

## Prologue

In their own country the two girls were denied any semblance of childhood. In spite of the fact that neither had yet reached puberty, they wore the chador whenever they appeared in public. Even then they were constantly surrounded by an army of guards and a platoon of chaperones. They did not attend school like other children but had private tutors. In their own country they lived like prisoners, albeit prisoners kept in a gilded cage. Tragically their fate was linked not to their own identity, but to their grandfather's. It was unfair. They had no say in the matter. It was only on those rare occasions when they were abroad that the door to the cage was opened and they could step outside and taste freedom. Even then it was highly restricted. Being virtually unknown outside their own country, they were able to dress like ordinary children and do things that other kids took for granted. Like go to the zoo or walk in the park. Or go to the cinema and have a Big Mac afterwards. Which was what they were doing that wet and rainy afternoon in Paris.

It was a persistent rain that dragged an early dusk with it. The traffic was chaotic, bumper to bumper and, at the end of the working day, Parisian's tempers were frayed. The two children had been to see a Disney feature length cartoon and were now running along the pavement to a Macdonald's less than fifty metres away. A nanny and a bodyguard ran with them. They all had their coat collars turned up, their heads bent. The car with the diplomatic number plates was trapped outside the cinema, the driver swearing profusely. He had insisted they climb into the car and he would drive them. The two girls had objected and disobeyed him. They had resolutely walked away dragging the nanny with them. The bodyguard had shrugged and followed them. The driver of the car was now trying to pull into the traffic. To most Parisians a diplomatic number plate meant nothing. To others it was a red rag to a bull. It represented parking tickets not paid, speed limits not obeyed, driving in a manner even a Parisian wouldn't countenance. In a word, many Parisians were jealous. Irate drivers eloquently raised their middle fingers so often that he finally bulldozed his way into the slowly moving stream of traffic.

He had his window open and could see the bodyguard catch up with the other three. He recognised the sound of a gunshot and watched in horror as the bodyguard stumbled and fell. The nanny stood in shock and began backing away, pulling the

children with her. Hiding them behind her. The driver swore, stopped the car and climbed out reaching for his gun. Immediately the air was filled with a cacophony of horns as Parisians vented their anger on somebody stupid enough to stop in the middle of a busy thoroughfare in rush hour. Those who saw the man with the gun quickly stopped blowing their horns. The driver committed a brave but senseless act as there was nothing he could do to save the children. As the bullets hit him and he died, his uppermost thought was one of thankfulness. It was better to die than to face the wrath of the children's grandfather.

## Chapter 1

Hunter was sitting in the comfortable living room of his parents house, enjoying a Speyside malt whisky with a dash of soda. The room was large, wood-lined in light oak and one wall was filled with books. A fire burnt low in the grate and although it was the beginning of June, there was a distinct chill in the Scottish air.

‘Cheers, Dad.’ He raised his glass to the man sitting opposite him and took an appreciative sip.

His father smiled, raised his own glass and said, ‘Good health.’ The years had treated Tim Hunter kindly. A tall, spare man with a shock of grey hair, he still looked fit for his age. He had been a reporter when he had met his wife. Soon after their marriage he had been offered a job by the family firm to manage a Scottish fishing fleet. It had been made clear that it was no sinecure and that results were expected. His father had been a deep sea fisherman off the eastern coast of Newfoundland. Tim Hunter had spent his childhood working on fishing boats of all descriptions. He knew and understood the men who worked the dangerous seas around the British Isles and he had worked hard for the company and for his men. He had built the fleet into one of the biggest and most successful in Europe. Somehow he had even managed to weather the storms that devastated the fishing industry of Britain when it was sold out to Europe by Margaret Thatcher in the early eighties. By adding fish processing, farming and distribution to the portfolio, he had created one of the most profitable and important divisions in the company. His reward had been a seat on the board, share options and, as he put it, more money that he could reasonably spend. After retirement he had turned his hand to writing novels. His training as a newspaper reporter in his early twenties stood him in good stead and he enjoyed researching the information he needed to ensure his stories were written with complete authenticity. ‘Well son, are you going to tell me all about it?’

Hunter nodded. ‘I’ve written a lot of it down. It’s for your archives only, Dad, don’t forget. You can publish it after my death.’

‘Dear God, I hope I’ll be gone a long time before you. However,’ aware of what his son did and the dangers he often faced, Tim Hunter nodded, ‘should something happen I’ll make sure the records are kept straight. So what happened?’

Hunter related to his father the rescue of the hostages and the death of Habib. When he was finished, he went into the hallway where the drinks cupboard was to be found and replenished the contents of his glass. He walked back to the fireplace, and added some more logs. His father sat pensively watching the flames, thinking about the parachute jump and how close his son had come to being killed. The other officer with him had died, shot when landing on the roof of a building in an attempt to capture one of the most wanted terrorists in the world - Aziz Habib. That had been his son's first operation working for the new, anti-terrorist organisation, The International Force Against Terrorism, acronym TIFAT.

'Nick, don't you think,' he paused, cleared his throat and continued, 'don't you think it's time to quit? After all, you've made lieutenant commander. Prospects in a shrinking Royal Navy aren't that great and there are companies to run. You know the firm could use you.'

The firm was the sprawling empire carved out by the Griffiths family during the last hundred years. They were involved in all the world's major industries from banking to airlines to insurance. One day, a small percentage of the company - perhaps three to four percent of the family's holdings - would pass to Hunter. When it did, he would be rich beyond words. Although he was in no hurry to collect.

He shook his head. 'I'm not ready, yet. I have,' he shrugged, 'let me say, rivers to cross and mountains to climb, before settling down to a life in business.'

'If you live that long,' his father replied, dryly.

Hunter grinned. 'Well, it means Louise will get that much more. Anyway, I don't intend to die. Not for a long time. You know, Dad, it's not like the bad old days. "Over the top and charge" went out of modern warfare a long time ago. Now it's all carefully planned, over planned, if the truth were known. And the reality is we won't be fighting nation on nation. We'll be fighting with overwhelming technology against tribes who are barely out of the stone-age.'

Tim Hunter took a sip of whisky, unadulterated by either ice or soda and said, 'Son, you can't kid me. I may be retired but I still know what's going on. The Middle East has more weapons than they know what to do with. The Soviet Union is in pieces, there's more hardware sloshing around the world than ever and the result is more localised wars than in the history of mankind.'

'Who says?'

'*Time Magazine* is who. They listed them. Sixty-four conflicts of one sort or another are presently being fought. Northern Ireland is not a thing of the past in spite of the Good Friday agreement. So if we start there and look around the world we have strife in Europe, Africa, Asia and America. In fact, across the world. And you're right in the middle of it with Macnair.' His father was talking about General Malcolm Macnair, the officer commanding TIFAT

Hunter smiled at his father. 'I wouldn't want it any other way. And don't forget, now that we've moved to *Cochrane*, I'll see a lot more of you and Mum.' Hunter was referring to the shore establishment at Rosyth in Scotland. TIFAT had spent the last few weeks transferring equipment and personnel from Plymouth. 'Dad, somebody has to fight these people. Terrorism has been described as the twenty first century's war and it's true. If we don't stop them, wipe them out at every opportunity, the world will go to hell in a basket.'

'If it hasn't already. Okay, okay,' his father held up his hand, 'I won't argue. I know they have to be stopped.' He forced a smile, looking his son in the eyes. 'I only wish that somebody else could do it.'

'Do what?' The door had opened and an attractive woman stood there, taking off her gloves, unbuttoning her coat. Only the grey streaks in her hair gave a true indication of her age; as Sian Hunter said of herself, nearer sixty than fifty.

'Hi, Mum,' Hunter crossed the room and kissed his mother's cheek. 'Can I help you?'

'Please, Nick. Empty the car so that I can get dinner. What were you two talking about? As if I couldn't guess.'

'Nothing much, Mum,' said Hunter, looking uncomfortable, not wishing to upset her.

'It's all right,' she touched her son's cheek, 'I know. Well, I agree with your father but I won't try and persuade you otherwise. Get me a sherry, will you?'

While her son poured her a drink she stood in front of the fire, warming herself. 'You know, your father has never come to terms with the idea that the women of the family are as tough as the men. And that's in spite of the fact that he wrote the definitive history of the family and nearly won the Pulitzer for it. Thank you, darling,' she took the proffered glass and sipped. 'Just be careful, that's all I ask.'

‘I’m always careful,’ Hunter replied, but then spoiled it, by adding “usually” under his breath, as he walked out of the door. At the back of the house he happily unloaded the groceries from the car, enjoying the humdrum nature of the task.

Later they sat in the kitchen while his mother prepared their meal, chatting about the village, family and friends. Over dinner, which they ate in the dining area of the kitchen, his father asked, ‘What’s next? Are you up to anything?’

Hunter shook his head. ‘Nope. We’ve been training for the last week or two, waiting for something to happen. We spend a great deal of time accumulating and sifting through data that comes in from all over the world. Some of it is useful but a lot of it is complete dross. The useful stuff we either use or pass on to relevant governments or agencies. You’re right about what you said. There’s a hell of a lot of conflict going on and nobody seems to be too bothered by most of it. As long as it’s contained within borders and doesn’t affect us or ours then we let them get on with it. It’s a sad state of affairs, of that there’s no doubt.’

‘What about the latest in the Middle East?’ his mother asked. ‘Will there be war?’

‘Between Israel and the Arabs? I doubt it. Israel has a nuclear capability and has made it clear that should they ever be threatened with an overwhelming force then they would use it. No, the Arabs will continue to fund the Palestinians who will continue to die in the service of their country and religion. A few Israelis will be killed and the Arab world will say, “Look, we’re doing everything in our power to beat the Jews and give the Palestinians their own, independent country. We can’t do anymore”. Stupid really, but I think it will continue like that for a long time to come. Unless something happens to upset the political balance in the region. Should fundamentalists on either side get too strong then all hell could break loose. It’s one of the strategic games we play on the computer. It’s called Operation Slaughter,’ Hunter paused and took a sip of wine. ‘Anyway, enough of that. How’s Sis?’

‘Louise? She’s fine. Sends her love and hopes to be here tomorrow,’ his mother replied.

‘Where’s she coming in from?’

‘Los Angeles,’ Tim Hunter answered. ‘It’s her first trip as Captain.’

Hunter smiled. ‘Good for her. What’s she flying? A 757?’

‘No, a European Airbus,’ said his mother. ‘She did well to get the job she did.’

‘Mother!’ Hunter spoke in exasperation. ‘Seeing as the Firm owns the company it was hardly going to be difficult for her to get the job.’

‘No, you’re wrong there,’ his father said, sharply. ‘It was more difficult. Not only did she have one of the best records of anybody interviewed but she had to prove herself time and again in the simulator. She handled more incidents better than any of the other twenty-eight pilots who were applying.’

‘How do you know?’ Hunter asked.

‘Because I told your uncle James to make it difficult,’ replied Tim Hunter.

‘Why on earth did you do that?’

His father grinned, ‘Because I then made sure the results were leaked and everyone knew just how hard it had been for her. Otherwise there could have been cries of nepotism.’

Hunter roared with laughter. ‘Good for you, Dad. Does Louise know?’

His mother, Sian, shook her head. ‘And we’d rather you kept it that way.’

‘Sure. I won’t say a word. Is there any cheese?’

‘There’s some Stilton in the fridge,’ said his mother. ‘I’ll get it while you find the port.’

They spent an enjoyable evening, chatting and playing Scrabble. Towards midnight Hunter stood, stretched and said, ‘I’ll take Winston for a walk before I turn in.’ At the mention of his name the dog, a golden Labrador, perked up from his comfortable position in front of the fire. ‘Come on, boy,’ said Hunter. As they went out through the front door Hunter picked up the dog’s lead, though he rarely ever had to use it.

The two of them stepped out into the street and wandered down the hill towards the river Endrick. The longest day of the year was only three weeks away and there was a glow in the sky. It came partly from the orange lights of Glasgow showing over the top of the Campsie Hills and reflected in the scattered clouds and partly from the quarter moon rising behind them.

It was a still night, with only the slightest rustling in the leaves from a light breeze. At the river they crossed the bridge and turned right along the track. Tall trees lined both sides and the gurgle of water could be clearly heard rushing over the stones. Hunter enjoyed the stroll, the night air clearing the fugue of alcohol from his brain. Winston, although nearly ten years old, was darting back and forth like a puppy, happy to be with his master once again. Suddenly the dog stopped and

crouched, his tail low and flat, swishing slowly back and forth. Hunter made a low hissing sound and the dog slinked silently to his side. Hunter reached down and stroked the dog's head.

'Let's take a look, old boy,' he whispered. They moved stealthily nearer the river. Hunter sniffed the air. 'Cigarette smoke,' he said softly. 'Was that what you smelt? Come on, quiet now.' They stepped off the track and down to the river. Stealthily they walked downstream, Hunter carefully scrutinising the dark shadows. It could be another person walking their dog or it could be poachers. His father had told him that there had been quite a spate of poaching incidents recently and that the bailiffs were desperate to stop it.

After a few minutes Hunter halted and knelt beside Winston. His instincts told him that they were close to whoever was there. He was also sure that whoever it was, was up to no good. He heard a splash and a loud voice yelled, 'Got it!'

'Quiet, you fool. Not so loud!' Another voice whispered fiercely. Twenty metres away three men materialised out of a copse and stood next to the water.

'Hurry up,' one of them hissed. 'Afore the bloody bailiffs get here.'

Suddenly there was a loud commotion and a whistle blew. Yells of "Stop!" and "Hey, You!" filled the air. The three men froze, looked about them and then started running towards Hunter.

'Quiet, boy,' he said. 'Let them come here.'

There were more yells and curses. One of the men tripped, falling flat on his face. The other two poachers kept running. Hunter saw the prostrate man being pounced on by his pursuers before turning his attention to the two running towards him.

'Oot o' the way,' the accent was harsh Glaswegian, the burly man threatening Hunter with a raised stave.

Hunter stepped to one side and said, 'Pass.' As the man came alongside, Hunter put out his foot and barged into him. The man gave a shriek and went flying into the river. The second man, a slight figure, tried to dodge past but Hunter grabbed his arm, spun him around and flung him after his friend. He landed with a loud splash and many curses.

Three other figures came running up, panting. 'Thanks,' gasped one of them. 'We can take it from here.'

'Want a hand, John?' Hunter asked.

‘Nick! I hadn’t realised it was you.’ Warm handshakes were exchanged. ‘What are you doing here?’

‘Visiting the folks and right now, walking the dog. I came out for some peace and quiet. The last thing I expected was to get caught up in catching poachers. At least, I assume that’s what’s going on.’

‘Aye, it is. I’ve been after them for some time, so I appreciate your help. I estimate they’ve taken about a thousand pounds worth of salmon from the river in the last six weeks.’ As head gamekeeper for one of the local landowners, John Meredith was responsible for the hunting and fishing that went on over an area of more than forty thousand acres.

While they had been talking the two poachers had been helped out of the river and were now standing, dripping and bedraggled, surrounded by John’s men.

‘The police are coming,’ said one of the men. ‘The van will meet us at the bridge.’

‘Come on, you three. I don’t want you catching pneumonia and dying on me before I can get you to court.’ He turned to Hunter and said, ‘Thanks again, Nick. How about a pint?’

‘Sure, why not? Tomorrow up the Pirn suit you?’

‘Eight o’clock,’ said John.

The burly poacher turned to Hunter and said, ‘I’ll know you. I’ll git you for this, you bloody interfering...’

The poacher stopped when John and his men burst out laughing and started hustling the offenders away. Hunter heard John say, ‘Don’t even think about it. You were lucky he only shoved you in the river. Last year I saw Nick take on six...’ the voices faded into the distance.

Hunter smiled. The story got better with the telling. Actually there had only been four of them and they had been drunk. He recollected that it had been pretty disappointing, as fights go. He sighed and turned to continue his walk. ‘Come on, Winston. Let’s go and find a few rabbits for you to chase.’

The remainder of their walk was peaceful and soon Hunter found himself at the road that led up to the cross-roads and back to the house. A short while later he arrived home, showered and turned in.

Early the following morning his sat-nav telephone warbled softly. Hunter was awake immediately and flipped it open. ‘Hunter.’

‘Macnair. I need you.’

‘General, it’s, em,’ he looked at the clock, ‘zero, six hundred hours and I’m on a long weekend. Can’t it wait?’

‘Sorry, my boy, it can’t. I’ve been up all night. All hell is breaking loose.’

‘Where?’

‘In France and the Middle East.’

‘I’ll be there in a couple of hours.’ He severed the connection and climbed out of bed. As he shaved and showered wondering what on earth could have happened to have Macnair so fired up.

Hunter sped along the A811, enjoying the feel of his MGB Roadster on the straight road through the beautiful Stirlingshire countryside. In the morning mist he could see the castle in the distance and, to the left of it, Wallace’s tower pointed at the sky, a reminder of the Scots’ battle against the English in the thirteenth century. Hunter grinned. With the Scottish Assembly now in existence, independence might yet become a reality. The thought intruded and he contemplated where his loyalties lay. If the truth were told, he was saddened by the idea. The strength of the United Kingdom was precisely because it was united. Even if Scotland did become independent, Brussels was proving to be the real power in Europe, where the meaningful laws were passed. Sovereign parliaments were little more than rubber stamping, talking shops, fiddling with tax laws and excise and duty rates. I’m becoming a cynic, he thought and then corrected himself - too late - I am one.

Under the sheer cliff face and walls of the castle he turned right for Stirling town centre. Once through the town he drove along more beautiful countryside until he reached and crossed the bridge over the River Forth and drove through the village of Kincardine. Turning right for Westfield and the power station, he sped towards Dunfermline. Twenty minutes later he pulled up outside the gates to *HMS Cochrane*, with its new sign, The International Force Against Terrorism. It had taken a month to find a set of initials that did not spell out a rude or insulting name in one language or another and after numerous efforts Macnair had settled on TIFAT. Hunter showed his identity card to the sentry at the gate and was waved through. Out of the corner of his eye Hunter could see David Hughes inside the gatehouse. The NCO in charge of security was putting away his gun and noting Hunter’s time of arrival. The clock on the dashboard showed 07.45.

He parked outside the administration block and went inside. Unlike other naval shore establishments *HMS Cochrane* had no history and no splendid public rooms to awe visitors, having been built in the utilitarian sixties. With the cutbacks it had been easily mothballed but now had a new lease of life. Hunter pushed through the swing doors and took the stairs facing him two at a time. He found General Macnair in his office, with TIFAT's computer expert, Isobel Sweeney.

'Morning,' Hunter greeted them both, wandering across the room to the coffee percolator. He held it up, offering them both a refill but they shook their heads. He added milk and sat down opposite his boss. 'So what's happened?'

'Thanks for coming in so quickly, Nick,' Macnair said, 'but the proverbial has hit the fan in a big way.' The General paused, collecting his thoughts. 'Yesterday morning two children were kidnapped in Paris.' Before Hunter could do more than raise an eyebrow in query the General continued. 'They were Saddam Hussein's granddaughters. He has been ranting and raving all night and has threatened to wipe Israel off the face of the earth if he doesn't get them back.'

Hunter frowned, sipping his coffee. 'That doesn't make any sense. Why would the Israelis take two kids? They don't make war on children, no matter whose they are.'

'Agreed,' said Isobel. 'Our Foreign Office has pointed this out to the Iraqis in no uncertain terms. So have the Americans. The Israelis deny all knowledge of it and have asked for calm and good sense.'

'Calm and good sense are contradictions in terms when it comes to the President of Iraq,' said Hunter, dryly. 'It still doesn't make any sense. Why should Saddam think that the Israelis are behind the abduction?'

Suddenly General Macnair let lose his thunderbolt. 'Because they are.'

'What?' Hunter sat up straight, almost spilling his coffee. 'The Israelis? I don't believe it. They just wouldn't do such a thing.'

'I would have defended them with every breath in my body,' said the General, 'except that late last night I had a telephone call from David Golightly.'

'The deputy prime minister we rescued from Habib?' Hunter looked puzzled.

'The same. He has confided in me a great deal of disturbing news. It appears that there is a group of right-wing fanatics in Israel who believe that it is their duty to secure a Greater Israel as an Orthodox Jewish State. For them any means justifies the ends.'

‘So what has that to do with Saddam’s grandchildren?’ Hunter frowned, sipping his coffee.

‘This group is trying to provoke the Arab world into lashing out at Israel. If Israel is forced to defend itself against an overwhelming enemy it will have to resort to nuclear weapons. They believe that if they use nuclear bombs and fight to the end the Arabs will lose the war, agree a peace and leave them alone inside their expanded borders. All Arabs and in particular the Palestinians will be forced to leave. Israel will become a Jewish state for Jews only.’

‘That’s nonsense,’ said Hunter. ‘The West won’t let it come to that. We’ll stop things getting out of hand.’

Macnair tilted back his chair and put his hands on his head, a thoughtful look on his face. ‘I’m not so sure. If the Israelis provoke a fight by committing acts of terrorism against innocent men, women and children, where will our sympathies lie? I don’t think it will be with the Israelis. So matters escalate to the point of no return. If the Israelis find themselves alone and the Arabs *think* they’re alone, then the Arabs could mobilise a massive force against Israel. There would be a nasty brutal war and if the Israelis use nuclear weapons the Arabs would use chemical and biological weapons in retaliation.’

‘Hell, General, the land would be returned to desert if that happens. It will be unusable for decades, maybe hundreds of years. You’ve seen the results of Operation Slaughter on the simulations. No matter how we play it, it seems to end up in a no-win situation. Hell’s teeth, I was talking to my father about this only last night. I just don’t believe it.’

Isobel butted in. ‘I’ve spent some of the night looking at other scenarios into the game and none of it is encouraging. Even if we came in at the last minute and forced the Arabs to pull back, our tenuous relationships in the area will be irrevocably damaged. If Israel is proven to be sponsoring terrorism then...’

‘Hang on a moment,’ Hunter interrupted her. ‘I thought you said,’ he looked at the General, ‘that it was a faction within Israel who were responsible? Not the whole Government. Can’t they deal with a few fanatics themselves?’

‘I suggested the same thing to Golightly. He tells me that it isn’t as simple as that. First of all they’re a democracy and they have to obey the law. There’s no proof that the people he believes are responsible actually carried out the kidnapping. Secondly, even if there was proof, what good would it do? If Saddam doesn’t get the

children back safely he'll say, with justification, that it's the fault of the Israelis. You know as well as I do that Saddam is very good at rhetorical speech making and there are a lot of countries in the Middle East who will back him. But it's worse than that.'

'Worse? What can be worse?' Hunter asked.

'According to David Golightly other atrocities are planned which are designed to provoke the Arab world. He says that there's a small group in the Knesset who are defending these people, arguing that the safety of Israel can be assured once and for all.'

'They're mad. Stark, staring bonkers,' said Hunter.

'Probably,' said Macnair. 'Be that as it may, Golightly phoned asking for our help to find the children. He says that he will be doing everything in his power, albeit within the law, to stop the trouble makers. In the meantime, we need to rescue the children and prevent any other atrocities.'

'General, such a statement from anybody else would result in me sending for the men in white coats. How are we going to rescue two small children who were kidnapped in France and then gallop to the rescue of other people in situations we know nothing about? It's ludicrous.'

Macnair sat forward in his chair and pointed a finger at Hunter. 'I agree but that's not the end of it either.'

'There's more?' Hunter frowned.

'The French have been on the telephone already. Golightly had asked them to send for us. They told him, and phoned me to reinforce the message, that we weren't needed. They said the crime took place on French soil and France would solve it. They also pointed out that thanks to their special relationship with Iraq they may be able to persuade Saddam to give them more time to find the children. Before the Iraqis invade Israel, that is.'

Hunter leaned back in his chair, his legs stretched out, his hands behind his head. 'Even if they find them, what good will it do? This isn't a hostage situation that's negotiable. It seems to me that there's nothing to be lost by killing the children and letting the bodies be found. In fact, quite the reverse. There's a lot to be gained if they are killed.'

Macnair nodded. 'I agree. The problem is the French don't have the big picture. David Golightly told me everything in strictest confidence. It's as important to keep this quiet as it is to prevent it happening. At the moment, the Israelis can keep

denying any involvement and blaming everybody else. If there's no ransom demand then that may have to change. What they cannot do is admit to any involvement by any individual within Israel.'

'Do we know who the leader of this Jewish sect is?'

Macnair nodded. 'More bad news, I'm afraid. David Golightly named Samuel Dayan as the leader.'

'The industrialist?' Hunter queried.

'The same,' answered Isobel. 'I've been trying to get as much information about him as I can.' She waved a floppy disk in the air. 'It's all here. Or at least, as much as I could find.' She shrugged, 'It's still early days yet so I expect to get a lot more.'

'Are we sure he's the man?' Hunter asked.

'We can only go by what David Golightly said. I can tell you, Nick, he is a very worried man. He's spent months putting together the information he e-mailed to Isobel last night. It's pretty damning, although I'll be the first to admit that there's no proof as far as a court is concerned. It's mainly innuendo and rumours but when added up it's a pretty strong case. However, with the money Dayan has and the power he wields, the Israelis would have the devil's own job even getting him into a court, never mind convicting him.' Macnair got to his feet and wandered over to the window, looking down on the quadrangle, watching some of his men go about their business. In the distance he could see the dockyard cranes and the gleam of water that was the Forth Estuary. 'Besides, there's another problem.'

'Another one?' Hunter was incredulous. 'Don't tell me, nobody knows where Dayan is.'

'How on earth did you know that?' Isobel asked.