as soon as they had heard him replace the receiver.

"Well? Any news?" Gambit asked.

"She was on the 1:30am flight to Nice. Pullman has sent someone to her villa to confirm."

"Well that's marvellous news Steed." Purdey exclaimed, a bit of cheer in her voice.

"Is it?" Steed enquired questionably.

"It just confirms that someone of her description took the flight. Not necessarily that it was her Purdey." Gambit explained to her.

"Exactly. Exactly so Gambit." Steed looked up at his colleague and friend. He could see Gambit's reassuring smile to show that he believed him.

"So we wait?" Purdey asked.

"We wait." Steed said sombrely.

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

Mrs. Emma Peel felt warmer although her toes had a slight chill to them. She pulled the covers up to her ears, as she raised her toes further up the bed. Such a warm, comfortable bed. Her drifting into slumber was rudely interrupted a few moments later. There was incessant banging coming from the downstairs door. She stretched out her arms and tried to pull herself together. She had only just gotten into bed. She reached for her dressing gown and slippers. Then proceeded out her bedroom door at a less than gracious speed down the stairs of her villa. A slight expression of annoyance on her face.

She opened the door.

"What on earth is this? Do you realise the time?" Emma practically spat out at the small dark-haired middle aged Frenchman on her doorstep.

"Mrs. Emma Peel. I'm Monsieur Jacque Pierre. I'm from International Security. I have orders to speak to you on a matter most urgent." He explained whilst holding up two forms of identification.

Mrs Peel squinted at one, and took the other green card from him to look at more closely.

"And just who's orders were they Monsieur Pierre?" She asked, the tone in her voice unchanging.

"Mr John Steed's orders Madame." He replied hurriedly.

Her face fell. She swallowed hard.

"In that case you better come in." She opened the door wider for him to enter. He was holding a briefcase.

She and Jacque walked into her large beautifully decorated living room.

"Please. Take a seat." Emma waved her hand to Jacque for emphasis.

"Before I am able to discuss anything with you Madame." Jacque began.

"But you must follow security procedures. Yes, Monsieur. I am familiar with this. Do continue." She explained.

He opened his briefcase. Took many items out.

A sheet with ten questions. A pencil. A few sheets of paper. A tape recorder. A blank and used tape. A file full of answers and handwriting tests.

He switched on the tape recorder. And began to ask her those questions. She verbally answered each question. Some were mathematical questions, requiring equational responses. Some regarding her previous cases at the Ministry. Other simple questions on quoting parts of Shakespearean plays. All devised to test her abilities and that it was truly her. He switched off the tape.

He handed her another sheet of paper with another ten different questions. Like an I.Q. test. After fifteen minutes she handed him the paper.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Excuse me Madame. I shan't be long." He exited her living room taking all his equipment with him.

"Not at all." Emma replied.

He returned fifteen minutes later. And advised her he would need to call Steed.

"By all means. But may I ask now why this is all necessary?" She enquired.

"I'll let Mr. Steed explain Madame." He responded.

He lifted the receiver and dialled the number for Steed.

"Steed." He answered after two rings.

"Mr. Steed. It's Jacques Monsieur. I'm here with Mrs. Peel at her Villa, as requested. She's passed all security protocols Monsieur." Jacques stated.

Steed sighed down the phone line. Then asked rather heated.

"Let me speak to her Jacque."

"Certainly Monsieur." Jacque lowered the receiver away from his mouth.

"Madame. Mr. Steed would like to speak to you." He looked in her direction.

Emma rose from her sofa towards Jacque.

"Hello Steed. What is this all about? Is there a problem?"

"Mrs Peel..." Steed paused, suddenly he had a dry throat.

"Steed?" Emma asked, she seemed agitated somewhat.

"What was the name of the hotel we stayed in the fourth night we were in France for your 29th birthday?" Steed blurted out.

She paused then answered.

"Hotel de Vendome, in Paris."

Silence at the other end of the phone.

"Steed what's wrong? What is it? Why all these questions?" Emma asked. Now panic in her voice.

A short pause.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Why did you buy that diamond tie pin for me?" He asked urgently.

Emma looked shocked...her hands began to tremble. She slowly answered him.

"I saw at in an antique shop along Princes Street, whilst I was away giving a lecture in Edinburgh...It reminded me of you...So I bought it...I wanted you to have something to remember me by when I was away from you...Steed please, what is this? What's wrong?" She said shakily, pleading for him to answer her.

Silence again.

"Steed?" She urgently called out.

She heard him sigh again.

"Nothing Mrs Peel...Just a routine check...Everything is perfectly fine. Goodbye." Steed said trying to sound like he was in control.

He hung up.

"Goodbye Steed." Emma answered shocked and worried by the tone in his voice. And the abruptness of him ending the call.

Chapter Ten -

Steed was numb. The colour had already drained from his features. (It was her. Is was definitely her. But how?) His brow tensed up in frustration. (This makes no sense at all!) He let out a long and hard sigh. (It was her).

Gambit had seen Steed's reaction from the other end of the room. He didn't signal to Purdey, who was now talking to a young agent at the other end of the ballroom. Instead he walked over to Steed himself.

"Any luck Steed?" Gambit asked, trying to sound encouraging.

"Quite the opposite in fact."

"Oh?" Gambit responded.

"She's at the Villa. She's alright. Tango-Alpha confirmation." Steed said, sombrely.

"Well that's some good news she's safe right?" Gambit said.

"But she was here Gambit. I know she was." Steed looked up still puzzled.

"There must be a rational explanation for all this." Steed then added, muttering to himself.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"How about we get that head of yours attended too first? Then work out that puzzle and who those three men were who killed Lord Robertson?" Gambit said. Trying to settle his colleague into thinking rationally himself.

"Perhaps you're right Gambit." Steed said.

"I'll drive you Steed. Most of the men have left for home now anyway." Said Gambit. Looking around the room.

—  
A day later.

Steed sat upright from his hospital bed. Bored. He had read the same page twice now. His thoughts interrupting him more and more.

Gambit then entered the private room with Purdey.

"Ah. Finally. Some relief from the boredom. Any news?" Steed said.

"Well we managed to do a full background check on Lord Robertson. He was a Judge at the Supreme Court for five years before getting his peerage in 1965. And spent fifteen years before that as a barrister. Retired five years ago following ill health. His wife and him spent most of the year living in their holiday home in Devon. But have their own London address in Chelsea. He lived off generous returns from his investments on top of his state pension. That's about it." Gambit revealed.

"Judge? Have you checked if there are any leads to ex-convicts with grudges?" Steed asked.

"We have twenty-five years of cases to sift through. Unfortunately it will take some time I'm afraid Steed." Gambit said.

"You need to think outside of the box Gambit. Narrow the list down to recent suspects only. Then work from there." Steed said.

"Oh and run a check on the list of investments he made. Bring that back to me as soon as you can." Steed added.

"And how are you Steed?" Purdey interrupted.

"Oh. Can't complain much. My head is constantly pounding. The books I've been given I remember reading the last time I was here convalescing. And not a drop of brandy in the place. Other than that. Perfectly irritable." Steed said with a sly pout. He flung the book down on the bed, and touched his head then grimaced to emphasise his plight.

"Well I have brought you some reading material. No brandy or champagne I'm afraid, doctors orders. It effects the painkillers. Have they said when you can be released?" Purdey said.

"In a day or two. But I highly doubt I'll last that long." Steed said.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Well. Plenty of rest is needed with head injuries Steed. You know that." Doctor Moore entered the room.

"Yes, I know that Doctor. But it would help if I could self medicate to assist in the sleeping procedure. Have you ever tried to sleep when your ears and head feel like they're home to a group of teenager girls at a rock and roll concert...in a stadium!" Steed said cradling his head once more.

"Well. No. But." Moore replied.

"I rest my case." Steed said.

"I'll up the dosage on your medication. And I'll have a nurse come here soon with them for you. All you need is rest." Moore added.

"Thank you Doctor." Steed said.

Moore then left the room.

"Right. Ok Steed. We'll better be off then. Let you get some rest." Gambit said.

"Let me know if you find anything as and when Gambit." Steed said.

"No problem Steed."

Gambit and Purdey then left their colleague sulking in his hospital room.

---

"Nothing. You?" Gambit said

"Not a thing." Purdey said.

They had both left opposite rooms, in which several agents were busy searching various piles of files with sealed court stamps.

"What about those investors Steed mentioned?" Gambit said.

"I have Morris from Forensic Accounting looking into them for me. He said he'd have a list of them all. Including money distribution records and current addresses of those companies recorded in a few hours." Purdey said.

"Well. Might as well go home for now. There's nothing more we can do here tonight. Want a lift Purdey?" Gambit said.

"Thanks Mike." Purdey said.

---

In Gambit's car they were discussing recent events.

"So what do you make of all this business with Steed saying Mrs Peel was with him?" Purdey said.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"I don't know. I've never seen him so determined to track anyone down that quickly before." Gambit said.

"He's never looked so distraught before either." Gambit then added.

"He didn't seem so happy that she had been found either...very odd." Added Purdey.

"Yes. Not like him at all." Gambit said.

"Do you think he was just imagining it Purdey?" Gambit asked a few moments later.

"I don't know. He seems convinced she was with him out in the gardens too." Purdey said.

"And he was outside in the garden at the time when the men were. Which is how he was attacked so quickly." Gambit added.

"Odd if he was out there on his own beforehand?" Purdey added.

"Exactly." Gambit said.

"I think we may have to look into this a bit closer for him." Purdey said.

"My thoughts exactly Purdey girl." Said Gambit.

---

Two days had passed since the incident at Lord Favercombe's charity event. Following numerous reports and even a psychoanalytical meeting. John Steed was released from the Ministry hospital. He had returned to his newly inherited re-furbished manor house. The stable area was however, still undergoing improvements.

Steed sat on his green leather sofa. Legs stretched out. Book in his lap. Asleep.

("Oh Steed...I'm sorry...so, very, very sorry...what else could I have done?...He's my husband... Rightly or wrongly...it was the only decision to be made.")

Steed's head turned from side to side. He was uncomfortable, her voice whirling in his mind.

("I only realised when it was too late...I was in love with someone else...And have always been.")

"Steed? Steed?" Gambit called to him.

Steed muttered a few unintelligible words under his breath. Then woke up with a start.

"Oh. Gambit...Must of dosed off. Those new painkillers the Doctor prescribed clearly are working wonders. Any leads?" Steed said surprised and a little flushed.

"Well there haven't been any recent releases from prison. The varied descriptions from the guests of those men have been proven inconclusive." Gambit advised.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Paid assassins?" Steed suggested.

"Could be." Gambit said.

"But I have Purdey working with someone on that list of investors you wanted." Gambit said.

Just as he had said this Purdey comes running into the sitting room.

"Steed. Gambit, I have them. It took some digging. But here. He's the list of those investors. Pay particular attention to what's highlighted on page four." Purdey said.

"0.5% share holding in Knight's Industries. So there is a link. Purdey, thank you. Thank you so much." Steed said whilst getting up to kiss her on the cheek.

"Now we just need to find out why." Steed said. A large smile across his face, then his brow furrowed again.

Chapter Eleven -

Friday 25th March 1975 - 4:30pm, the offices of "Foxglove, Hawthorn and Forsyth LLP", Central London.

A small portly white bearded man, who wore thick rimmed glasses wore, a trilby hat and dark overcoat entered the office of a Mr. Foxglove.

"Mr. Foxglove?" The strange man, with a slight Welsh accent said.

"Yes?" Said Mr. Foxglove getting to his feet.

"Please sit Sir."

Mr. Foxglove sat himself down again.

The bearded man took a silver rectangular box from his jacket pocket. And pressed a small black button on the top. Mr. Foxglove covered his ears in pain and slumped into his chair. Unconscious.

The bearded man pressed a yellow button on the silver device and Mr. Foxglove immediately woke up. Eyes wide and staring straight at the bearded man.

"Now I have your attention Mr. Foxglove. What were you doing with Lord Robertson at 1:00pm today?" Said the bearded man.

"I'd just finished the full accounts for Knight's Industries. And left to meet Harold for lunch at Tempest's across the street." Replied the man at his desk robotically.

"And what did you discuss?" Said the welsh man.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"I noticed a large number of money transfers to the experimental research department - block 67f. But no new products were being made. Yet, money was still being sent on a regular basis. This had gone on for the past seven months. I explained this to Harold and to speak with Mrs. Peel about it. He is an old friend of her father's and she trusts him. She wouldn't have known otherwise. I've tried obtaining a meeting but she was too busy this week to see me. I've known Harold since Oxford. And he is due to attend the board of members and shareholders meeting this Monday coming. Harold said he would speak to her earlier and get the matter looked into. And to find out which scientist was working in that department." Foxglove told him robotically.

"And then?"

"And then I left."

"Very good Mr. Foxglove..."

He pressed a green button on the device.

"Now I'll tell you exactly what you have done in the past twelve hours..." Said the welsh man.

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Monday 28th March 1975, Knight's Industries Headquarters, Central London.

Mrs. Emma Peel sat in the board room turning the last page of the booklet in front of her.

"Anyone got anything further to add?" She asked.

The fourteen men turned to each other shaking their heads and shrugging their shoulders.

"No. I don't think so Mrs. Peel." Said Walter Duffield. The Managing Director of the Company.

"Well. If that's all gentleman? I look forward to seeing you all here next year. Thank you for your attendance." She said.

All the men then rose from their seats and exited the room carrying documents and briefcases.

A knock was heard on the door.

"Yes?" Mrs. Peel said looking up.

"Sorry to interrupt Mrs. Peel. But there's a gentleman here to see you. He said it was most urgent." Said the young dark-haired woman.

"I was just about to leave Wendy."

"I'm sorry Mrs. Peel but the gentleman was most persistent."

Then in walked her husband with a bunch of flowers of various sorts.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Peter?" Emma said smiling.

"Emma. Darling." Peter said handing her the flowers and kissing her on the cheek.

"I thought your plane wasn't going to land until tomorrow?" Emma asked, surprised.

"I managed to get a free standby flight home. I pulled some strings." Peter said pleased to see her.

He'd been away a week, and was looking forward to spending some time off with his wife.

"I have a table booked for 6:30pm. We better leave now so we can change for dinner." Peter said trying to impress his wife.

"Alright. I'll collect my things." Emma said smiling.

They left a few moments later.

----

Mr. Foxglove sat at his desk putting the remaining papers on his desk into the dossier. He switched off his table lamp. And then picked up his briefcase.

A man appeared at his door.

"Mr. Foxglove?" The man said.

"Yes?"

"I'm Mr. Steed. Mr. John Steed. The Ministry I trust called to explain I was on my way?" Said Steed shaking the man's hand.

"Erm. Unfortunately no. No, they didn't." Mr. Foxglove said.

"Oh. Now that was remiss of them. I do apologise. Here are my credentials." Steed said handing him his security clearance card and identification.

"Very well Mr. Steed. How can I be of help?" Said Mr. Foxglove.

"You have just finished Knight Industries yearly accounts, have you not?" Steed asked.

"Yes, Mr. Steed. I finished them on Friday ready for the meeting today." He replied.

"Any discrepancies appear untoward in them?" Steed asked.

"No, no, not at all Mr. Steed? Same as last year. Why?" Foxglove advised.

"Oh. Just wanting to invest in them myself that's all. My accountant said they are a good fine bet. Would you recommend them?" Steed lied, but extremely well.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Of course. Very profitable business. And extra 3.5% profit increase from last year. 0.5% over last year's budget prediction. A very sound company Mr. Steed. I would certainly recommend them." Foxglove said.

"Well. Thank you very much for your time Mr. Foxglove." Steed said tipping his bowler to him as he left the office.

"0.5% over budget prediction. Curious." Steed said to himself as he entered the lift.

----

"Purdey get onto Morris will you. Have him find out exactly how much 0.5% shares would have been worth for Knight's Industries before Lord Robertson's death. And see if there have been any bank transfers for that amount over the past few days or weeks in any of Lord Robertson's accounts. Get back to me as soon as you can will you?" Steed said into the phone.

He was calling from a pay phone around the corner from "Foxglove, Hawthorn, and Forsyth LLP".

"And where will you be?" Purdey asked.

"I'm going to speak with Mrs. Peel." Steed said.

"Oh." Was all Purdey could say.

----

Purdey was contacted by Morris an hour later.

"£25,000 exactly Purdey for 0.5% of the share price as of today. Here's the thing. Lord Robertson's shares for Knight were all sold on Friday 25th March, the day of his death. The money was also just transferred into Lord Robertson's bank account earlier today." Morris said

"Really?!" Purdey exclaimed.

"The transfer should have gone through the same day they were sold. But it was done after banking hours. All of his other stocks have been suspended and the money transferred to a separate account. All of his other bank accounts have been frozen. Which is standard practice after a death." Said Morris.

"Who authorised the selling of the shares?" Purdey asked.

"Lord Robertson's accountants, Foxglove, Hawthorn and Forsyth LLP...A Mr. Foxglove authorised the sale." Morris added.

"I see. Have you spoken with Mr. Foxglove?" Purdey enquired.

"No, unfortunately he had left the office." Morris responded.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Purdey here's the thing. Foxglove, Hawthorn and Forsyth LLP are also the accountants of Knight's Industries." Morris said, in exclamation.

"Really?!" Purdey replied.

"I thought Steed would have told you?" Morris said.

"No. Should he have?" Purdey asked.

"He asked me who were Knight's accountants were earlier today." Morris said.

"Did he now. I'll have a word with him. Thanks for all your help Morris. I'll be in touch." Purdey hung up the phone.

----

Chapter Twelve -

Gambit answered the phone from the desk of administration.

"Right, ok Purdey. I've got that...No, I've not seen Steed either. He's going to see Mrs. Peel. Right ok. I'll try her offices for him...We've been cross-checking recent releases. We're only up to 1973 so far in the files. Not a thing. He's put away a lot of people, but most are in for the long-term sentences. So it must be someone further back into his past. Which is going to take some time before we find them...Nothing has come up with witnesses from the charity event either. There's too many varied descriptions of the three men...There also has to be a reason why Steed believes Mrs. Peel was with him. So, I've also called in Lloyd Pullman for a follow up statement...I've also checked Steed's psychoanalytical report. And he gave no information as to what he and Mrs. Peel were talking about outside. It states, "He was very reticent, and tried to fain ignorance that he couldn't remember why. Just that she was there. Blaming his head injury for the loss of memory."... So there is a possibility Steed knows what was said between them, but refuses to discuss it." Gambit explained, whilst reading from the information in the documents in his hands.

"Well he's obviously keeping things close to his chest. So I doubt he even thinks we believe him. After all we didn't see her with him either did we Gambit?" Purdey added.

"That's a good point Purdey. So he's probably trying to uncover that explanation himself." Gambit replied.

"Well it does seem possible. It certainly explains why he was at Foxglove, Hawthorn and Forsyth's before we were. I think he's going this one alone Gambit. I just hope he doesn't get hurt in the process." Purdey said.

"Well I'll get on to Knight's Industries now. See if I can catch him there. At least give him a heads up we have a possible motive now." Gambit said.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Ok, Gambit. I'll meet you downstairs in Bravo-Victor D. In around fifteen minutes. I want to stand in when they speak with Lloyd Pullman. I'm just with Morris in Forensic Accounting at the moment." Purdey explained.

"No problem Purdey." Gambit hung up.

----

The young dark-haired woman by the name of Wendy shook her head in response. As she handed back the two forms of identification the older gentleman gave to her.

"I'm sorry Sir. But she's only just left. Her husband and her have gone out for dinner. I doubt you'll be able to reach them this evening. I have no idea which restaurant they have gone to. Is it really that urgent sir, that it can't wait until tomorrow morning?" Wendy explained.

Annoyance displayed on his features, then he tried the easy approach. "I'm afraid so...Erm, Wendy is it?" He said looking down at her desk name plate then back towards her.

"I'm sorry Mr. Steed that I can't be of more help." Wendy said, her eyelashes fluttering at him.

"Can't be helped I suppose." Steed said with a shrug.

Then he turned and walked away from the personal assistant's desk. Just then the phone began to ring on Wendy's desk.

"Yes, yes he's here." Wendy said into the phone.

"Oh Mr. Steed!" Wendy called after him.

Steed turned towards her direction. He was nearly at the lift door down the corridor. She pointed at the phone and then to him. Steed walked towards her desk.

"Phone call for you Mr. Steed. It's a Mr. Gambit wanting a word with you." Wendy said handing him the phone.

"Ah. Gambit. Steed here. What's the problem?" Steed asked.

Steed nodded in confirmation as Gambit explained all the information they had uncovered and the next plan of action.

"Right. Not a problem. I'll meet you there myself. I'll be at least an hour. Make sure you follow all Lima-Tango protocols. Yes, that's right. It's a necessity." Steed said.

Steed replaced the phone handset into the cradle. He winked at Wendy.

"Thank you for your help Wendy."

The Woman with Auburn hair.

He looked at his watch, 5:15pm. Plenty of time he thought. And he walked down the corridor towards the lifts.

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Peter answered the door dressed fully in his dark dinner suit.

"Steed? What on earth are you doing here?" Peter said, shocked and a little outrage displayed on his features.

"I need to speak with your wife." Steed explains sternly, looking directly into Peter's blue eyes.

"I'm afraid she's busy. We're about to leave for dinner." Peter responds quite avariciously, still standing at the door. Refusing to let Steed enter.

"I'm afraid it's not your decision. It's a matter of urgency. I have orders to follow. Which means I must speak with her." Steed says assertively.

Peter still refuses holding the door back with his hands.

"Peter who is it darling?" Emma says whilst she puts her heeled shoe on and then proceeds to walk towards the door.

"Steed!" Emma gasps, and stands there in front of him slightly dumbfounded.

"Mrs. Peel. I have orders to come and speak to you. But your husband here seems to think National Security doesn't apply to him." Steed says disapprovingly.

Emma scowls at her husband. And let's Steed enter opening the door herself.

"By all means. Come in." Emma says. The shock on her face turning to displeasure at her husband's reaction.

They all walk into the large sitting room to the right of the hallway of the three storey town house.

"I'm sorry Peter. But when I said I need to speak to your wife. I meant alone." Steed says after watching Peter enter the room also.

"Dammit Steed. To hell with security clearances. I'm a pilot for god sake. I have enough security clearance to fly. Whatever you have got to say. You can say in front of me. She's my wife." Peter said bitterly. Clearly there was no friendship or chivalry between the two men.

Steed's temper rose a notch. He clenched his fist, out of view from them both. He sighed. Trying to release his growing anger and to remain calm. For Mrs. Peel's sake.

"Peter, please. There was no need. He's just doing his job. It's fine Steed. Please continue." Emma said again chastising her husband for his manners. As she tried to compensate and reassure her husband could be trusted.

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Very well, then Mrs. Peel. Do you know a Lord Harold Robertson?" Steed asked. Somewhat calmer knowing Mrs. Peel was taking control of her husband's behaviour towards him. Thankfully. Otherwise he would have taken great pleasure in silencing Peter's tongue himself.

"Yes. He's a board member at Knight's Industries Steed. He holds shares in the company. An old friend of my fathers. Is this what's all this is about. He was murdered two days ago wasn't he? Poor Helena. She must be so distraught." Emma said informatively and sympathetically.

"Yes, at the charity event at Lord Favercombe's mansion by three young men." Steed said in response to her question.

"Have you any leads on these men?" Emma asked.

"Not really. Varied descriptions from the hundred or so guests." Steed said.

"And where does Emma come into all of this Steed? Why come here to discuss this with her directly? What's the urgency?" Peter asked.

"Really Peter!" Emma scorned.

"Because she was at the event too." Steed said.

"That's ridiculous. You said you were at the Villa Friday night. I called you back there myself when you left a message at the hanger. You had only just arrived home." Peter said.

"That's right Steed. I left London on the 1:30am flight to Nice. I got to the Villa. Oh, around 3:30ish, London time. Then by 4am Jacques was here. I spoke to you on the phone after the security clearance." Emma added.

Steed sighed again. Pacing around the room. It had been confirmed. Clarified and agreed by both Emma and her husband. There was no use in denying it.

"Do you have any witnesses to confirm she was there?" Peter asked.

"Yes." Steed said.

"Who?" Peter asked.

"Me." Steed said.

"You?" Peter added.

"So you and him? You've been seeing him behind my back. I should have guessed!" Peter spit out angrily. He looked at his wife in outrage.

"No. Peter don't. It's nothing like that." Emma said defensively.

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

"I've been gone a week Emma. I'm not stupid! You and him could have been having an affair at any time." Peter said. He looked in Steed's direction in abhorrence. His fists curling at his sides.

"I swear to God Steed..." Peter said moving towards him.

"No, Peter. It's not like that at all. I haven't spoken to Steed in several years." Emma said, desperately trying to calm her raging, jealous ridden husband. Holding his arm to stop him from nearing his pursuit towards Steed.

That hurt. Her reaction. That hurt Steed a lot.

"Before you get the wrong idea Peter. She's right. Unfortunately. Before two days ago. I hadn't spoken to her for over seven years, two months and six days." Steed said.

Emma's face fell her attention now on the man she hadn't spoken to until the day she kissed his cheek and said goodbye.

Steed felt empty at her response and reaction. But he was her husband. And she had every right to defend her honour. Even if he was the only one who seemed to remember that evening she told him she loved him more than her husband. He was beginning to recognise, after her outburst, that he may well have been imagining their entire reunion.

"I'm the only witness to have seen her there. There was 106 other guests. None of which can recall seeing Mrs. Peel. Except me." Steed said as a matter-of-factly.

"Then why the hell come marching in here and say you were with my wife, make me think you'd been having an affair, when you are blatantly lying." Peter said, in resentment.

"I had to be sure." Steed said, in concern.

"Sure of what?" Peter said, spitefully.

"That she hadn't been abducted by those men who had killed Lord Robertson, held captive, probably tortured for all the information she possesses. To be replaced by an double-agent. Then either sold to the highest bidder or worse killed." Steed spit out his words spitefully and with force. He'd had enough of this arrogant man in front of him.

Emma's stood open mouthed. She did mean something to him still. She didn't say a word.

"And you're the very reason why that could happen Steed. Now you've seen for yourself she has not been compromised. Then do me the courtesy of leaving." Peter angrily replied. Signalling to the door for emphasis.

Steed stood staring at Peter. His fists clenched. Looking or the more likely to hit the blue-eyed, dark haired man square in the jaw.

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Very well then. I shall go. But I can not promise I won't see your wife again. I'm assigned to this murder investigation. And somewhere, somehow Knight's Industries are involved. Mrs. Peel. I'll be in touch in the next few days." Steed sternly said directly at Peter the enter time.

Steed couldn't look over to Mrs. Peel. He walked passed Peter. Wanting desperately to hit the man. But refrained from doing so in front of Mrs. Peel. The damage was done. She didn't say a thing. He walked out of the living room and out the front door as quickly as he could.

## Chapter Thirteen -

"Damn the man!" Steed said hitting the steering wheel of his car, with the palms of both his hands in frustration.

"He doesn't deserve the privilege to be married to her!" His anger voiced in his words.

He tried to calm himself but found it impossible. He was even more determined to prove what Emma had said to him a few nights ago was true and to hear her say them to him. Even if she herself at present couldn't remember doing so.

"That'll wipe the smirk off his face!" Steed muttered under his breath.

He started the car engine and drove off into the direction of the Ministry's headquarters.

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Purdey and Gambit were in the room next to suite Bravo-Victor D watching through the see-through mirror.

Lloyd Pullman was seated and strapped to a lie-detector machine. A tape recorder on the table in front of him. He had completed his formal identification and the first ten questions with ease. He knew the procedure after all. Now he was explaining the days events of Friday 25th March. For the fifth time.

"Mrs. Peel left for work at around 8:15am. Drove herself to Knight's Headquarters. Arrived at 8:35am. Didn't leave there until 7:04pm. Drove straight to her Chelsea residence. Arrived at 7:25pm. Left there at just a little before 1:00am, I think 12:54am, or thereabouts in a black London cab. I followed her to the London City Central airport. She arrived there at 1:15am. Then just caught the last flight to Nice at 1:30pm. Oh, sorry which was Flight 4621." Lloyd advised.

"Anything else?" Foster said.

"No. I don't think I've missed anything out." Lloyd answered.

"Do you have any evidence to collaborate your story?" Foster asked.

"Of course. Have 'em for you here." Lloyd said as he handed Foster a brown envelope.

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Foster opened the envelope. Inside were an array of photographs of Mrs. Peel. And some with numerous shots of a watch near or next to images of her in the same frame. To display the correct time and date of each photograph. This was standard practise for security operatives on surveillance.

"Thank you Lloyd. These will be most helpful." Foster said.

"Not at all Jim, erm, sorry. Foster." Lloyd said.

Foster switched off the lie-decector and tape recorder. Then nodded to Purdey and Gambit behind the mirrored glass and lifted up the brown envelope to them. He signalled for them to enter the room.

"Lima-Delta completed. All clear. Here are the surveillance photographs as well." Foster said to Purdey and Gambit. Handing the envelope to them.

"I've got the roll of films here too." Lloyd said. As he reached into his pocket.

"To collaborate continuity." He added.

"Thank you Lloyd. That'll be all. Thank you for coming here to do this and so promptly." Gambit said.

"No, trouble. It's my job. Plus I'm worried about Steed just as much as you are." He said with a wink to Purdey.

"Thanks Lloyd." Purdey said.

----

It was 6:15pm before Steed arrived at the Ministry's Headquarters. He sat in a room opposite Bravo-Victor-D. And he was listening to Lloyd's statement on the tape for the fifth time. Whilst he looked through the photos of Mrs. Peel. When the tape ended he looked up at Gambit and Purdey.

"Is Lloyd still here?" He asked.

"Yes, just talking with Foster next door. Do you want me to ask him in?" Purdey asked.

"No, get him to go into Bravo-Victor-D and set up the Lima-Tango tests again. I want to check something." Steed said.

"Is this really necessary?" Gambit asked.

"It's just a hunch. But I want to test it just to be sure." Steed replied.

"Alright Steed. I'll arrange it now." Gambit said.

They all gathered in Bravo-Victor-D.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Steed I've told you everything I know. Is this really necessary?" Lloyd asked. As he was being strapped into the lie-detector again.

"It's a hunch Lloyd. Nothing more. Just bare with me here please?" Steed replied.

"Ready?...Now, explain to me the movements of Mrs. Peel that day." Steed asked.

"Mrs. Peel left for work at around 8:15am. Drove herself to Knight's Headquarters. Arrived at 8:35am. Didn't leave there until 7:04pm. Drove straight to her Chelsea residence. Arrived at 7:25pm. Left there at just a little before 1:00am, I think 12:54am, or thereabouts in a black London cab. I followed her to the London City Central airport. She arrived there at 1:15am. Then just caught the last flight to Nice at 1:30pm." Lloyd answered, in a tone not unlike a robot.

"Ah...now...explain it to me...but this time backwards..." Steed said.

Purdey and Gambit's eyebrows shot up in amazement.

"Alright..."She just caught the last flight to Nice at 1:30pm. I followed her to the London City Central airport. She arrived there at 1:15am. Left for the airport just a little before 1:00am, I think 12:54am, or thereabouts in a black London cab. Drove straight to her Chelsea residence and arrived at 7:25pm after leaving Knight's Industries at 7:04pm. She arrived at Knight's Headquarters at 8:35am after leaving for work at 8:15am driving herself there." Lloyd said, again very robotically and didn't stop to think about each different time or location once.

Steed's eyes showed signs of recognition, and slowly began to smirk to himself.

"Thank you Lloyd. You've been most helpful. You may go now." Steed said, shaking the man's hand.

"So that's it. Great. Thanks Steed." Lloyd replied.

Steed leaves the room with Purdey and Gambit in pursuit.

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"Well?" Asks Gambit.

"Didn't you see?" Steed said looking at Gambit.

"How about you Purdey?" Steed asked.

"Erm, not really." Purdey replied.

"Didn't you both not find it strange he could recite every detail, including the times, perfectly, he didn't pause to think about it once?" Steed asked.

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"If I were to ask you what you did nearly a week ago. Would you be able to explain to me in as much detail as that? And to then recite it backwards with equal clarity?" Steed explained to them.

"Ah." Purdey and Gambit said in unison turning to look at each other when they did.

"He's been "programmed" to say it. Nothing has come up on the lie-detector because he believes what he is saying is the truth. So he's been brainwashed." Steed said in exclamation.

"But why?" Purdey asked.

"That. Purdey, is the next question we need to answer." Steed said.

"So where does Mrs. Peel come into all of this then? Does this mean she is involved in the murder of Lord Robertson?" Purdey asked.

"Of course not. She was with me at the of the murder remember?" Steed said.

"Yes, but you can't remember what you and her were doing outside. Only that you were at the time of the murder. Which is odd considering you're the only witness to her being there with you. You're her alibi. Theoretically." Gambit said.

"Oh come now. You can't possibly accuse Mrs. Peel of cold blooded murder. She was my partner for two and a half years here at the ministry." Steed said. Amazed at the slightest notice of this accusation.

"Unofficially, she was your partner Steed." Purdey added.

"Don't be ridiculous. She had a higher security clearance than the both of you have now." Steed said outraged at his two colleagues.

"Well at least give us something to go on Steed. You must remember discussing something with Mrs. Peel. You can't have just been outside doing nothing the entire time you were with her." Purdey said.

"I can't remember anything other than she was there." He lied.

"Oh, come on Steed. This is us. We're not going to say anything to anyone." Gambit said.

"No, Gambit. I can't. That's all. I just can't." Steed said. His eyes hid something much more and they both knew it.

"Steed we're trying to help. But we can't unless you tells us more." Purdey said.

"Let me figure it out my own way. Please don't ask me again." Steed said. Then left the office.

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## The Woman with Auburn hair.

He returns to his flat. He removes his jacket and pours himself a large brandy. He gulps down that quantity very quickly. Then pours himself another. But sips at the second glassful. He slumps onto his red leather chair. Then proceeds to gently move his glass between his palms in contemplation.

(She didn't even voice any recognition to what I said. Just defended that oaf of a husband of hers! Damn that man! How could she choose him over me?)

Thoughts whirled in his head about what she said to him on Friday night...

<<"What else could I have done?...He's my husband...">

Then he thought of earlier this evening and what Peter had said when he thought he had been having an affair with her.

>"I've been gone a week Emma. I'm not stupid! You and him could have been having an affair at any time.">

(And her reaction was very defensive too.)

<"No. Peter don't. It's nothing like that.">

She had tried to stop her husband from hitting him at that moment. Their conversation on Friday night entered his mind again...

< "Rightly or wrongly...it was the only decision to be made.">

<<"I only realised when it was too late...I was in love with someone else...And have always been.">

He sat up in realisation and he began to contemplate further.

(Could I really just be imagining this? Has Peter thought we have been having an affair this whole time? So this may not be the first time he has accused her of having an affair? Is that why she reacted the way she did? Does he know Emma isn't truly in love with him?)

His phone rang, interrupting his analysis.

"Steed here." He said.

"Steed? It's me."

He took in a deep breath then said,  
"Mrs. Peel?!...", then paused unsure what to say.

"I need to talk to you." Emma said, a little wispy.

"Will Peter allow it?" Steed asked.

"He's stormed out. I'm terribly sorry about earlier." Emma said.

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"Are you busy?" Emma added.

"When? Now?" Steed asked, dumfounded.

"Yes. I'll meet you at your flat. Say, twenty minutes?" Emma said urgently.

"Alright. Mrs. Peel. I'll see you there." Steed replied.

"See you there. Goodbye." Emma said.

"Goodbye Mrs Peel." Steed said. He hung up the phone.

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Chapter Fourteen -

Steed paced the floor of his flat. The third glass of brandy in his hand nearly empty. He thought to himself.

(What do I say? Do I tell her the truth? Should I explain my actions earlier today? Will she even believe me?)

The door buzzer rang out.

Steed looked towards it. He placed his glass on the nearby desk. And walked towards the door.

"Mrs Peel." Steed said opening the door to see her standing there. A look of worry in her face.

"Steed." Emma answered.

"Please. Come in." Steed said.

"Thank you." Emma replied.

Emma walked into the flat she hadn't stood in for over seven years. She stood looking around the room unsure what to do. Whether to sit, stand, or walk the desk to get a drink. She felt out of place.

"Would you like a drink?" Steed asked.

"Please." Emma answered. Inwardly thanking him for noticing her dilemma.

"Brandy?" Steed enquired.

"Yes, thanks." Emma replied, sitting herself down on his red leather sofa.

"I'm sorry Steed." Emma said.

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

"For what?" Steed asked as he handed her a glass. He then walked back to the desk for the brandy decanter.

"For it all." Emma replied.

"It was my fault really. I shouldn't have spoken to him like that. I should be the one apologising." Steed answered. Pouring the brandy into her glass for her. He returned to the desk.

"No, Steed. None of this is your fault. You were just doing your job. Peter still doesn't understand why I did what I did." Emma added.

"Did what exactly?" Steed asked.

"Assist you at the ministry. He's always been very overprotective since. He gets very frantic if I don't explain where I'm going or where I will be. It's becoming quite tiresome lately." Emma said a little exasperated.

"Mrs. Peel as he is your husband he has every right to be protective of you. But he shouldn't scorn you for your decision to help your country. Or me for it either." Steed said.

"Unfortunately Steed, the majority of his concern is justified. I do tend to be difficult when he does worry." Emma replied.

"Stubbornness was also one of your best characteristics Mrs. Peel. One I learnt a long time ago." Steed replied smiling to himself.

"I know. I just wish he would understand I'm my own person. But he doesn't. He just flies off the handle without thinking of the consequences. And I just wanted to apologise for his behaviour. I'm so sorry." Emma said looking up at him.

"And what about his accusations, I presume they are also justified?" Steed said then took a sip of his brandy. He finally had the courage to voice his opinions.

Emma looked up at him after those last words. He was standing casually propped up against his desk. His eyes searched her own for an answer he was desperately seeking from her. He didn't move from his position.

"He knows I'm not the woman he married. But he finds it easier to blame someone for it. So he blames you." Emma said looking away from him. Fearing his response.

Steed was past being gentle with her now. He wanted to know the truth.

"So that gives him the right to now accuse us of having an affair? I don't see the logic here Mrs. Peel. You left your position at the ministry and assisting me to be with him seven years ago. How is that my fault? We thought he was dead. Does he expect you chastise yourself for all those lost years as well? You were widow. Or so you thought. Why think we were having an affair?" Steed angrily

The Woman with Auburn hair.

replied. He didn't care if he sounded harsh. But he wanted her to know that she shouldn't feel guilty for living the life she chose to do without her husband.

"Steed please. Don't do this." Emma said pleading.

"Why not? I haven't done a damn thing wrong here. I should have told him the same thing but I didn't. I should have told you all those years ago about how I felt." Steed said.

Emma looked at him. Saw the anger on his face. Saw the pain in his eyes. She wanted to leave. Didn't want to be sat in a room with someone who hated her for doing the only thing she could do at the time.

"I can't do this Steed." Emma said.

She rose from the sofa, leaving the glass on top of his fire place. She opened the door and quickly ran down the stairs.

"Mrs. Peel?" Steed said calling after her.

She was already half way down the stairs when he appeared on the landing.

"Wait. Please." Steed shouted after her.

Steed looked down at her. His face full of shock at her actions and his own. Had he really just made her leave. Had he upset her so much she couldn't take it anymore?

"I can't Steed. I just can't do this." Emma said tears in her eyes. She turned to walk further down the stairs.

"Emma...Please don't go." Steed said. Walking down the stairs himself.

She turned and stopped once she had heard him say her name. She turned and looked up at him. He pleaded with her, only using the look in his soft grey eyes. He quickly walked down the stairs to meet her. Stopping only a few steps away from her.

"Please...don't go." Steed said, a rasp in his voice. Tears were forming in his eyes.

"I'm sorry. I shouldn't have come here." Emma said.

A stray tear fell down her cheek as she looked into his eyes. He reached down and gently rubbed the tear from her cheek with his thumb.

"No. I'm sorry. So very sorry. Please don't go. I need you." Steed said.

She looked into his eyes as he spoke. Not knowingly understanding what he was desperately trying to tell her.

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

### Chapter Fifteen -

"I don't know what to do." Emma replied still standing on the stairs frantically searching his eyes for some clue or sign he understood.

"Come inside and let me explain. Please." Steed said.

He held out an open hand to her trying to get her to take up his offer. She took it and he led her back up the steps towards his flat. As they walked through the door and into his sitting room. She headed for his red leather sofa, sat down and looked up at Steed.

"I don't want to argue with you Steed. I couldn't bare it. Please don't." Emma asked. Her hands grasped together tightly in front of her.

"I'm afraid I haven't been quite so truthful with you." Steed said as he stood near his desk picking up his brandy-filled glass. Turning the glass over in his palms nervously.

"The reason I came to your house earlier was to see you. But also to find out if you remembered Friday night." He explained somewhat unsure of himself.

"Because of Lord Robertson's death?..." Emma asked.

He walked over towards her and picked up her brandy glass from the fireplace and handed it to her. Then turned and walked over to the red leather chair opposite her and sat down.

Emma continued, "...but I told you Steed. I was at home from around 7pm then left at around 1am to get my flight to the Villa at 1:30am. The plane landed around 2:30am. I took a taxi straight to the Villa. Jacque was there around 5:15am. And then Jacque himself called you around half an hour later after the Tango-Alpha protocols were completed. And that's when I spoke to you." Emma added, sounding very slightly robotic in places.

"And what did you do between 7pm and 1am?" Steed asked.

"I looked through the end of year accounts for Knight. Ready for the meeting on Monday. I stopped a few times for a bite to eat, then packed up around 12am to pack a few things. Then I phoned for a taxi and left at 1am." Emma explained. Very vaguely, calmly but quite clinically.

"Anything else?" Steed asked.

"No. Why? Steed what is it you're not telling me? And why do you assume I was at this party with you?" Emma voiced quite angrily.

"Because you were at the party with me Mrs. Peel." Steed said.

"Don't be ridiculous. I was at home around 7pm then left at around 1am to get my flight to the Villa at..." Emma said.

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

"...at 1:30am, the plane landed around 2:30am. You then took a taxi straight to the Villa. Jacque was there around 5:15am. And I spoke to you on the phone after the Tango-Alpha protocols around half an hour later... Yes, Mrs. Peel. I know all that. That's the problem." Steed said sounding frustrated. He was convinced he was now getting to the truth.

"Why is it a problem?" Emma asked.

"Because between 11:00 and 11:30pm you were at the party with me outside in the gardens." Steed said.

"But that's simply not true Steed. I was home around 7pm. I looked through the end of year accounts for Knight. Ready for the meeting on Monday. I stopped a few times for a bite to eat, then packed up around 12am to pack a few things. Then I phoned for a taxi and left at 1am." Emma explained again and this time very robotically.

"Don't you see what you're doing Mrs. Peel?" Steed asked.

"No, should I?" Emma asked.

"If you won't believe me. Then listen." Steed said.

He rose from his chair and walked towards his desk. He opened the top drawer and picked out the hidden tape recorder and placed it on top of his desk. He pressed the rewind button, a few seconds later he then pressed play. Their whole conversation of the last few minutes began to play out loud. He looked towards her and she rose from the sofa to stand next to him to listen to the tape clearer.

"Do you understand now?" Steed asked after he had stopped the tape and turned to her.

"I responded to your questions but my answers, they, they were exactly the same...I'd explained it all precisely...But that's the truth, I know it is, that's what happened...I left the house, went to the airport. I even remember waking up at the Villa. But why?! Oh God... Steed...I've been brainwashed haven't I?! But why? That's all I know. Why me?" Emma replied. She'd realised instantly, she put her hand to her mouth and turned to looked at him in horror.

"You're not the only one Mrs. Peel. Lloyd Pullman has also been brainwashed and believes he is speaking the truth. But only for Friday night. He also has photographic evidence of you leaving Knight, your home and you entering the airport. But ultimately I'm trying to find out why all this has happened and why the only thing that seems to be amiss is you attending the party where Lord Robertson was killed." Steed said.

"You don't think I'm being framed for his murder do you?" Emma asked.

"It's the only logical explanation Mrs. Peel. Knight's Industries seems to be at the very centre of this investigation. Lord Robertson's shares were sold the day of his death and the money was requested to be transferred the same day to Knight. There is also the time difference from you returning home at 7pm and leaving at 1am. We cannot confirm you were home the entire time or any evidence to trace your movements between those times." Steed said remorsefully.

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

"So the evidence is suggesting I killed Lord Robertson? And they have now found a motive too. So I then must have fled to my Villa to cover my tracks. But I didn't Steed. You know I wouldn't. Why are they framing me?" Emma asked, worry now spread across her face.

"No one is accusing you of anything Mrs. Peel. That's never going to happen. I won't let it happen. At present you only have me as an alibi. And I know you were at that party with me Mrs Peel. You were no where near that house or Lord Robertson at the time of his death. Because you were with me." Steed said.

He looked directly at her the entire time. His eyes searched her own. He tried to explain to her he was willing to testify she was with him. And that he was determined to uncover the truth.

"Oh, Steed. If only I could remember. But I can't. I do believe you. If you say I was with you, then I must have been. But if I was there with you, what were we doing for half an hour exactly?" Emma asked. She looked at him desperate for him to reassure her everything would be ok. That he knew somehow to prove her innocence.

"Now that Mrs. Peel is the most important factor." Steed added. Raising his finger and looking straight at her. A slight smirk across his lips. He was trying to break the tension and calm her nerves.

"Because...well...we told each other some home truths. And it was something we both needed to hear." Steed said.

"Really? And what was that exactly?" Emma asked.

"This..." Steed said as he moved towards her and lightly kissed her lips, then he slowly pulled away. He searched her eyes for some sort of response. Eagerly looking for some sort of recognition in her to understand the nature of his feelings for her, and to find out if she truly felt the same. Whether she could remember Friday night or not.

"Oh..." Emma replied. Looking into his eyes as she did so.

"Maybe we should discuss it further..." Emma added, leaning in to kiss him again.

Chapter Sixteen - Part A or the NSFW + fluffy romantic chapter.

His hands gripped at her shoulders. Her hands rested on his suit lapels. She ended their kiss.

"What's wrong?" Steed asked. He searched her eyes for a response.

"I thought...I didn't think you wanted me." Emma replied.

"My dear Mrs. Peel. I've always wanted you." Steed replied.

His head moved towards her again as they kissed, this time with more heat, much more passion. Both of his hands moved down her shoulders to her waist, as he pulled her closer to him. She

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

reached up moving her right hand and fingers to the base of his neck and gently caressed him. Their kiss deepened further.

He left her mouth and slowly kissed her chin, down her neck to the top of her shoulders.

"I need you very much." Steed managed to whisper in her ear.

He pulled her closer to his growing arousal moving his hands to her buttocks, gently massaging her. He moved back up to her mouth again seeking out her tongue with his own. Their breaths ragged from their explorations. His lips left her mouth again to caress her neck once more.

"Steed..." Emma managed to say followed by a breathily sigh.

He grasped her waist again, this time to emphasise the desk behind her, he moved his body against hers to move her back against the desk. He then lifted her onto the desk by her waist and hips, their kiss never broke with their movements. She instinctively moved her legs apart and he stood between them, his arousal pressed against her inner thigh. He cupped her buttocks hard against him. His mouth left her neck again and down towards her breasts, he mouthed the fabric covering them. His fingers worked their way to the back of her dress for the zipper, he slid it down, and the fabric fell in front of him. He moved it down her arms and off to crumple at her waist. He moved his head to her breasts, his lips kissed the top of each as he gently uncoupled the clasp from her bra and he slipped it off and over her arms. Her breasts sat pert in their arousal, as his lips covered one then the other, her head flung back in response to his touch. She cupped the back of his head and fingers twined in his hair, pushing him against her further.

She pulled at his coat, it fell to the floor, then reached up and undid his tie, loosening it as it joined the coat on the floor. She frustratingly tried to undo the buttons of his shirt, trying desperately to feel his warm body beneath. She pulled at it from the waist of his trousers, but he let her go to pull it off. He returned to kissing her again, their breathing harsh and out of sync. He pulled her closer to his manhood. She traced her fingers around the base of his skull and down his neck and shoulders. She slipped a hand down his torso and to his waist, she gripped the top of his trousers as she frantically sought out her goal. Undoing the button and zipper she felt his trousers loosen to feel his hardness against her palm. She kissed his neck, and tongued his ear. She had a hand grip at his throbbing member still covered in cotton, he let out a tight breath in her ear.

He moved his hand down and under her dress covering her thighs, he could feel her wetness from the outer layer of her underwear. He moved his fingers under them to find her warm centre, she let out a groan. His fingers tickled her outer silky warmth, as she bit into his shoulder, as he pushed two fingers deeper into her, trying to find her inner sanctum. She cried out. She moved the top of his cotton briefs and gripped at his penis. Early semen dripping up and over the tip, she curled her fingers around it gently circling the warm liquid over his erect member.

He pushed his fingers deeper into her. She let out another cry of pleasure and her teeth dug into his neck once more. She gripped his penis again, rubbing her thumb over the escaping fluid. She moved her hand down and up and over, allowing the fluid to gently cover her palm as she moved her hand down his penis in the same motion, again, and again. As her thumb caressed the tip each time. They found their mouths once more tongues dug deeper, as they continued their movements of pleasuring

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each other. He slid his fingers in and out, covered in her arousal. His thumb stroked at her clitoris, circling and gaining more and more fluid each time from his movements.

"Now Steed...oh God...now...please." Emma pleaded.

She gently moved his penis to her own opening. As he moved his fingers out of her, he pulled her panties down and off over her legs. He then positioned himself standing stooped as he was. He gripped her buttocks and moved his penis towards her waiting opening. He looked into her eyes as he neared her entrance. He plunged deep into her, by gripping her hips and then began kissing her again. She wrapped her legs around his lower back, as he managed to move his hips and pushed further into her. He grasped her buttocks as he moved slowly out, then with force back into her. He left her mouth, as they both let out slight whimpers of pleasure, their touch also too great a feeling to breath correctly. He looked into her eyes once more as he drove into her again. He kissed her neck, then back up to her ears. He thrust again, in, then out. Her arms caressed his shoulders. Her lips kissing his neck then down to his shoulders. He thrust out then in, out then in, again and again. Harder. He gripped the desk losing some momentum, as he thrust again into her, he gripped at her hips pushing her deeper onto him, thrusting constantly into her. She bit his neck. He tongued at hers. Their breathing so harsh. His back taut. She could feel it, feel the wave of pleasure ebbing to the surface.

"Oh god...oh god Steed." She breathed.

He thrust deeper, harder. Spurred on by her reaction. His fingers gripped at her buttocks tighter. He was nearly there himself. He pound into her faster. Sweat dripped down their backs.

"Oh God...Emma." Steed coked.

His thrusts suddenly became out of sync, the rhythm ragged. She felt the wave take her, felt it grow in size, she could feel the same in him. He called out. She felt it, felt the power in his hands as they gripped her buttocks. His liquid poured into her with such force it overwhelmed her as she called out. The same wave taking her over the edge, the electricity running through her veins all over her body, as his semen filled her. He slowed his thrusting. The grip on her loosened as he kissed her neck. His breaths were long and hard as he tried to regain his equilibrium. Her legs wrapped around his waist. He pulled his head back to look into her eyes. She caressed his hair with her fingers and gently kissed the tip of his nose. Their breathing still ragged. She slowly dropped her legs from around his waist to her sides, as he gently gripped at her thighs as he slowly pulled his flaccid penis out from inside her. He then tried to step a few times backwards, to stop himself from pressing his too much weight on her. Their breathing slowly returning to a normal pace. He then held both hands out to her.

"My dear...I'll always want you." Steed said, as she gripped his hands as he pulled her from his desk and into his arms.

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"Well I must confess Steed. That's not exactly what I expected would happen the next time I was alone with you in this apartment." Emma smirked at him.

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Whilst she bent down, holding her dress up to cover her exposed breasts. She proceeded to collect her bra and panties from the floor and sofa where they had been flung not moments before.

"Believe me Mrs. Peel. That's what would have happened eventually. Best to get it out of the way. That way we both know where we stand." Steed grinned to himself. As he stood half naked, as he zipped up his trousers.

"I'm not altogether sure you're not hiding something else from me Steed." Emma asked suspiciously.

She sat on the sofa readjusting herself into her panties, and then slipping her bra on into its correct position. She stood up and pulled up her dress zipper to its top point. Then she tapped at her dress with her hands, trying to knock out the crumbled areas.

She stood in front of him and looked deep into his mischievous grey eyes. He was just finishing buttoning up the last few buttons of his shirt.

"How did you know that's how I truly felt?" She asked him, waiting for him to acknowledge or dodge the question.

She tapped his hands with her fingers and continued to button them up fully herself. She stood with her hands resting on his shoulders, waiting for his reply.

"Because that's what you told me when we were alone in the gardens at the party on Friday night. I desperately needed to know it was the truth." Steed explained, looking back into her eyes with such tenderness, she blushed in response.

"And? What did I tell you exactly? As a matter of fact, what did you tell me for that matter?" Emma asked moving away from him and turning to take a seat on the red leather sofa.

Steed sighed, but he owed her the truth if nothing else. The divide had now been broken down between them. But she still had every right to know the entire explanation of his avoidance of her. And how he knew her true feelings for him were still there, and had always been.

"Well you're right in part. I'm not explaining the whole truth to you. But, I'm afraid of what you'll think of me when you do know the truth." Steed explained, trying to avoid full eye contact with her.

He had walked over to the mantelpiece to collect her brandy glass. And then stood at the nearby table pouring them both large glasses of brandy. He turned to hand one glass out to her as she sat on the sofa. He then turned around and stood with his back propped up against the desk.

"Steed, what ever it is I'm sure you had your reasons. But you owe me an explanation at least. You seem to be on higher ground than me at the moment. I have no knowledge of Friday's events at all." Emma replied, looking up at him as she took a sip of the brandy.

"I don't know how to explain this to you...But you do need to know...I've spent the last seven years trying to avoid all contact, and thoughts of you. Everything about you became such a poison to me,

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I feared it had taken over my self control, my will, my very being. I lost myself the day you walked out on me. And I struggled to fight each day alone without you..." He explained, he sighed and took a long gulp of brandy.

"Ha, it's no exaggeration here, but I drank far too much. I struggled with sleep, even became utterly dependant on prescription drugs. Even my psychiatrist was frustrated with me. I became bitter, angry and violent. Even Tara, sorry Miss King, was at a lost what to do with me. She eventually gave up her admiration of me and also lost patience with my behaviour. She walked out just a year and a half after she first became my partner. And I mean partner, not lover. I couldn't bring myself to attach myself with anyone else. I was bruised and damaged. And it felt exactly like that..." Steed explained, a pained expression on his face. He stared not at her, but at the brandy glass in his hands.

"Oh Steed..." Emma replied, her eyes spoke of regret, and guilt that she had caused him so much anguish and pain.

"No, Emma please don't...you must know the truth...the man you left behind is not the same man I became..." He interrupted her. He then left resting on the sturdy oak desk and paced the floor. He stood stooped over at the fireplace looking intently at it, then back up to his painting of a quaint countryside.

"My job, ha, that in itself nearly caused me to resign completely...I had been brought up for questioning on a number of occasions for the mis-handling of a few lives lost in the tour of duty...Looking back now, I don't think I should have been so callous as I was. But at the time I simply didn't care about the survival or punishment of a few guilty men...I was eventually suspended after the sixth occasion. This time Tara couldn't seem to defend my actions. And soon after she then decided the ministry life wasn't for her. She left with a young gentleman and elope to Canada. I believe they've just had their second son..." He grinned ever so slightly and took another gulp of brandy.

He looked over to her finally as he said, "...Ha, but she wasn't a patch on you, you know. Too young, inexperienced, and well, wouldn't pass her entrance exams to Oxford should I say. If you get my meaning...So off I went on an extended holiday, following a six months suspension...I tried desperately to see as much of Europe as I could. Delicately avoiding all areas we had previously seen together in France. To my surprise I quite enjoyed the four and a half weeks I spent in Spain. And I loved my two and a half months in Italy...It helped you know, seeing other cultures, having new experiences, sleeping with new women..." He laughed, and took another gulp of brandy as he continued. Still standing at the fireplace, but his arm stretched out along the mantelpiece.

"Oh, it didn't cure me you understand, but it did smooth out some of the creases I'd developed. I wasn't me exactly, but it's as close as I could get without leaving the Ministry entirely. I still missed the danger element, the thrill and excitement of a case. To tell you the truth, I'd become bored of the solitude...There's only so many conversations you can have with foreigners before you start to get the pang for grassy banks, the rain and a good cup of tea. I returned home and to the Ministry. I took up office under the direction of a Colonel Baker. He's not a bad chap. But he managed to take pity on a man like me. I was assigned to a handful of cases assisting others. But wasn't allowed to take charge of my own partner until I had proven I could be trusted. Two and a half years later. I was cleared for partnership with a young ex-naval man by the name of Gambit, Michael Gambit.

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Nice chap. Not what you call a cricket man, but I'm smoothing out his rough edges, slowly..." He explained, then took another gulp of brandy finishing it entirely.

He had walked over to the small table nearest her side of the sofa. Refilled his glass, noticing she hadn't quite finished hers. He stood once again back propped up against the large oak desk. He continued talking.

"And then I saw you again. Only a few months later at the Langham Hotel. I was assigned, with Gambit, to guard a man by the name of Lord Ulswater. I saw you standing by the bar with him, holding onto you possessively. I couldn't bare it. To see you there with him. So happy. So content. Not a care in the world. I didn't think twice about it and left as quickly as I could. I didn't care about the case, nor the consequences. I left Gambit alone shadowing Lord Ulswater. Luckily it had been a long couple of days. And he was due to attend debriefing the next morning. But Gambit, the decent sort of chap he is. Covered for me. And no action was taken against me for leaving my post." He explained, slipping between certain sentences at his brandy.

"It took me quite some time and a lot of brandy fuelled nights to get that idyllic picture of you and him out of my mind." He added, taking another long slip of his brandy.

"Oh Steed...I remember that night...I saw you there by the door... I tried to catch up with you. But you'd already left...Let me explain myself...please?" Emma rose from the sofa standing in front of him.

"I don't think it'll help...I don't need to know." Steed said.

He was still slightly unsure whether he could take to listening to her explain the wonderful life she had been having with her husband.

"Please Steed..." She touched his hands that were both holding onto his brandy glass.

"Let me...you need to know." Emma pleaded. She looked deeply into his soft grey eyes with her unshed tears reflecting in her own. She began to talk.

"Steed, I'd tried desperately to talk to you when I saw you that night. But you hadn't noticed me for quite some time. I'd seen you arrive with Lord Ulswater about an half an hour earlier. But Peter had noticed my gaze towards you. And took great pleasure in not leaving my side..." She walked back to the sofa and sat down. Continuing her explanation.

"...I'd tried to excuse myself on a number of occasions. But Peter was quite persistent. At the time we'd been having problems for at least a year. And we'd decided to return back to London, from our then permanent residence at the Villa in France, to work on things. Being closer to family and friends certainly helped share some of the burden. And the recent upset with Knight also an excuse to return. So Peter and I spent little time in each others company. He began taking extended flight tests in numerous different countries. The odd charity event, or "invitation only" gathering brought us out together. He had come to the conclusion quite early on that we had become two quite different people. And when he noticed my reaction when I saw you. It just added fuel to the fire. Which is why I tried to talk to you that night. But by that time it was too late. You'd gone. And I was left with a scorned husband, who began accusing me of all sorts of things. I had made the

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decision then to explain everything to him. Of our past relationship and how I had chosen him over you for the sake of our marriage. It started a number of chain reactions that have led to his behaviour towards you today." She said in between sips of her own brandy glass, which was now also empty.

"So you see no matter how much I explain to Peter. He will always doubt whether you and I ever really ended our relationship. All because of that evening's events." She added. She had stood up from the sofa to refill her glass and then sat back down.

"But Mrs. Peel...I had no idea." Steed stood open mouthed in shock.

"Why would you Steed? I've tried so hard ever since to speak to you. But you seemed to avoid me when ever I saw you." She explained looking up to him.

"I only avoided you because I didn't want you to see the man I'd become. A jealous, bitter, angry...hurt man...I knew you'd notice the moment you spoke to me again. So I tried at all costs to stop that from happening." Steed explained. Looking at her finally once he'd finished speaking.

"Oh Steed. It came to a point when I noticed you more, and more. But it felt like you didn't want to see or speak to me. I thought you couldn't ever want me again. I felt so guilty. I just felt like giving up..." Emma added. Tears formed in her eyes.

She rose from the sofa and stood in front of him. Clearly looking into his eyes as she said. "Oh Steed. Please just believe me when I say...I've never stopped loving you." A stray tear rolled down her cheek.

"Oh, Mrs...erm...Emma...I've always loved you...and only you." He said, as he moved his right hand to her cheek to wipe away her tear. He slowly bent his head towards her, closed his eyes and tenderly kissed her. They stood there gently caressing each others tongues as their kiss deepened.

## Chapter Sixteen - Part B.

A cream telephone sat on top of his dark green leather covered oak desk. It had been ringing non stop for five minutes. But the owner of the telephone was far from eager to answer it. He rolled back over in his bed mumbling to himself.

Half an hour later loud knocks came from the front door of the apartment.

"Really. Who on earth?" Steed said, to his stirring bedroom guest as she lifted her head sleepily towards the sound of his voice.

"Mmm?" Emma voiced, blinking and gently slowly opening her eyes.

"For God sake, it's quarter-to-seven!" Steed muttered again, after looking at his Aunt Mable's gold-plated wind-up bed-side clock.

He flung back the bed covers at his side, and stood up. He grabbed his pyjama bottoms that hung on a nearby chair, quickly put them on. He slid into his slippers and walked towards the door. He lifted

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his dressing gown that hung behind the door and wrapped it around his body. He opened his bedroom door, impatiently walked along the hallway and down his spiral staircase. He marched towards his green front door, reached up and unlocked it with a look of annoyance across his face.

"Gambit, Purdey. What on earth?" Steed said in astonishment.

"Steed. We're very sorry. But it's urgent." Gambit said.

"Couldn't it wait another few hours?" Steed said, quite perturbed as he rubbed his brow to emphasise they had woken him up.

"Steed. May we come in?" Purdey asked.

"Of course. But it looks like I have no choice." Steed replied.

He opened the door and let them enter. They walked into his small living area and noticed the array of drinking vessels. Two brandy glasses sitting next to each other on top of the oak desk. A nearly empty bottle of champagne stood on the side table near the sofa with one champagne glass, the other glass on top of the mantle piece. A tape recorder sat on the desk. Seemingly out of place from the rest of the items they noticed.

"So what's the urgency then?" Steed said.

He blushed slightly to himself as he signalled to his two colleagues to sit on his sofa. He sat opposite them in his red leather chair.

"It's Pullman. Lloyd Pullman. He's been found dead at around 2:30ish this morning." Gambit said.

"Oh...Oh...Where was he found?" Steed asked. His face shocked and surprised by their information. His fingers steepled together in front of him.

"In his car parked outside Ministry headquarters." Purdey added.

"Oh." Steed added.

"So why the hurry in letting me know? I would have found out myself in a few hours." Steed asked.

"We think it's looking more than likely who was to blame for his death. And we..." Purdey said.

"...And we would rather come to let you know now, rather than you...erm found out yourself." Gambit added.

"Oh...oh...so you've come here to warn me...so you think...you both think this has got something to do with Mrs. Peel?" Steed mentioned, he frowned to them both in recognition.

"Steed we're sorry. But it's looking, more and more likely that she may be the main suspect." Gambit said, concern spread across his features.

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Steed's brow furrowed in annoyance, his fingers curled into fists and he was about to speak when.

"Steed?!..." Emma said. She stood, in her cream knee length dress between the hallway nearest the kitchen, open mouthed in shock.

Steed turned in her direction and stood up immediately. An awkward look on his face. He straightened down his dressing gown as he coughed to break the silence.

"Erm, Gambit...Purdey. I'd like to introduce you to...erm...your main suspect I believe...Mrs. Peel, Mrs. Emma Peel...." Steed said whilst standing beside her looking intently at her.

Gambit and Purdey looked at each other open mouthed and then again to Steed and Mrs. Peel.

Chapter Seventeen -

"Oh dear, where are my manners. Mrs. Peel. These are my two ministry colleagues. Mr. Michael Gambit and Purdey." Steed said, lifting his hand to point out each of his colleagues to her. He said in rather a flippant manner.

"Erm, it's a pleasure I'm sure...but...erm...Steed...they said I was a suspect? A suspect of what exactly?" Emma replied, looking at them and back to Steed. She was slightly unsure of his two colleagues and irritated by their accusations, crossing her arms in defence.

"I'm afraid Mrs. Peel my two younger colleagues have now little evidence to make any accusations of that nature." Steed said. He signalled to Emma to take a seat in the red leather chair he had previously sat in.

"Steed...erm." Gambit blushed trying to respond.

"You see Mrs. Peel they simply have nothing further to go on. My partners here have arrived early this morning to notify me of a recent murder...unfortunately the death of your very own security surveillance officer Lloyd Pullman." Steed explained. He walked towards his oak desk, he turned leaned back standing with his arms folded in front of him. He looked directly at Mrs. Peel rather than at Gambit and Purdey.

"Oh...Pullman...Oh dear...and when did this happen?" Emma asked.

"Incidentally early this morning..." Steed added. This time looking at his two younger colleagues.

"Erm...yes...erm, around 2:30am..." Gambit said, blushing the entire time.

"Oh..." Emma added.

"And they seem to think you're to blame my dear." Steed said looking in Emma's direction.

"Really?..." Emma replied, shocked and began to slightly smirk, as she knew Steed would quite happily explain.

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"Yes..." Steed answered. His eyes narrowing at his two colleagues.

"Look Steed...we had know idea..." Gambit tried to explain. Embarrassment written all over his face.

"Why would you Gambit?" Steed casually replied.

"But when I say something is the truth you should believe me. Both of you." Steed added. He rose his finger at them both for emphasis.

"Look Steed all the evidence..." Purdey pleaded trying to explain their mistake.

"All the evidence you need is standing right in front of you Purdey. I told you she was with me the night of Lord Robertson's death, and she was also with me the night of Lloyd Pullman's death." Steed angrily replied. His temper rose quite significantly.

"Look Steed it's not that we don't believe you..." Gambit added.

"It's just you can't prove it. Yes, yes, I know that. Well, clearly Mrs. Peel's presence here with us this morning can testify her innocence for Pullman's death. Now we just need to uncover the proof she was with me at the time of Lord Robertson's death. Unfortunately the only other witness for your whereabouts that evening Mrs. Peel was Pullman. And now after his death, I'm your only alibi. However we had only just uncovered he had been brainwashed exactly like you have been." Steed explained to his two partners and to Mrs. Peel.

"You've been brainwashed Mrs. Peel?" Purdey asked. Breaking the status quo between them.

"According to Steed I have been yes." Emma replied to the younger blonde haired woman in front of her. She still had her arms folded in front of her, not knowingly wanting to trust the two younger agents.

"I recorded our conversation here last night. I noticed every time I asked Mrs. Peel what her activities were for Friday evening she explained clinically and precisely. Exactly like Pullman had done in the Lima-Delta tests. I have the tape here." Steed explained to his colleagues.

He turned the tape recorder round on the desk, rewound the tape and clicked play. The voices of Steed and Mrs. Peel were clearly audible as they all heard the entire recorded conversation in the small living room. Steed turned to his partners and who looked at each other then back to Steed.

"Exactly like Pullman. Even the tone is the same." Purdey replied.

"Precisely Purdey. If you're willing enough Mrs. Peel. Would you mind undergoing a few more tests? Just to prove our theory further?" Steed enquired turning back to her, as she sat for the first time without her arms folded and looked over to Steed.

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"Of course. I'm just as keen as you all are to find out why this has happened and who is behind it all." Emma added, looking at Steed and then to his two colleagues for the first time without annoyance.

"Well then. That's settled. If you'll excuse us both. I must speak with Mrs. Peel alone." Steed explained to his two partners.

"No need Steed. We'll take this tape to headquarters and have it analysed. We could meet you both there later if you'd like?" Gambit suggested.

"No, I'll keep the tape Gambit. We'll meet you at headquarters around 9:30ish." Steed responded.

"Alright then Steed. Very well." Gambit replied.

"Look Steed we are extremely sorry. We didn't mean to accuse..." Purdey explained.

"Purdey, Gambit. All we ask now is your discretion. As you're both aware this is a very delicate matter for both Mrs. Peel and myself...I do not want anyone knowing about this..." Steed pleaded with his two partners and friends. Steed blushed and looked in the direction of Mrs. Peel. Mrs. Peel hung her head and sighed then back to Steed in a very guilty manner.

"I don't need to explain the current situation as I can assume you both are aware. But as Mrs. Peel is still a married woman. We would both not like this information getting into the wrong hands." Steed added again looking in concern at Mrs. Peel.

"Steed we wouldn't, you know we wouldn't." Gambit replied. An understanding in his features. He turned to Purdey as she nodded in agreement.

"Trust us Steed. You have our word." Purdey said in response.

"Good...now please would you mind...Mrs. Peel and I need to talk." Steed said. He raised his hand towards the apartment door to give his indication of intent.

"Of course." Gambit said. They both rose from the sofa in unison.

"I'm most terribly sorry about all of this Steed...Mrs. Peel." Gambit regretfully said looking towards his older partner. Then at her as he walked passed.

"You weren't to know Gambit." Emma responded. She looked into his eyes and could see genuine forgiveness there.

Gambit opened the door to the apartment and out onto the landing.

"So sorry." Purdey added.

Not able to look at Mrs. Peel entirely. She blushed intently and walked out of the living room and the door of the apartment following on behind Gambit.

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Steed looked over towards Mrs. Peel, she returned his gaze, a mixture of nervousness and guilt. They began to blush at each other. The door of the small apartment closed tight shut. Allowing them the space they needed and time to talk alone.

### Chapter Eighteen -

"Are you sure they can be trusted Steed?" Emma asked him, looking slightly wearily at him.

"I've saved both their lives on several occasions Mrs. Peel, as they have done so for me. They can be trusted. They're just inexperienced that's all." Steed sighed looking at her.

"Oh Steed, I hope you're right. If Peter were to find out..." Emma regretfully said.

"If Peter were to find out, I'll deal with the consequences Mrs. Peel." He said, frowning at her. Getting slightly agitated by her reticence.

"You're regretting this already aren't you?" Steed then asked her, a look of concern and fear in his features.

"Oh Steed. I don't know what to think anymore." Emma replied, slightly unsure of herself. She rose her hand to her brow in contemplation.

"Mrs. Peel, please, don't. If it wasn't meant to happen it wouldn't have. But now that is has. Please don't regret it. I don't." Steed said. He moved from his position resting on the desk and walked over to sit on the sofa opposite her. Only a few feet away.

"Oh Steed. I made a terrible mistake..." Emma said, her hand never leaving her brow. She couldn't look at him.

"Emma, don't. Please." Steed said. He looked terrified.

"I shouldn't have left you...I shouldn't have...oh Steed...I'm so sorry...this is all my fault." Emma added, panic written all over her face. Her eyes began to tear up.

"Oh Emma..." Steed said, he breathed a sigh of relief.

He rose from the sofa as he knelt down at her feet. His arms circled around her shoulders as he brought her closer to him in an embrace. She began to gently sob against his shoulder.

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"What do you make of that then Purdey girl?" Gambit asked as they sat in his car as they pulled away from the curb of Steed's street.

"I...erm...well..." Purdey replied, still quite shocked by the entire situation.

"Yeah, my thoughts exactly." Gambit replied.

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"It just goes to show..." Gambit began.

"What?" Purdey asked eagerly.

"Steed's willing to do anything to protect her...including her honour..." Gambit said bluntly.

"She is still married Gambit. And Steed's a gentleman." Purdey said.

"Ha... he always told me never to get involved with a married woman, because they have husband's who have a habit of causing chaos. Now I know which woman he was referring to...ha...So I also don't think either one of them has forgotten that she is married Purdey." Gambit said.

"Gambit, I don't think it's easy for them either. Steed clearly is positive of her innocence concerning Lord Robertson's death. And she obviously isn't to blame for Pullman's death either. But I have no idea how he's going to explain that one to headquarters without exposing their affair." Purdey explained.

"I'm sure he's got some idea how to. He usually does. I just hope he knows what he's doing." Gambit said, turning to Purdey looking concerned.

"Either way Purdey. I don't think Steed could stand losing her a second time. By the looks of it he'd do anything for her. Including risking his job." Gambit added.

"And she looks like she's willing to do anything for him too." Purdey added sorrowfully.

"Let's just hope we can prove who is trying to frame her. For both their sakes." Gambit replied.

"Or else it could end badly for them both." Purdey said.

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"More coffee, Mrs. Peel?" Steed asked her.

"No, thank you Steed. I'm having difficulty finishing this cup." Emma replied.

"Oh, come now. Things will work out. You'll see. Think positive Mrs. Peel." Steed said reassuringly.

They both sat at his small kitchen table across from each other. Half eaten breakfasts in front of them.

"I don't know how you're going to explain our little..." Emma asked.

"Catch up. Just a little catch up between friends. Nothing more. You had a little bit too much to drink. It was too late for a taxi. You fell asleep on the sofa. We shared an innocent breakfast together." Steed added, already explaining the lie of the previous evening with finesse and not a hint of doubt in his voice.

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"If they believe that, they'll believe anything." Emma said over the top of her coffee cup.

"Oh come now Mrs. Peel. Where's your methodical mind this morning?" Steed asked.

"Probably the same place the rest of me should be. In a warm bath surrounded by bubbles." Emma replied.

"By all means help yourself. We don't have to be at headquarters for at least an hour." Steed said.

"I'll come and scrub your back." Steed added with a wink.

"You're not helping the situation at all you know." Emma said with a wry smirk of annoyance.

"Did you ever think I would do anything less?" Steed said with a grin.

She picked up the tea towel on the table and threw it at him.

"Ouch!" Steed said, muffled by the towel on his head.

Chapter Nineteen -

They both casually walked into headquarters of the Ministry building. He produced his two identity cards to the security guard at the front desk. She produced her driving licence as identification. He walked first into the booth, placing his hand print on the lit wall display. Noises were heard and the doors at the other side slide open. He walked through. She entered the booth, placed her hand onto the wall display, the doors slid open and she walked through.

"It's just along here Mrs. Peel. Well, a few stairs and more corridors. But it's not far." Steed indicated with his umbrella.

"They certainly have updated the building. Last time I was here there were four security guards at reception." Emma mentioned.

"Ah yes. Wilson, Jacobs, Morris and White are all still here. But they tend to take separate shifts." Steed added.

"Ah, I see. They've finally put their faith in modern technology rather than human competence." Emma smiled to herself. Knowing full well her company probably had helped design most of their technology anyway.

"Machines can go wrong. After all you can't have a conversation with a computer." Steed quipped.

"True." Emma smiled at him. He's never lost his sense of humour, even this early in the morning.

---

"They should be here any minute." Gambit said looking at his watch.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

Purdey turned to the door as Mrs. Peel entered the room, followed by Steed.

"Not late are we?" Steed asked his colleagues.

"Not at all Steed." Purdey replied.

"Good, good. All Lima-Delta protocols set up and ready? Best to get this over with as soon as possible." Steed said, then turned to explain to Emma.

"Of course. Just through here Mrs. Peel." Purdey explained, signalling to her to follow her into the room next door.

Foster, Michaels and Jones all stood in the room waiting for Mrs. Peel. She looked at them all individually and at then to the apparatus around them. She turned to see the obvious two-way mirrored glass on the wall. She sighed to herself and took a seat in the chair. The three men delicately arranged the equipment on and around Mrs. Peel.

"Right you are Mrs. Peel. Comfy?" Jones asked her.

"Not exactly. But it'll do." Emma replied, screwing her mouth up in annoyance.

"Ready then?" Fosters asked her.

"As I'll ever be." Emma answered.

"Perfect. All right then. Let's begin." Michaels said.

----

"Well?" Steed asked, as Michaels, and Jones entered the room.

"Well Steed. All Lima-Delta protocols are complete, including both your colleagues insistence here to get her to recite it all backwards. And as far as Mrs. Peel is concerned everything she's explained is the truth..." Michaels explained.

Michaels paused then said, "but..."

"But?" Steed asked, his brows furrowed in response.

"...if she has been brainwashed like Pullman we will need to analyse the tapes further. But it does sound like she has been "programmed" to say things in that manner. And we have no other evidence to confirm her story. We will just have to take her word for it..." Michaels added, whilst pressing his dark rimmed glasses further up his nose.

"...does my statement not suffice as evidence?" Steed queried.

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

"...I'm afraid not Steed. You seem to have little memory of that night's events. Only that she was with you. It could be possible you yourself have also been brainwashed. As no other witnesses have come forward to confirm she was also at that party..." Jones added, sounding far from sympathetic.

"...I'm sorry Steed." Fosters said turning to look at him sympathetically.

"So what are you not telling me exactly?" Steed enquired, frustrated by the tone in the agents voices.

"Steed we have little option but to take Mrs. Peel into formal custody." Jones explained. Clearly following orders higher above than he cared to admit.

"What, but that's ridiculous! You can't..." Steed said, turning to both Purdey and Gambit then to the other men in the room. Anger, shock and betrayal clearly evident in his expressions at them all in the room.

"I'm sorry Steed. But my orders are clear." Jones explained to the older more senior agent standing in front of him.

"On who's orders. I want them to tell me this to my face. You can't possibly suspect Mrs. Peel. She was my partner here for two and a half years. She can't possibly be a suspect....she was with me the night of the party and last night for that matter! You can't do this!" Steed shouted out. His hands turned into tight fists at his sides.

"We have no choice Steed. She's been out of active service for over seven years now. She knows all the classified information. And the evidence suggests her company is at the centre of this investigation. Following Pullman's death. It's even more likely she is at least a possible suspect." Jones explained.

Steed stood open mouthed, too annoyed to voice his true thoughts. He turned and looked at Purdey and Gambit.

"If that's the only option I want Purdey and Gambit to stay with her then! You can't just treat her like a common criminal. Give her some dignity at least!" Steed pleaded with Jones.

"All right Steed. I'll ask. But I can't promise anything." Jones explained.

"I'm not leaving her here alone." Steed explained looking at his two partners who hadn't defended the decision, nor spoken up either.

"We'll discuss it with my superiors. Until then you'll only be allowed access to her with a chaperone." Jones added.

Steed's eyes bulged in anger.

"I'll have your head for this Jones!" Steed spat out. He moved closer and pointed at the younger man standing in front of him. Gambit put his hand out to stop Steed from doing anything he may regret later.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Get your hands off me!" Steed shouted at Gambit, and pulled his hand off his sleeve.

"I thought I could trust you!" Steed turned to Gambit.

"You can Steed. We're trying to help." Gambit said.

"Then help!" Steed said.

He stormed passed all the men standing in the room, out the door and into the room next door.

They all turned to look through the mirrored glass to see Steed walk through the door and stood in front of Mrs. Peel.

"Mrs. Peel. I'm so sorry. So very, very sorry." Steed said to her as he sat on the table just in front of her.

----

Chapter Twenty -

She sat behind the desk with her arms folded and legs crossed in annoyance.

"They're what?!" Emma shouted out, looking horrified.

"I'm sorry Mrs. Peel. There's nothing I can do. It's out of my hands." Steed replied sorrowfully.

"So I'm going to be held here until further notice?" Emma asked.

"I'm trying to get you at least placed under house arrest. And to have Purdey and Gambit as your guards twenty-four-seven. I know how this sounds. But I'm trying my best." Steed advised.

Emma sighed, unable to comprehend why this was all happening.

"But Steed you know I would never do anything remotely like this!! Have they forgotten my entire service records? Just because I've been out of the field for seven years they think I've turned rogue! This is absurd! Stupid! Ridiculous!" Emma furiously replied, confusion also displayed on her face.

"No one knows you better than I, Mrs. Peel. And I know you haven't don't anything wrong. I know how this seems. But we will find out who's behind all this. I'll not rest until they are behind bars. You can have faith in me at least." Steed sombrely advised her, as he looked into her eyes as he did so.

"What on earth am I supposed to do until then? What will I tell Peter? Oh God! Peter?!" Emma replied, suddenly realising she was going to have to explain all this to her husband sooner rather than later.

"I can handle him. Don't worry." Steed explained, looking at her with concern.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"And what are you going to do?" Emma asked looking at him questionably.

"I haven't thought of that yet." Steed truthfully replied.

"Look it's not the right time to discuss this. I'll speak with my superiors to straighten out a few things. I'll be back as soon as I can." Steed explained.

Steed stood up from the table and walked towards the door.

"Steed..." Emma wearily called after him.

"Please, just trust me Mrs. Peel." Steed said, his eyes explained much more to her than words ever could.

He then left the room in rush.

----

"I don't care how many other capable agents you have available. No one is to go near her other than Purdey and Gambit." Steed shouted aggressively to his superior sitting behind a large oak-panelled desk.

"Look Steed...calm down..." The grey-haired gentleman sat in the large black leathered-back chair behind the desk.

"I will not calm down. I've worked at this department for over thirty years. The least you can do is give some sort of compassion to a former colleague of mine and employee of yours. This is just outrageous!" Steed angrily replied.

He paced the floor back and forth as he looked up occasionally at the man known as Colonel Baker.

"As a former colleague of yours Steed, we may be able to make an exception. But, we can't revoke your chaperone I'm afraid. For the same reasons." Colonel Baker replied.

"So be it, but you will regret you accused Mrs. Peel of cold-bloodied murder. I'll make sure of that." Steed responded in a somewhat threatening manner, raising his finger towards the man.

"Unless you prove her innocence Steed. I'll take great pleasure in apologising to you both myself." Colonel Baker replied.

He looked towards Steed with a slight hooded expression. As if he was trying to give the younger agent a clue as to where his allegiance lay.

"I'll quite happily do so Colonel. Just give me the resources and the time I need, that's all I ask." Steed replied.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

He was beginning to understand at least that his superior did have some empathy for his current situation.

"You have the full authorisation from me Steed. But we have procedures to follow, you know that. There's nothing more I can do. It's all up to you now." Colonel Baker explained.

"Very well then." Steed said.

He turned and left the room.

---

Purdey and Gambit stood either side of Mrs. Peel, handcuffed to her, as they exited the Ministry building. They walked down the stone steps to the waiting black Jaguar parked at the foot of the stairs. They all paused, as Gambit undid his handcuff, it then hung loosely from Mrs. Peel's hand. Purdey opened the car door and got in, followed by Mrs. Peel. She paused and turned to look up towards Steed, who was standing at the top of stairs, only able to watch her leave with them.

Steed's hand tightened on his umbrella.

"Who ever has done this will certainly pay for it." He muttered to himself underneath his breath.

Mrs. Peel sighed to herself as she got into the car, and Gambit closed the door behind her. The Jaguar sped off out of the Ministry car park and into the city streets.

----

"Peter please. Just listen to what they're saying." Emma pleaded with her husband. He was pacing the floor and already had his second glass of whiskey.

"They can't possibly suspect you. You gave yourself to them for nearly three years. And they repay you like this?!" Peter spat out annoyance written on his features. He rose his hand in emphasis.

"They're just following orders. It's not their fault." Emma replied, exasperated.

"Oh, right. Orders. That wouldn't be from your wonderful old friend now would it dear?" Peter asked, realisation now on his face. He looked over to her, waiting impatiently for her response.

"Unfortunately, no Sir. We all, have our orders from much higher up. There is a large amount of evidence to suggest your wife could be involved or possibly to blame for the death of Lord Robertson. Therefore our procedures are similar, if not the same as the police. Just with more seniority." Gambit explained to Peter.

He'd noticed the tension between him and his wife for their entire conversation. She seemed to be rebuked on every occasion with a sly comment referring back to Steed. It was plain to gather Peter was extremely jealous of him. But it was also apparent that Emma had difficulty in calming her husbands opinions.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"We're investigating all avenues, sir. But it will take some time. Your cooperation would be most appreciated." Gambit then added.

"I'll cooperate, as long as Steed doesn't come anywhere near us." Peter spat out. He looked directly at Emma, turned his head towards Gambit, and then to Purdey. He gulped at his whiskey finishing it, banged it on top of the mantelpiece and marched angrily out of the sitting room door. Slamming the door behind him.

----

"I'm so sorry. I knew he'd react like that." Emma said. Looking to Gambit and Purdey, who both sat on the white leather sofa in the large living room.

"When you say react. I was expecting..." Gambit began.

"Yes?" Emma asked.

"A more defensive manner on your part...but it seems like he has one or two issues with the ministry. And one of those is Steed." Gambit explained.

"I know how this must look to you both...but really..." Emma began.

"Mrs. Peel, it's quite alright. We understand." Purdey finally spoke up.

"No...you're getting the wrong idea entirely...Peter has always hated the fact I worked for the ministry...how I put my life in danger. He seems to forget he risks his life every time he flies. But, the fact I openly chose to work for the ministry, to offer my expertise, my services and ultimately my life...just to gather up criminals and send them for decades of incarceration. Only to one day possibly become the victim of their revenge. Which is exactly what is happening here. He also hates the fact during that entire experience I was with someone else...Steed." Emma explained to the two younger agents, and colleagues of a man they were slowly becoming to realise was someone she felt far deeply about than she would care to admit. And also the same man who she gave up for the sake of her husband and marriage.

"You see it's quite understandable. I feel the same about the time he spent away from me. But as he wasn't doing anything else but surviving as he puts it. He seems to think he has the right to scorn me for my behaviour in his absence. He seems to completely forget on some occasions that I thought I was a widow. And that I came to understand what it was like to be a more independent person. Something he dislikes about my change in personality. I was 23 when I married him we only had two and a half years together. And then he was lost over the amazonian jungle, his body was never found after a year of searching. What else could I do? Just mourn for the rest of my life? And then I met Steed. The rest you both know." Emma explained.

"So he's theoretically punishing you for living your life without him? That's hardly fair Mrs. Peel." Purdey replied. She was slowly sympathising towards the older woman. Somehow Purdey deep down felt an understanding of her plight. Maybe she too had also been in a similar situation with a man she loved.

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Oh Purdey, he doesn't punish me for it, he just has difficulty accepting it that's all. I would never put up with such behaviour from anyone, let alone my own husband. I can give just as good back believe me, and I always win. I've just heard it all before. He doesn't bode well with my reply and sulks more often than not. He'll apologise eventually. But I've just learnt to let him voice his opinion. I let him go and let off some steam and he usually comes back acting like he's the worst husband in the world etc. But deep down he knows I gave up my new life to go back to him. And that is something that he forgets sometimes. He's just overprotective of me. Which he has every right to be, he's my husband after all." Emma explained.

"And what about Steed?" Gambit asked.

"That's the latest problem I have to figure out. I have no idea how I'm going to explain last night's events to Peter. But, I will have to eventually." Emma sighed to herself, biting her lip.

She knew full well the only evidence to suggest she didn't murder her security officer was the fact she was in bed with Steed. And as far as Peter was concerned she'd stayed at her friend Jane's last night. She just wished Steed would contact her and put an end to this nightmare as quickly as possible.

## Chapter Twenty-One -

He stood behind a glass window talking with the Chief Forensic Officer. Inside the room he occasionally looked into was Pullman's 1966 dark grey Vauxhall Viva. All four doors were open, as was the boot, and bonnet. There were ten or so men and woman dressed entirely in white taking various samples from the car.

"The onsite observations of Pullman's body suggests he'd been dead for around three hours. A shot to the left temple of his skull at close range. The shot was fired more than likely from someone either leaning into or sitting in the passenger side of the car. We have the car in our forensic lab at present. We'll have some results for you as soon as possible." Dr. Howard explained to Steed reading from the information listed on his clipboard. He removed his reading glasses and then replaced them with his thicker distance glasses from his pocket.

"Good. Any witnesses come forward?" Steed asks.

"Only Simons' here who found his body. He's our newest recruited security guard here at the Ministry." Howard replied looking in the direction of Simons' standing to attention.

"Ex-army, eh Simons'?" Steed enquired, looking intently at how the man in his late thirties stood, clearly as if on parade.

"Yes, sir." Simons' replied, quite quickly.

"At ease man. It's a long time since either one of us was asked to stand to attention." Steed said.

"Thank you, sir." Simons' replied, standing more calmly than before.

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

"So you didn't fancy joining our department did you?" Steed asked, seemingly intrigued as to why he would want to be a simple security guard rather than an agent.

"I failed the entrance exam, sir. Plus it's not for me. I have four children at home and a wife who'd kill me if I joined up again." Simons' explained.

"Ah. Well that explains it then. Now what did you see at the time you found Pullman here." Steed asked.

"Strangely enough, sir, it was completely by accident. I was on my usual rounds for the morning search. And I just so happened to shine my torch into the direction of his car, I then saw the green illumination of Pullman's watch dial reflect back. It caught my attention, so I investigated, sir." Simons' explained.

"You must have very good eye sight for you to have seen that Simons'." Steed said curious, and a little dubious.

"I was a sniper in the army, sir. I was trained to notice the slightest changes in my surroundings. The watch may well have been worn on the hand of an enemy sir. I knew instinctively something wasn't right." Simons' replied.

"Well then Simons'. If your wife ever changes her mind. I think we could over look in the future your problems in passing your entrance exams. We could use a man like you." Steed replied. His eyebrows raised in wonderment, and looked at the man whose expression also changed.

"Really, gosh. Thank you, sir. Thank you. Will that be all?" Simons' replied, a large grin formed on his lips. Obviously excited at the prospect of possibly joining the department, if only on the say so of his wife at home.

"Yes, Simons'. Thank you for your assistance." Steed said shaking his hand. Simons' then turned and walked off down the long corridor.

"How long until you have fully searched the car?" Steed asked Dr. Howard.

"Another 24hrs maybe more. I have my best team working on it Steed. Don't worry. I'll call you when we know more." Howard replied.

---

A small dark haired woman with glasses, walked through the door she was knocking on, trying to get the attention of her employer.

"Mr. Foxglove, Mr. Foxglove? Would you like me to get you anything for your lunch?..." She said.

She turned to see the man slumped over on his desk, arms stretched out in front of him at the side of his head. A pool of blood had leaked onto the papers he was resting on.

"Oh good Lord!!" She exclaimed, then screamed.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

----

"I'm so sorry Mr. Steed. But that's all I can tell you. I last spoke with him only two hours before...for his 11:15 coffee break...no one has seen or spoken to him...he had no appointments..." She explained, dabbing her eyes with the tissue she held in her hands.

"None at all this morning Miss Clarke?" Steed asked her.

"None at all sir. Mr. Foxglove doesn't like to be interrupted until after his lunch...he always says...sorry...said he thinks better alone on a morning." Miss Clarke explained.

"Could you just explain all of this to me again Miss Clarke, I didn't quite understand it all..but this time explain it all backwards?" Steed requested.

"Backwards, Mr. Steed?" She said.

"Backwards, Miss Clarke." Steed repeated.

"Very well." She said, then sighed and began reciting it all precisely, clinically and slightly robotically.

----

"That's right Gambit, yes. Either way Mrs. Peel can't be accused now of committing cold-blooded murder herself. But we must find out who is trying to frame her for all of this..." Steed explained into the telephone situation on the desk of Miss Clarke.

"One moment Steed...here's Purdey." Gambit interrupted.

"Steed, what's happened?" Purdey asked.

"Foxglove has been murdered, Purdey." Steed answered.

"There's a definite link now then. At least Mrs. Peel won't be accused of murdering him at least. But what can we do to help?" Purdey asked.

"Get onto Morris for me. Get him to get a team together and go over to Knight's Industries. We need them to look at any discrepancies in the year end accounts Foxglove had just completed." Steed advised.

"Right, not a problem. I'll get onto it straight away." Purdey confirmed.

"Oh and Purdey...how's Mrs. Peel?" Steed enquired, pausing and hoping it was obvious he was worried about her.

"She's fine Steed. Honestly. Do you want me to tell her anything?" Purdey asked.

"Tell her...tell her, I'm wearing my diamond tie pin." Steed said, sighing down the phone.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Oh...erm...ok...I'll let her know...and if anything turns up in the accounts, I'll get Morris to call you straight away. We'll soon find out who is behind all of this." Purdey tried to sound hopeful.

"I hope so Purdey, I hope so. Goodbye." Steed said, sighing once again.

"Goodbye, Steed." Purdey said.

---

Chapter Twenty-Two -

"Oh good Lord...now Foxglove!!" Emma replied, shocked. Having just taken a sip from the china cup of tea in her hand.

"Steed's also convinced the same person who had brainwashed Pullman and you is behind all of this. As Foxglove's secretary is also showing signs of being, programmed." Gambit advised.

"But now what?" Emma asked.

"Steed's asked me to contact our Forensic Accountants Department to go through your company's year-end accounts. There is a link there now. So it's only a matter of time before we can uncover why they are doing this. The only thing we need to worry about now though is..." Purdey explained.

"Who's behind all of this?" Emma interrupted.

"Exactly!" Purdey answered.

"What can I do to help?" Emma asked.

"If you could contact your offices and ask for a list of all your employees. It will give us a head start." Gambit asked.

"Very well. But what will you be able to do from there?" Emma asked.

"Lord Robertson was a judge for over fifteen years. If someone is trying to frame you for his murder. Then the only logical explanation is..." Gambit explained.

"This person was imprisoned by Lord Robertson, and could possibly be working for me?" Emma interrupted again.

"Precisely." Purdey exclaimed. She was beginning to understand why Mrs. Peel was such an important asset, not only to Steed, but to the Ministry as well. Her quite rational, quick thinking, brilliant mind.

Emma put down her tea cup onto her saucer, and rested them both on the large dark wood coffee table in front of her. She stood up and advised.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Well then. There's no time now to just sit here and chat about all this. We have investigations to make."

"I'm afraid Mrs. Peel. That's one thing we can't do ourselves." Gambit apologetically said.

"...You're still under house arrest. And we are under orders to not leave this house." He added.

"But it's clear now I'm not behind Mr. Foxglove's murder, and Lloyd Pullman's. You both know that." Emma frustratingly said. She stood with her arms crossed, her brow furrowed and lips curled in annoyance.

"Unfortunately Mrs. Peel. Unless Steed explains your innocence to our superiors, or finds the person behind all of this. Our hands are tied." Gambit then said.

"But, he knows the truth. You both do...He said he'd told them." Emma said.

"Yes, but not everything Mrs. Peel. Steed is trying to protect you. Unless you want him to reveal it all. I know Steed would take it to his grave, or risk everything in the process. He's an honourable man Mrs. Peel. And ultimately it's you he's thinking of." Gambit explained.

"So that's why you are both here too. He doesn't trust anyone else? But he's doing all of this on his own. Without any support at all. What if he was taken, or worse killed, by this mad man?!" Emma added. She slowly sat back down on the sofa.

"He's a clever and experienced agent Mrs. Peel. But you know yourself he always puts others needs above his own. He was worried for your safety." Purdey added.

"He's always been the same. But that doesn't mean I can't worry about his safety too? Oh, Lord...Steed!!" Emma sighed to herself. She held her hands on her lap, and tightly squeezed them together.

"He also told me to tell you he was wearing his diamond tie pin. Does that mean anything to you?" Purdey asked.

"Oh Steed! Yes, Purdey. That means a lot to me." Emma sighed, sounding very emotional, but trying to hide it behind a barrier of annoyance.

----

"Right, Steed. We have all the accounts for Knight here. There doesn't seem to be anything missing, so far. But we'll know for sure once we've had them all analysed." Morris explained.

Steed nodded in appreciation, at the much smaller man standing next to him holding one or two folders in his arms. The eight other men and women in the room carried boxes of information in their arms up the steps. They stood in Foxglove, Hawthorn and Forsythe LLP's underground storage cellar.

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

"How long will it take before you'll find anything?" Steed asked. He looked significantly worried, due to the large volume of boxes that were leaving the cellar. All marked with Knight Industries on the labels.

"It depends how quickly you want it done. I have a team of fifty men and woman at my disposal. But they are busy handling other cases. If they were taken off their assignments. Oh, maybe between forty-eight or seventy-two hours, give or take." Morris replied.

"Really?!" Steed stood wide-eyed looking at the man in front of him.

"My team are the finest in the country Steed. If they don't find anything, then there's nothing to be found." Morris replied, rather proud.

"Very good Morris. I'll have a word with Colonel Baker. See if I can get authorisation." Steed replied, finally relaxing. As he believed it would take much longer than he first thought.

---

"So what are we looking for exactly?" Gambit asked Mrs. Peel.

"Well, if Steed's hunch is right. Who ever is behind the murders they aren't exactly efficient when they are "programming" new cover stories. Once they have gotten information or erased memories from the witnesses or some of the victims. Therefore they either haven't tested this correctly, or they are in a hurry to cover their tracks. Who else but an experimental scientist who hasn't full tested their latest invention correctly." Emma explained.

Gambit and Purdey looked at each other in amazement.

"An experimental scientist. Perfect." Gambit exclaimed.

"Well, it is obvious when you think about it, really." Purdey added.

"So all we need to do is cross-check all of your employees that fit that description against any ex-convicts." Gambit mentioned.

"And also their age or expertise. In case they have also changed their identities." Emma added.

"I can see now why Steed hired you Mrs. Peel." Gambit smirked at her.

"Yes, well. I do have three Masters Degrees as well, Gambit." Emma replied, smirking back at the younger man.

"Yes, well. Like you said before Mrs. Peel. The quicker we look through these the more we can help Steed."

"Quite right Purdey. And where has your husband got to with the coffees?" Purdey asked.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"He's in the kitchen on the phone to his Wing-Commander. He'll only be a few minutes more." Emma explained.

---

Chapter Twenty-three.

All four of them sat at the large eight seater mahogany dining table surrounded by numerous files. They had been looking through forty-four scientists individual employee records for six and a half hours now. It was around 6:45pm. Each had the usual, basic information; photographs, curriculum vitae, employee history at Knight and a list of their inventions and product activity.

"What about Professor Gabriel Weinstein?" Gambit asked.

"No, he joined the company long before I took over." Emma replied.

"Dr. Mary Slimmers?" Purdey suggested.

"Absolutely not. I was at Cambridge with her a few months ago, we attended a lecture together. She's a very dear friend too." Emma exclaimed annoyed.

"What about Mr. Howard Shaw? Understudy to a Dr. Hew Powell?" Gambit asked.

"Powell? Hew Powell? The name rings a bell...Yes, he...I fired him six months ago!" Emma replied in bewilderment.

"Here, Emma. Look, Dr. Hew Powell. He fits the profile. Mid-forties. Experimental radio-transmitter Scientist. And he'd not had a decent new design in over two years. Which is why you fired him. He'd been with the company for five years." Peter handed his wife the file and slips of paper with the details of Dr. Hew Powell's employee record.

"Peter, you're right!" Emma said, astonishment written in her face.

"What's his address?" Gambit asked.

Emma recited the address to Gambit, as he picked up the phone on the desk nearest to him. He dialled ministry headquarters.

"Yes, Mr. Gambit. We'll search the records for you now. A Dr. Hew Powell you say. Right. We'll call you once we can confirm it. I'll pass the message onto Steed." Said a young woman at the other end of the line.

-----

An elderly woman in her late seventies, answered the door to six ministry agents. One who was dressed immaculately in a dark three-piece suit, bowler and umbrella.

"Excuse me. But does a Dr. Hew Powell live here by any chance, Mrs?" Steed asked.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Thorndike, Mrs. Thorndike, sir. And you are?" The woman enquired.

"I'm Mr. Steed, Mrs. Thorndike. We're trying to get a hold of him. We're colleagues of his. Is he here?"

"I'm afraid Dr. Powell was evicted five months ago, Mr. Steed. He left no forwarding address either sir." Mrs. Thorndike explained.

"I see. Well, thank you very much for your time, Mrs. Thorndike." Steed smiled. He walked down the stone steps of the house and stood at the iron gates of the garden.

"Phillips. Will you contact Blakeley, have him run a trace for Powell's car. And Williams, you and a few boys' go over to Knight. I want his lab searching for clues too. I'm going to head back to the Ministry." Steed gave orders to his younger colleagues.

----

"As you can see here Steed. There's no mistake. That's Mrs. Peel standing talking with Lord and Lady Robertson." Dr. Howard explained. He pointed to the coloured photographs scattered on the lab bench.

"Where was this taken?" Steed asked.

"In a coffee shop opposite the Knight Building." Howard replied.

"And here Steed, look. She's wearing that dress you described." Howard added.

"Here she is walking into Lord Favercombe's Mansion too. We've got it Steed. All the evidence you need." Howard exclaimed, slapping Steed on the back of his shoulder.

"Yes, yes, you have haven't you." Steed stood in amazement.

"But unfortunately Steed that's not all it proves. She is seen speaking to the victim that day. She was at the crime scene, no other witnesses saw her there. So theoretically this evidence implicates her further." Jones' explained.

"I've told you this all before. She was outside with me at the time of Lord Robertson's murder. Now these photographs prove I was right." Steed shouted at the man standing smirking at him.

"Steed unless you miraculously regain your memory of that half an hour you did spend with her. We simply have nothing to defend her with." Fosters' explained sympathetically.

"Alright, alright...But I'll need to speak with Mrs. Peel first... Alone." Steed said, pausing and emphasising he needed to take control.

"We can't allow that Steed you know that." Fosters said.

"Just for five minutes, please?" Steed pleaded.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Alright, but you'll have to be recorded when you do." Fosters' advised.

"We've got her in a custody suite. Purdey and Gambit are with her, as is her husband." Jones' explained.

----

"Mrs. Peel." Steed said quietly.

He entered the small room alone. His two colleagues and Mr. Peel were all standing in the room next door to them. His eyes moved to the right, indicating to the two-way mirrored wall, to signal to her that they were being listened to in the room next door.

"Steed!" Emma said surprisingly.

"I'm afraid we've got good and bad news." Steed said.

"Steed, all I know is, I've been rudely taken from my home for no good reason. We managed to trace the possible suspect ourselves. Even gave you all their details. I don't know what I've done wrong now." She replied, tiredness and confusion written on her face.

"Mrs. Peel, we've uncovered photographic evidence found in a hidden undeveloped film underneath Pullman's driver seat of his car. They show you entering Lord Favercombe's party the night of Lord Robertson's murder. And that you also spoke with Lord and Lady Robertson earlier the same day, at a nearby coffee shop opposite the Knight Building." Steed explained.

"Well, why am I here now then? You told them I was with you when Lord Robertson was murdered, and when Pullman was found didn't you?" Emma asked, still confused by his explanation.

"Yes, of course. But not what we actually doing at the time we were together at the party." Steed replied.

"Well, why not? They know I have no recollection of it. So why incarcerate me here now?" Emma sounded shocked.

"Because...because I do remember what we spoke about, and what we did...and if I do tell them...well...it could...well it could seriously harm your marriage." Steed replied sombrely.

She sat open mouthed in astonishment. Then looked down at her hands grasped together on her lap. Tears slowly began to form in Emma's eyes. She thought to herself what ever Steed was hiding it would affect her marriage either way. Because of Pullman's death too. It would only be a matter of time before Peter had asked her why she had lied about staying at Jane's last night. And if the ministry ever asked Steed to follow Lima-Delta protocols, they'd find out he'd lied the entire time. They'd want to know why he could quite easily lie and describe innocently the evening before's events to his superiors with no second glances or reason for doubt. How she hadn't really passed out on the sofa through drinking too much, and felt a little worse for it the next morning. Purdey and Gambit would also be uncovered as lying, as they collaborated their story. They had even defended

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

her this morning to her husband, explaining how she was arrested early in the morning when she arrived at work. Presumably he hadn't even thought to ask, he'd been too distracted by the fact his wife had been placed under house arrest. She had little choice, but to let Steed tell the truth. It was the only way to save her, and they both knew it. She then looked up and noticed the glistening diamond tie pin he wore. She slowly rose her eyes to meet his.

"Alright Steed....If it's the only way....I trust you." Emma said, sighing each time as she paused.

"Are you sure? You know what will happen?" Steed asked, somewhat shakily.

"I do trust you Steed, we must do the right thing." Emma replied. Looking into his eyes once more. She sighed. It was the only way.

"Very well." Steed answered.

----

## Chapter Twenty-Four -

Steed sat in the chair in the centre of the room. His arms, chest, head and fingers were strapped to a heart monitor, lie detector and blood pressure monitor. A large standing unit stood in the corner of the room ready for recording all of the information, including Steed's verbal and body movements responses due to a camera attached to the top of the unit. And an ordinary tape recorder also sat on the metal table in front of him.

"Ready Steed?" Fosters' asked. He sat on the desk on front Steed.

"Of course." Steed replied.

"Right, let's begin." Jones' added. He signalled to Michaels' and he clicked the switches on the computer unit.

-----

"You can see you wife now if you'd like Mr. Peel." Gambit asked.

He turned to Peter who stood crossing his arms intently listening and watching Steed through the two-way glass window. As he started to answer the questions he was being asked.

"I'm going no where near her until I've heard what he has to say!" Peter spat out, not moving at all.

"Very well, sir." Gambit said.

----

"That will be all Steed." Jones' said.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

He gave Steed a look of disapproval, as he reached over to switch off the tape recorder nearest to where he stood.

"Well, have you got everything you want now? Are you satisfied?" Steed enquired, feeling annoyed.

"I should say the same about you Steed." Jones quickly replied.

"Don't you even dare Jones!" Steed angrily replied. He rose his finger to Jones in frustration, as he was still unfortunately incapable of moving from the apparatus he was strapped to.

"We'll have to go through the information again. But, I doubt we'll need anything more from you no, Steed." Fosters replied sympathetically.

"Good. Then you'll drop the charges against Mrs. Peel then?" Steed asked, concern noticed in his voice.

"We'll have to analyse the tapes Steed. Then we'll make a decision from there." Michaels' explained.

Steed sighed. He needed to know what was going to happen now. He needed to reassure her it wasn't all for nothing.

"We'll let you know as soon as we do Steed." Fosters said, taking the last piece of equipment off Steed.

All three men left the room.

----

"You bloody bastard!" Peter yelled at Steed.

As he burst through the door. He stormed up to Steed, who had only just stood up. And hit him square in the jaw.

"You couldn't just leave her alone could you?" Peter said again.

Steed turned to Peter and retaliated hitting Peter once, to the left of his face, then a second time to the right. Peter raised his fist again punching Steed on the other side of his face. Steed hit him back again. As Peter tried to hit back, Steed blocked his hand with his own, and twisted his arm around his back. He pushed Peter a few steps back and against the wall on the far side of the room.

"She came to me Peter." Steed said to Peter as he twisted his arm further up his back, and gripping onto it tighter.

"She left you Steed. For me!" Peter spat back at him.

"Yes, yes, she did. But she wishes she hadn't." Steed replied, quite arrogantly.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Steed! Let him go." Gambit said as he burst into the room, with a bloodied nose.

"That's enough Steed." Gambit grabbed at Steed's shoulders.

Steed released his hold of Peter. Peter then began to rub his arm as he turned to look back at Steed.

Peter pointed his finger at Steed, and said, "You smug bastard!", he then he turned his shoulder, raised his other fist about to hit him.

Gambit only just managed to stand between them, pushing them both back from each other. Fosters, Michaels and Jones then entered the room. Michaels and Jones held back Peter. Fosters and Gambit held back Steed.

"That's enough!" Gambit yelled.

"I'll get you for this Steed. I swear it!" Peter yelled.

He was taken out of the room by Jones and Michaels holding onto his arms as he wrestled against them both.

Chapter Twenty-Five -

"Look I'm sorry Steed. But he just took me off guard." Gambit said.

He handed Steed a clean handkerchief.

"I told you not to have him in the room with you! I told you to keep him occupied. I'm not surprised at all for his reaction. He has every right to hit me after listening to all of that. I've just explained, truthfully and publicly to having an affair with his wife. Any husband would do the same. I just hope Mrs. Peel is alright." Steed said remorsefully.

He gently dabbed his nose, and cut eyebrow with the handkerchief.

-----

"Do you miss the excitement is that it?" Peter asked her.

"Look Peter, you and I both know it's not been working between us for quite some time." Emma said.

"But you feel like you'd be better off with him?" Peter said.

"Peter, it wasn't planned, if that's what you mean." Emma replied.

"He's got you arrested and accused of murder here!" Peter exclaimed.

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

"If I'd let him explain everything in the first place I would never have been accused. At least he's thinking of my honour when he's not told anyone until he's been forced to." Emma said.

"Your honour. Ha, you clearly didn't think about that when you went to see him last night after our argument!" Peter shouted back at her.

"Peter look. I only went there to find out why he believed I was with him on Friday night, and why my company was at the centre of Lord Robertson's murder. If you'd let him or us speak properly, then I wouldn't have had to go. I didn't set out for all of it to happen. It just did." Emma replied.

"Don't you dare blame me for all of this! I told you for years I didn't want you to go anywhere near him. That all he seemed to do was bring trouble with him. I was trying to protect you." Peter shouted.

"Peter I don't need protecting. I can do that very well for myself. I'm not the young innocence girl you remember anymore." Emma replied.

"Yes, I know, ha, you're certainly not innocent anymore. But don't you think for a minute I'm going to stand by you now after all of this." Peter replied.

"I never thought you would." Emma responded coolly.

And with that, Peter looked at her scornfully, turned away and left the room, banging the door abruptly after himself.

----

Half an hour had passed when Jones', Fosters' and Michaels all walked into the room where Steed still hadn't left.

"Well? Don't just stand there. Will the charges against Mrs. Peel be dropped?" Steed asked urgently.

"Yes...but only on the grounds that she not leave the country and assist us fully with our enquiries." Fosters' explained.

"Oh thank God!" Steed said, sighing with relief.

"But?" Jones explained.

"But?" Steed said, questioningly.

"You've been taken off this case Steed. Due to the personal relationship you have had with her. And now being the only witness to testify to her innocence. You could be seen as tampering with evidence if you were still involved with the investigations." Jones explained.

"Well, I knew that would have had to happen in any case. So who's going to lead the investigation now then?" Steed asked.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Fosters, Michaels' and myself." Jones replied.

"What?!...But what about Gambit and Purdey?" Steed exclaimed.

"Gambit and Purdey lied about the events last night. And due them both being your colleagues we simply can't trust them to lead this investigation. They will be biased against Mrs. Peel and yourself." Jones explained.

"But that's ridiculous." Steed exclaimed.

"You know the procedures yourself Steed. You know Gambit and Purdey could no longer continue working on the case. They are too personally involved now. Especially as they are your colleagues." Jones explains.

"So what are we to do now then?" Steed asked.

"You've been suspended for a week, following your recent admission. For with-holding evidence and leading the investigation to whom you have a personal connection with the main suspect." Jones advised.

"But that's absurd!" Steed said, angrily.

"It's protocol Steed. You know that." Jones said.

"And you will also have to hand in all your security clearance passes and department identification." Jones said, holding out his palm for emphasis.

Steed reached into his jacket pocket and took out both passes, and put abruptly on the metal table.

"You know Jones. I'll take great pleasure in awaiting your apology once you've found the man behind all of this." Steed said, looking directly into the other man's eyes.

"You're free to go now Steed." Jones said.

"And where is Mrs. Peel?" Steed asked.

"With her husband. Where she should be." Jones replied.

Steed's brow furrowed in contemplation. As he thought to himself, if he was alone in the room with Jones, he would take great pleasure in hitting him too.

Chapter Twenty-Six -

Steed handed Mrs. Peel a second glass of brandy, then turned to sit in the red leather chair across from her. She sat with her legs curled up on top of his red leather sofa in his flat. A sombre look on her face, and a tired look in her eyes.

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Look Mrs. Peel, I know this is hard to accept. But you knew he would have found out eventually." Steed said.

"I know Steed, I know, it was the only way. But it was just not the right way for him to find out, that's what's bothering me really. He deserved to be told to his face. I owed him that at least." Emma explained.

She felt such guilt for the way her husband had found out, not the fact that he had.

"There is never an easy way to tell anyone that Mrs. Peel." Steed replied. He rubbed his jaw in emphasis.

They sat in silence for a few more minutes. Emma sighed to herself on a few occasions, as well as letting out a few errant yawns of tiredness.

"Look Mrs. Peel, it's late and you've had an exhausting and stressful 24 hours. You go on upstairs, take my bed, all you need is rest to clear your head. We can talk about it all in the morning." Steed asked her, trying to change the subject.

"And where will you sleep Steed?" Emma enquired.

"Perfectly good sofa there for me, I'll be fine." Steed replied, indicating the sofa she was sitting on.

"I'd prefer it if you joined me." Emma replied indicating the sofa with a tap of her hand.

"Only if you want me to." Steed said, slightly unsure of himself.

"I'll always want you." Emma replied, a grin slowly spread across her lips.

----

"Right, Purdey, I've got that." Steed said, as he hung up the phone on his green leather topped desk in his living room. He turned to look at Mrs. Peel sitting in the red leather sofa opposite him.

"A friend of Purdey's at the Forensic Accounting Department in the Ministry, has told her they've found some discrepancies in Knight's accounts. Something about significantly large amounts of money being transferred to a specific research department for the past seven months- block 67f, but they had failed to produce any outcomes. Yet the money was still being transferred through. Dr. Hew Powell led that department, until he was fired by yourself six months ago. The money should have stopped then, but it continued. We have a possible motive now. Looks like the Accountant Foxglove was onto something, which could be why he was killed. We've also got men searching for his deputy Howard Shaw. No one at Knight has seen him for the past few days. So it looks like he's working closely with Powell. At least we are onto the right men by the sounds of it. We just need to find them both now." Steed explained to Emma sitting on his red leather chair at the opposite side of the room.

"Any links found to Lord Robertson yet?" Emma asked.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Not yet. But they have far more papers to go through than a year's worth of accounts. It could take quite some time before they find any leads there." Steed replied.

"So what can we do now?" Emma asked.

"Just wait until they trace Powell, Shaw and any accomplices...I know this will sound forward of me Mrs. Peel. But I'd feel safer if you and I stayed somewhere out of London. Until they've traced these men." Steed added.

"To be honest Steed. I thought you might suggest that. Do you have any ideas?" Emma asked.

"I inherited a country manor house estate from a Great-Aunt and Uncle of mine, we could stay there. The stables are currently being renovated. But the house is very much habitable, and secure. I've only just in the past month had it redecorated before I move in fully." Steed explained.

"I'll have to go to my house to collect a few things. But I agree with you Steed. It's best we got out of London, until these men are found." Emma smiled at him in agreement.

"Good. That's settled then." Steed said smiling to her.

----

He opened the large white Victorian door to let her enter before him.

"Steed, this is beautiful." Emma said.

She walked into the large open plan hallway and through into the large living room, the blood red painted walls greeted her. It was yet to be fully decorated with ornaments and paintings. But the two large green chesterfield sofas stood proudly at either sides of the room. As too did the other pieces of dark oak furniture, a large coffee table, two side tables, a very large desk in the corner and a very long sideboard. Probably inherited along with the house she thought to herself.

"Some of these have been in my family for generations." Steed explained.

He could see her interest in the furniture. Remembering all too well her endless trips to antique auctions, and his own efforts in having to move the newly acquired items to a suitable position in her living room.

"They're superb Steed, such craftsmanship, some of these are Georgian aren't they?" Emma said, running her fingers along the detailed design on the top of one section of the sideboard.

"You've not lost your keen eye Mrs. Peel. Most of these pieces are." Steed replied chuckling to himself.

"Would you like me to put on some lunch before I take you on a full tour?" Steed asked.

"That would be wonderful of you Steed. Thank you." Emma replied.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"My pleasure Mrs. Peel." Steed replied.

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Chapter Twenty-Seven -

They both sat on a large oak dining table next to each other. Seemingly out of place as it could seat eight people. But they each casually ate their lunches of cider stewed gammon, new potatoes, carrots, peas with a stilton cheese buttered sauce.

"Well the house and estate are just stunning Steed. You were very lucky to inherit this from your Aunt and Uncle." Emma said, then took another bite of lunch.

"Actually, it was written into my Grandfather's will years ago. As you well know my Father passed away, unfortunately long before my Grandfather had done. So my Grandfather's youngest sister my Aunt Beatrice and Uncle Marcus, then inherited the estate after he passed away. Unfortunately my Aunt and Uncle died tragically last year on a tour of Africa. A charging bull Rhino didn't quite like their mode of transport. They were killed instantly in the jeep they were in. As you well know, they had no other children. And as I'm the oldest Steed son, naturally, and my older sister Charlotte married young, as did my younger brother James. So they all have large homes of their own. It was then passed to me. I think they were trying to subtly encourage me to change career choices. They've also given me four stud champion race horses too." Steed explained, both sorrowfully, and proudly. He took another bite of his food.

"Your Aunt Beatrice, and Uncle Marcus, oh, dear. They were quite an adventurous couple as I recall. Weren't they supposed to complete a tour of India in six and a half months? But it was extended by a further two months because your Uncle Marcus directed them onto the wrong train and they ended up in Pakistan?" Emma asked, as she could picture quite clearly the last conversation she had, had with that old couple herself. She then took a sip of the light sweet Rosè wine from the heavy crystal glass.

"The very same. He was a keen explorer, but useless at navigation. He doted on Aunt Bea though. So she didn't scorn him much for the mistake." Steed replied, gently smiling as he too reminisced about the two family members he missed dearly. He took a sip of wine himself.

"How's the gammon, Mrs. Peel? Good?" Steed asked.

"Very, Steed. Local?" Emma answered, after she had finished her mouthful of it.

"Yes, just up the road. Nice chap my Aunt used to know who rears his own. Always gives me a good deal." Steed said smiling to himself.

"Any news from the Ministry then?" Emma enquired.

"No, unfortunately not. I only told Gambit and Purdey, that we were here." Steed replied.

"Why?" Emma asked.

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Because I don't trust Jones' Mrs. Peel. He's been extremely opinionated, and domineering since he's been put onto this case. So the less he knows the better." Steed replied. His brow tight in slight frustration.

"Oh, I see. So as soon as Gambit and Purdey know more, they'll tell us?" Emma asked.

"Precisely." Steed said, a little calmer than before.

"Once we've had lunch, would you like to take a walk with me in the grounds? It'll do us the world of good to get out and get some more of the wonderful country fresh air. It'll also take our minds off things happening in London?" Steed enquired.

"That would be lovely Steed. Thank you." Emma replied, as she then took another sip of the light Rosé wine in the heavy crystal glass.

-----

They had been walking around the gardens for over an hour. Stopping to look at the different types of flowers, trees, the herb garden and nearby stream that was all now Steed's property. They were nearing the house once more. But Steed directed her over to the stables that were currently being refurbished. He was half way through describing to her an amusing anecdote.

"Ha, ha, ha. Oh, Steed." Emma laughed.

"It's true Mrs. Peel. I went straight through the floor. How was I to know the barn had a hay trap door? The bales of hay looked perfectly safe behind it. Stupidly though, I hadn't realised the loose hay was only just covering the open door. I was lucky I didn't break anything." Steed explained, a look of slight annoyance written on his face.

"Trust you to find my near death experience amusing." Steed added, with a slight miffed look on his face as he looked towards her.

"Oh, Steed. Ha ha ha, I do apologise." Emma said, still giggling to herself.

"Apology accepted." Steed replied, smirking towards her again.

"Perhaps I could show you how fun it is to fall on the hay?" Steed said as his smirk changed to a more devilish one.

"Perhaps you should." Emma said, smirking back at him in the same manner.

He grasped her hand and they walked off laughing together in the direction of the same barn he'd been discussing.

----

Steed stood at the far end of the living room standing talking on the phone, occasionally looking towards Mrs. Peel.

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Right, thank you Gambit. Thank Purdey also for her time. I'll be in touch." Steed said, as he replaced the handset on the phone receiver.

He sat down, next to Mrs Peel, who was sitting on the green leather sofa.

"They've traced a Hew Powell who was released from Prison in 1960. Lord Robertson was his barrister. He was sentenced to five years imprisonment for fraud. No surprise there then. At least they've found a link and motive for Robertson's death now. And also how Powell has been able to steal money from your company without your knowledge. They've also traced back to Powell attending Cambridge University and completing his Engineering degree and his Doctorate. He was like you said, later hired by your company around five years ago." Steed explained.

"Well that's a relief. At least they've found a motive and a link now. Has Jones' found any leads to finding Powell or Shaw yet?" Emma asked.

"Unfortunately, no. Gambit has reassured me they have a number of men asking their relevant sources for any traces of them. But nothing had turned up so far." Steed replied.

"So they're on the run then?" Emma said.

"Basically, yes. Or underground somewhere lying low." Steed replied.

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"That's right, they're at his estate in the country. I want them silenced...By no later than 8 o'clock, I'd rather they had no pleasant memories...See it's done right this time." The hand slammed the hand receiver back onto the telephone.

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## Chapter Twenty-Eight -

Steed stood in his living room on the phone and looked increasingly annoyed by the conversation he was having.

"What do you mean Mrs. Peel is missing? She's sat here on the sofa with me Gambit. Are you sure you're alright?!" Steed said, then his face fell, realisation sunk in.

"Oh, really? We've had a report from her husband that she's been missing for days. I'm perfectly fine Steed, are you ok? Is Mrs. Peel ok?...And like I said before we've not got any further leads on Powell or Shaw." Gambit replied, slightly clinically, calmly, and robotically.

"Gambit, when was the report filed by her husband?" Steed asked, sighing to himself.

"Monday night. He said three men took her from their house. Why all these questions Steed? Are you sure you're ok?" Gambit asked in concern.

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"I have a feeling I'm not going to be. Who's leading the investigation to find Mrs. Peel?" Steed enquired, his brow tensed in frustration.

"Jones!." Gambit answered.

"Jones!...Why am I not surprised! And where's Purdey?" Steed asked.

"Standing in the room with us. Are you sure you're ok? Is your head hurting again?" Gambit asked.

"I'm fine Gambit, really... That'll be all. I'll be in touch." Steed said replacing the handset on the cradle.

He turned and looked down at her sitting on his green leather sofa cradling half a glass of brandy in her hands.

"We have to get out of here, now Mrs. Peel." Steed turned to Emma.

"Why?" Emma asked intrigued.

"I'll explain in the car." Steed said.

"But where will we go?" Emma asked.

"I'll figure that out in the car too. Go and get your suitcase. I'll be with you shortly, I have a few things here to pack." Steed said.

Emma got up quickly from the sofa and walked hurriedly up the stairs to retrieve her suitcase. Steed turned towards his Grandfather's large oak desk. He opened the bottom drawer and took out an old worn box, with his rank and regiment number embossed on its top in gold lettering, he placed it on the desk. He also took out a spare box of bullets next to it, which he also placed on top of the desk. He opened it and checked the gun over, and replaced it back in the box. He opened the top drawer to his desk. He then took out a large tape recorder, microphone, small camera, large journal and a pen and pencil.

"Steed, what are those for?" Emma asked, standing in the centre of the looking room looking over towards him.

"We need to record the last few days of events. It's important that we make as much evidence as we can. Then I'll hide it in a place only I will know of, and can then leave a paper trail so I can then find easily in the future, when I have to. I have a feeling it's no coincidence that memories are being wiped to cover up three murders. Do you remember our last case together before your husband returned?" Steed explained.

"Vaguely actually. I only really remember bits of it all, and mostly those are fuzzy at best." Emma replied.

"What?! Right, well that's a start. We'll discuss it further when we're somewhere safe...Right, it's just gone seven-thirty. I always have a bag of clothes packed and ready. So I'll be only a few

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

minutes. Then we'll go alright." Steed said, shocked and then had a look of understanding spread across his face instantly.

He walked over to her as she stood standing in his living room a little confused. He raised his hands and grasped both her shoulders, he bent down and kissed her.

"I'll do anything to keep us together Emma. Please don't ever forget that." Steed added.

He then left her standing in the room as he hurriedly ran up the stairs to collect his suitcase.

-----

He felt along the top of the door-frame, for a sliding panel. When he touched it, it revealed a switch that he pressed down and the lock to the small cellar door clicked open. He pushed the door slightly and felt for the electric light switch nearest the door, and the lights flickered on. He signalled to her to go first, as they both took the small staircase gently, as the wooden steps were very small and creaked under their weight. As they reached the bottom of the stone floor. He raised his arm to direct her to through the rows filled with various bottles. There was Champagne, White wine, Rose wine bottles either chilled or warmed to perfection. The Red wine section was at the back far right, nearest the warmest part of the cellar.

"Steed, what are we doing? Is it really a necessity to bring the wine too? I thought we were in a hurry." Emma asked as she followed him further down the cellar.

"I'll not be long Mrs. Peel...I have an old crate of seven bottles of 1967 bottle of Red Premieres Cotes de Bordeaux, from our trip there for your birthday. I'm going to hide the tape I recorded from our conversation a few nights ago at my flat. If anything, it's a damn good place to hide it." Steed smiled to himself as he walked down the cellar to the back of the room.

He opened the crate, and saw all seven dusty bottles. He placed the tape, wrapped in a cotton cloth, safely in between four of the bottles. He picked out one of the bottles and closed the lid to the crate.

"Right, lets go." Steed said, as he turned to look up towards her.

----

Steed had been driving for four and a half hours now. He was also noticing the tell tale signs of tiredness written in her body language. Her head was pressed up against his curled up jacket, which was made into a make shift pillow, as she rested it on the window of the yellow jaguar he was driving.

"It's not far from here Mrs. Peel. Just a few more miles or so." Steed explained.

"Finally, I think my legs and feet have fallen asleep before I have." Emma replied, whilst yawning.

"I'll run a bath for you when we get there. Help your muscles relax a little." Steed replied.

"That would be heavenly Steed." Emma replied.

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

She was slowly just drifting off to sleep around ten minutes later. When Steed pulled into a gravelled driveway, and brought the car to a halt. He turned to look at her sleeping form. He gently pushed back her loose hair from around her face behind her ears.

"Emma, we're here." Steed softly said to her.

"Mmmm?...Oh...mmm...we're here?" Emma replied, slowly waking herself. She rubbed her eyes and then slowly tried to see her surroundings. Everything was pitch black, but she could just make out the outline of the small white-washed cottage as the moon-light reflected off it. His Aunt Isabelle's cottage. She'd not been here in years, and from what she could see. It hadn't changed at all.

"Yes, I'll collect the bags, you go on in. I'll set the fire later too." Steed said, as he opened the car door.

----

The tape recorder on the small coffee table in front of them continued to turned recording their conversation. She took another sip of the red wine Steed had brought with them.

"And now we're currently here in Cornwall in Aunt Isabelle's cottage. Follow the signs for the Red Premieres Cotes de Bordeaux. All will be revealed there." Steed said into the tape. He pressed stop on the tape recorder.

"Do you think that's enough?" Emma asked.

"It's as much as we can record I'm afraid. The tape is only 60 minutes long." Steed replied. He leaned back against the sofa and brought his leg over to rest crossed on the top of his knee. She then put down the pencil in her hand, and closed the journal she was writing in on her lap.

"She where shall we put this then?" Emma asked lifting up the journal she had resting on her lap.

"There's an old cellar down below here too. Once we've finished the bottle of wine I'll hide it in there, on top of a crate so we can put all of these inside." Steed said.

He leaned himself back up as he removed the film from the camera safely and placed it in its sealed container. He had taken a few photographs of the newspapers and files that he still had in his house which displayed information on the deaths of Lord Robertson, Foxglove and the reports on Pullman. He had also taken numerous photographs of them in his house before they had left. And also in the cottage when they had arrived here.

"So if your hunch is right. And Jones is behind all of this. Why stop us from remembering our past relationship?" Emma asked.

"Because I don't think Jones' is the one behind all of this. He's just the man on the inside. There is someone else who would stand to gain an awful lot if we forgot our past." Steed replied.

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

He turned to look at her, to see if she knew deep down who was really wanting them to never be together again, and to forget all their feelings for each other.

"Oh good Lord! Peter!" Emma said, she gasped and put her hand over her mouth in horror.

"I'm afraid so my dear. Peter." Steed replied sombrely.

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## Chapter Twenty-Nine -

"What do you mean they weren't there?...Well where are you all now?...Cornwall!...Do have a trace of the car?...Good...Right, I'll get on to Peter...And for God sake stay there! We'll be there by morning." Jones' slammed the receiver down onto the cradle, as he sat on the edge of his desk in his office.

He lifted up the phone and dialled his superior.

"It's Jones here sir. They've moved bases again. They're in his Aunt's cottage in Cornwall. What would you like me to do with them now?" Jones asked.

"I will not let that woman take one of our best agents from his work! See to it that they remember nothing of this and that they can't even bare to talk about each other." Said the man at the other end of the line very loudly and angrily.

"Yes, Mother." Jones replied.

"And see that it's done right this time!...We've had to clean up all this mess...Wing Commander Peel has been subdued too, the little he knows the better. So only you, Steed and Mrs. Peel know what has gone on. We're still looking for Powell and Shaw. Once we've found them they'll be charged with three murders..."

"But they didn't kill Pullman."

"Yes, well, they have done now...Now get to it man! I have no time to discuss this further!" He then slammed the phone down in frustration. He raised his walking stick. Rhonda then walked over to a small table nearest the desk he was at and poured him a large scotch, walked back and handed him it as he sat behind the desk in his wheelchair.

"I'll be damned Rhonda! I'm working with a bunch of idiots! The sooner Steed and Mrs. Peel are apart, the better! Then we can all go back to normal! I refuse to let one of my best agents, walk away from his job, his profession, for her!" He then slammed his fist on his desk, and took a large gulp of the scotch, finishing the lot.

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"How are you feeling?" Steed asked her.

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

"A little better. Thanks to you your back rub." She replied, smirking at him, as she rubbed the towel against her damp hair to dry it.

"It was my pleasure." Steed grinned back at her.

"What have you been doing?" Emma asked him. She saw a group of wires, screwdrivers, wire cutters and a eight small microphones the size of a stamp, on the coffee table in front of him. He was busy attaching a microphone to a wire.

"Setting up a little trap." Steed said, winking at her.

"Oh, ingenious and sneaky, I should have guessed you'd take extra precautions." Emma replied, as she walked over to sit in the small cream leather chair opposite him.

"Well, can't be too careful. We had difficulty being believed ourselves this time round. So the chances of us being believed a second time are slim really." Steed said.

"How did you know it was Jones' and Peter behind it all?" Emma asked, as she removed the towel from her hands and rested it in her lap.

"Because Mrs. Peel. He was the only one I know who took Peter's side." Steed replied, as he fiddled further with the wires and microphones in front of him.

"Oh! I see, and all of your friends agree with adultery do they Steed?" Emma asked him, rather forcefully.

"Of course not! But they do know you should have left him when he returned. They were shocked when you didn't." Steed said, staring intently at the microphone in his hands.

"Well, I can understand that now." Emma asked.

"But at the time you had no choice, he is your husband. Yes, yes, I've heard all this before remember." Steed replied, not looking at her.

"Oh, Steed. Don't argue about it all now. I thought we were passed all of this?" Emma said abruptly.

"You're quite right. Now...let's just see if this will work." He said, he attached the cables into the tape recorder and pressed record.

"Testing...testing...one, two, three, alpha, bravo, charlie." Steed said into the small microphone, about the size of a stamp. He pressed stop, rewound it, then played it back to himself. It had recorded it all clearly.

"Perfect. Now we just have to await the arrival of your husband now don't we?" Steed said, as he looked up at her. Her returned gaze back at him was scornful, as she folded her arms and crossed her legs.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"Hurry up Peter. We don't have time for this now." Jones said to him, at the door of the sitting room in the Peel household in Chelsea.

"I'll be damned if I let him take her like this!" Peter shouted angrily, as he opened the drawer to his desk and got out a hand gun. He made sure he loaded it fully with six bullets.

"Come on Peter!" Jones shouted again.

They both left the house a few moments later.

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"So you have your men posted outside the cottage too?" Peter asked Jones, who was driving.

"Yes, but don't worry. They won't harm her. They'll just make sure she doesn't have any fond memories of her trip to Cornwall." Jones replied, turning to Peter smiling.

"I owe you one for this Jack, I'd never have done it without you." Peter replied.

"That's what friends are for Peter. And the last thing I want is for you having to deal with that scandal again. She should have known better than to betray you like that." Jones said.

"That's been the trouble for years Jack. Every time she sees him, it's back to square one. I'm just pleased Dr. Powell managed to improve his memory device from the drugs he used before. Otherwise, I'd be a divorced pilot with nothing." Peter said.

"Well, we'll handle Powell for you too. He'll not be able to blackmail you anymore once we've got our hands on him." Jones said.

"Thanks. So you said they won't harm her. But what if Steed kills them all and runs off with Emma?" Peter asked.

"That won't happen Peter. My orders are to capture Steed and return him to his job. He won't have any pleasant memories of it all either. Anyway, the device has been improved with an automatic incapacitating sonic sound wave. The instant they hear it they'll fall to the floor unconscious. So they'll be no need for violence." Jones explained.

"Oh, I see. Well then, that's put my mind at ease anyway." Peter replied, more reassured.

Jones continued to drive the next four hours to their destination in Cornwall.

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She was curled up against him on the long cream leather sofa, covered by a quilted blanket from the double bed. His right arm rested on top of her shoulders, as his left hand held a coffee cup that he sipped at then replaced onto the small side table.

The Woman with Auburn hair.

"You need your rest Mrs. Peel." He said to her, as he stroked her shoulders. He looked at the clock on top of the mantelpiece, 4:50am.

"Steed, I won't rest until all of this is over with. Anyway, I'm perfectly comfortable right here." Emma said, as she looked up at him.

"Yes, you are, and very distracting." Steed said as he was about to lean down to kiss her.

A loud noise of breaking glass came from the back of the cottage. Luckily Steed and Emma then heard a crackle, sizzle and scream. As the pressure on the doormat had set off the electricity switch, which in turn sent power through the wire to the door handle. The electricity wattage shocked the man who held the door handle at the other side into unconsciousness, he fell to the floor.

"I think our guests have arrived Mrs. Peel. How rude of them to use the back door." Steed said, as he looked at her.

"Quite shocking of them." Emma replied, grinning to herself, as she flung back the quilt cover and moved herself off the sofa.

"That was quite a good idea of yours my dear." Steed said, grinning at her, as he rose from the sofa.

"Oh, that's just basic science." Emma replied, smirking.

"Well remind me not to forgot my key in future." Steed retorted. He turned to pick up the gun from the coffee table, he flicked it open checking the rounds were still there in it.

"Oh, Mrs. Peel?" Steed then asked her, turning himself towards her.

She was standing in front of him looking intently at him. Then realisation sunk in between them. He moved one step towards her, and gripped at her shoulders.

"Promise me what ever happens, you will come back to me?" Steed said, looking fearful.

"I promise Steed." Emma replied, as she moved closer and kissed him.

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Chapter Thirty-one -

"No, I want to see them both suffer first!" Peter explained to Jones, grabbing his arm to pull him back. Oscar, and Elliot stood to the right of Peter, as he barged his way to the front of them just outside the front entrance of the cottage.

He twisted the door handle and walked through into the main living room.

"Ah, now isn't this cosy?" Peter exclaimed, as he saw his wife standing kissing Steed, just in front on the fire place.

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

They broke their kiss and turned to face her husband. The gun in Steed's hand he motioned up towards Peter. He moved one step closer, nearer to a small little black box attached to a wire and the posed tape recorder awaiting only power to then record any sounds. It was hidden on the floor by the sofa and he gently pressed the button with his shoe and began speaking.

"Ah, we were expecting you gentleman. What took you so long? We wouldn't have thought there would have been much traffic at this time of the morning. Or did you have engine trouble again Peter?" Steed said, as he looked at Emma and then back to the men and then directly at Peter.

"That's enough Steed! Get away from her now!" Peter yelled at Steed, as he drew his gun and pointed it at him.

"Oh, come now Peter. If you were to ask your wife I'm sure she'd happily explain who she'd rather be with." Steed explained, never once lowering his gun or eyes at him.

"Peter, just listen to him. Drop the gun. There's no need to do this anymore. I don't love you. So why make it worse for yourself now? Just stop all this nonsense!" Emma said, looking at her husband, who for a fraction of a moment looked like he was going to lower his gun.

"I know you don't love me anymore Emma, I've known for quite some time. But I'd be nothing without you." Peter explained, looking at her.

"Why are you doing all this? We've been unhappy for years. We'd have divorced eventually." Emma advised.

"Because I didn't spend three years risking my life trying to find civilisation to return to a wife who'd moved on with her life with another man!" Peter spat out spitefully, turning his attention back onto Steed.

"But Peter, surely you didn't just expect to return to England and for her to not have lived her life?" Steed interrupted Peter.

"I thought she may have, but when I contacted London, Jones here gave me the surprise of my life. I could return home and to Emma on one condition. That I contact no one until you had been dealt with." Peter explained.

"What?!" Steed said in surprise.

"That's right Steed. Don't you think it was odd. Of all the contacts you have around the world, and not one of them warned you that your lover's husband wasn't dead after all?" Jones advised him, moving around Peter to stand to his left.

"But no one knew until he called that day?" Emma said in shock.

"That's simply not the truth Mrs. Peel. That's something Mother thought would have been best for you both. He knew as soon as Steed and you had found out, that Steed would beg you to stay with him. He also knew that you mean more to Steed than his own job. And as such Steed would have then resigned from the ministry to be with you." Jones explained.

## The Woman with Auburn hair.

Emma gasped, and then turned to Steed.

"Would you? Would you risk your job, something you've done all your adult life, just to be with me?" Emma said, looking at Steed standing at her side.

"I'd do anything to be with you Emma. An agent isn't supposed to have a wife and live happily ever after." Steed said, as he turned to look at her.

"Now!" Peter shouted.

Jones already had his hand in his jacket pocket as, he felt for the tip of the triangular black button on the silver rectangular box. Both Steed and Mrs. Peel grabbed at their ears, unable to think, or hear, they both sunk together to the floor unconscious.

"No one takes my wife away from me Steed. Not even you!" Peter shouted down at him. As he took an ear piece from his ear.

"Now, let's make them forget everything that means something to them both away from them!" Peter said as he turned to Jones, then replaced the ear piece back into his ear.

Jones then pressed the yellow button on the device, and began speaking.

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The end...or is it?!

To be continued in another story...

The Woman with Auburn hair.