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David Hidalgo knew perfectly well that talking to a batch of dough would not make it rise any more quickly nor would it make the bread taste any better but he couldn't entirely help it. It was such a magical process, he couldn't resist taking sneaky peeks at the pasty lump in the baking bowl with a damp orange tea towel over it and whispering small endearments. Somehow it felt so unlikely that the three simple ingredients of flour, water and yeast could rise of their own accord and become the basis of bread that maybe they needed some encouragement. He felt baking bread on a Sunday evening in the flat of his new fiancée in Marchmont, Edinburgh seemed to connect him with the bakers who fed the workers on the pyramids, the builders of Stonehenge and the sailors on what the Spanish still insisted on calling the *armada invencible* (even though it had quickly become very "*vencible*" indeed). However distant they might be in time, country and culture they all baked and ate bread and so did he. And maybe they talked to their dough as well as they watched it rise. Maybe he was not only part of a long human line of bakers but one of bread whispers as well. He smiled at the idea and again whispered something affirmative to the dough before pulling the damp cloth over it again and checking the timer.

Through in the living room, Dr. Gillian Lockhart - who, even before the wedding, had now taken to referring to herself as "Mrs David Hidalgo" just to tease him - was practising the second movement of Mozart's Concerto for Flute and Orchestra scaled down to a chamber group for a forthcoming recital. It sounded divine. He was torn between checking his bread and checking on the extraordinarily talented and kissable lady in his life. He wandered back through wondering if he would get another telling off for interrupting the flow with a few endearing words - even more endearing than lavished on the bread - and a quick kanoodle.

“David Hidalgo! You are getting in the way of culture!” Gillian remonstrated half-heartedly but put the flute down anyway and put her arms around his neck. “I’ll never master the tricky bits with all these goings on! You are an awful man. But I do love you.” Then Mozart and his movements were forgotten for a few moments.

When that was over David didn’t quite know what to do next. He was reading a biography of Lope de Vega, the golden age Spanish poet but couldn’t settle to it. So he just mooched around for a bit, wandering from one room to the next, with a stupid smile on his face. This was the life. In fact it was well worthy of capitalisation. It was **THE LIFE**. Having lost what he’d always assumed was his big chance at love some years before in tragic circumstances in Madrid, fate, destiny, or Providence had handed him another bite at the cherry of happiness here in Edinburgh. For some reason he still couldn’t entirely fathom or believe she had said *yes* and happiness was back in fashion. Life was back to “normal”. Of course, this was nothing like normal. Maybe a new normal, but had yet to feel anything like the normal normal. Instead it was wonderful. He couldn’t quite believe she had voluntarily agreed to share her journey with him but apparently it was true. And every evening and every morning the bubble had yet to burst.

On the other hand there were certain things that had remained stubbornly normal - in the normal sense of the word. Sunday afternoons for David Hidalgo were normally the equivalent of Friday nights for other people. In his case, the working week all led up to the morning service at Southside Fellowship on South Clerk Street Edinburgh. As well as trying to prepare something helpful in the way of Bible teaching and application for his congregation - he tended to think of them more as a family - there was also co-ordination of the other bits and pieces. Although he strongly believed in team leadership, he also accepted that

he was probably the leader of the team so had to make sure that everything else ran smoothly. Worship songs should be suitable and if they could in some way fit with what he was going to speak about so much the better. The announcements had to be comprehensive even although they were also all sent out on email. Some older members of the congregation would never be on email so had to get the update in the old-fashioned way. So, comprehensive but not taking as long as the nine o'clock news. Then there might be other stuff as well. A kids' talk done by one of the children and youth team. Maybe a new member to welcome. An appeal for folk to fill shoe boxes with small but essential items we take for granted but are hard to get and expensive in Bangladesh. An explanation of the upcoming home groups programme or an introduction to the next Alpha Course. Despite having done basically this same routine for ages - a few years here but many more pastoring Warehouse 66, his church in Madrid - despite all that, he still found he got a bit keyed up as Sunday approached then felt himself just as tangibly relax, once it was over.

This Sunday had been a bit different though. David knew he was not a natural youth worker but still they kept on inviting him to speak on everything under the sun that was relevant to youth and he knew it was his duty so he did his best. The youth group met late on Sunday afternoons, had a soup and sandwich meal then often a half hour of games then their meeting. The topic he'd been given this time was "Love Sex, Porn - what's the difference?" He'd almost choked on his coffee when Angus, the youth leader, had given him the title a few months before, then he'd spent weeks agonising on how to be real and honest without descending into toe curling embarrassment for everyone. Some research was clearly called for but he'd insisted that Gillian sit right by him as he did a bit of necessary browsing - much of which had

disgusted both of them. But then it had started getting more interesting as he'd gone into the science of addiction, the role of dopamine on the learning circuits of the brain and the wonderfully named Coolidge Effect. Gary Wilson's TED Talk on The Great Porn Experiment had proved a revelation. Soon he began to realise that this was a topic that really mattered and that he really needed to say something about. Eventually he'd talked Gillian into sharing the session with him and the discussion had ended up really interesting and productive - as well as pretty shocking when they'd discovered the average age at which their young people had first been exposed to online porn. So although it had ended up going really well they both needed time to chill out afterwards. Hence the flute and the bread. The relief was palpable.

The flute part seemed to be gradually coming together and the bread went into the oven. Half an hour later onto the cooling rack with a reassuring hollow sound from a tap on the bottom. Another half an hour and he couldn't resist any more and cut two fat, warm, slightly steaming slices and spread them with butter and honey. Gillian put the flute down, gave him another kiss and they sat together on the sofa trying to keep the melted butter and honey from ending up where it shouldn't be. They were both quietly munching in perfect peace when the phone rang out in the hall. David rolled his eyes and got up to answer it.

"Good evening, sir. Am I speaking with Mr. David Hidalgo?" asked an official sounding voice. David was just about to say *who wants to know* or *yes, but I haven't had an accident and don't need compensation* when he thought better of it and simply confirmed his identity.

"Good evening sir," the voice repeated. "Sergeant Ian Harper. I'm phoning from St. Leonard's police station. I was given this number by DI McIntosh. I believe you've worked together in the past..."

Now the caller had David's attention and a slice of hot bread and honey was forgotten. McIntosh wouldn't have passed his name and Gillian's number on unless it was something important.

"Yes we have. How can I help you?"

Harper hesitated a bit.

"Well, I'm not sure if you can help us or not sir," he went on. "It's just that ... well we have a man here whom we think is Spanish but that's about all we can be sure of about him. And we're not entirely clear what to do with him. DI McIntosh mentioned that you'd lived in Spain for a number of years and might be able to help us out."

David raised an eyebrow.

"Well, Spain has a population of almost fifty million people. I think I'm pretty unlikely to know a random Spaniard in Edinburgh. What happened? Did he have an accident or fall down dead in the street?"

"Actually, neither sir," Harper went on. "He's very much alive and well. It's just that he's got absolutely no idea who he is or what he's doing here. He's been checked over but he doesn't have any other medical condition. No identification or cash on him so we have no idea where he might be staying or if he has any family or friends here. We have no reason to detain him and he doesn't need to be in hospital. So, actually, we just have no idea what else to do with him. DI McIntosh thought you might be willing to look after him - just for a day or two till we find out where he's from. I mean, we can't really just put him back out on the street and there's no reason for him to be in a cell. Sorry to be putting this your way, sir. What do you think?"

David spent the entire run to St. Leonard's where it sat under the gloomy shadow of Arthur's Seat wondering what exactly he did think without coming to any definite conclusion. Helping out any human being in trouble was a sort of default position - much more so a stray

Spaniard who had somehow made it as far as Scotland and couldn't find his way back. Normally that might mean a bit of helpful advice offered in fluent Spanish that was quickly reassuring for a lost foreigner with only a smattering of English. But someone merely thought to be Spanish with not another earthy thing known about him was another matter. And he was already beginning to think Harper's "couple of days" could be a mite optimistic. When he'd explained to Gillian her reaction was immediate.

"Well, obviously we'll look after him. You go and find out what's going on and I'll get the spare room ready. Does he need fed?"

Harper greeted him at reception with an expression of some relief, thanked him for coming and took him into an interview room.

"Weirdest thing I've ever come across," he began. "You read about it or you might see it in a movie but I've never actually come across it first hand. Crazy."

"And he doesn't remember anything?"

"Not a dicky bird. Not even his own name. We've been calling him Pablo and he doesn't seem to mind but it could be Samantha for all we know. Or for all he knows come to that."

"So how do you know he's even Spanish then if he doesn't know who he is?"

"Well he's not Scottish anyway - that's for sure. He speaks reasonable English but with a strong accent. We tried French first then German. Nothing. One of the PCs has a bit of Spanish though. We tried that out and he answered right way. So it could be somewhere in South America, I suppose, or it could be Spain. I was told DI McIntosh deals with European Union liaison so I gave him a ring at home just to get a bit of advice and he suggested you might give us a hand just till we can nail it down and somebody steps up to claim him. Once we've ruled out fakery

- which believe me does happen - we'd normally involve social services but in this case we think that would be even more disorientating for a man who's not even a native speaker of English. Hence the call to you."

"So what exactly do you want me to do with him?" David asked, interested in what he'd just signed up for.

Harper shrugged.

"Just babysitting, I suppose," he admitted. "We'll be making as many inquiries as we can. Missing persons, facial recognition at passport control, see if we can find out where and when he came into the country. Then if we can tie him to a face on the system then we'll get a name and maybe a next of kin. Then we can ship him back to Spain and let them sort it out."

"So just babysitting then?" David repeated. "I suppose that means feeding him and not letting him wander off."

Harper grunted.

"Well, if he does wander off, we'll probably end up picking him up again then we're back to square one. And I phone you up again..."

David let out an involuntary sigh.

"Well, in that case, I'll try and bear Hilaire Belloc's advice in mind."

Harper looked at him quizzically.

"And what might that be?" he asked.

"Always keep a hold of nurse, for fear of finding something worse!"

They found "Pablo" sitting in a second interview room with a female police officer. Harper introduced PC Hilary Arnott then turned to the foreigner who was sitting in a comfy chair with a cup of coffee nestled in his hands and a look of benign bewilderment on his face. He looked about David's age with a dark complexion, pure white, slightly receding hair, a well-trimmed grizzled beard and a craggy face. David

thought he looked a bit like Anthony Quinn in Zorba the Greek. He was wearing a smart beige Nehru collarless jacket, a cream linen shirt and light, well-tailored trousers. He looked up at David with an entirely empty smile. Well, he's not a pauper, David thought. A man of means like this must have connections.

"*Buenas noches, Señor. Cómo te llamas?*" was David's opener holding out his hand. Despite the assertion that the man didn't even know his own name he thought there was no harm in asking anyway.

"Pablo" immediately rose to his feet.

"*Muy bien,*" he replied, taking David's hand. "*Pero - parece que he olvidado mi propio nombre. Lo siento mucho. Es un poco ...*" he hesitated, looking first at Arnott then at Harper for some clue. "*Es un poco ... em ... desconcertante, no?*"

Harper looked inquiringly at David.

"He says he's fine," David translated. "He says he seems to have forgotten his own name. He says it's a bit baffling."

"I'll say," Harper concurred.

Without bothering to translate every expression, David checked that the mystery man was happy to be called Pablo since he had to be called something - to which he shrugged and agreed. Then David tried where he came from and why he was in Edinburgh. Every question elicited the same benign response - a look to one of the uniformed officers for some help or guidance - despite the fact that they hadn't even understood the question - a shrug of the shoulders and an embarrassed apology that he couldn't seem to remember. So then David explained that he had lived in Spain for many years and had been contacted by the police to ask if he would mind looking after their guest for a few days until they could find out where he came from. Was that ok?"

Pablo easily assented again with the same childlike mixture of

bewilderment and trust.

“Ok then,” David turned to Harper with a sigh. “I suppose that’s it. Nothing in his pockets I suppose by the way?”

Arnott answered by laying a clear plastic bag in the table.

“Used tissue - one,” she said. “Packet of something called Chiclets. A twenty pence piece.”

“Hmm. Well at least that strengthens the Spanish hypothesis,” David replied. “Chiclets are one of the most popular brands of chewing gum in Spain. When people mean chewing gum they just say *chicle* which comes from Chiclets. You know like Hoover or Kleenex. It’s the generic brand.”

Harper gave a nod.

“So ... if that’s it, you’re both free to go. Here’s my card. Any issues give me a ring. Of course - anything you find out would be great. DI McIntosh told me you’re a bit of the detective yourself...”

“Hardly,” David responded with an inner groan. He turned to the Spaniard to change the subject. “*Vale. Vamos Pablo,*” he said. “*Vas a alojarte conmigo unos días. Acceptable?*” Right. Let’s go. You’re going to stay with me for a few days. Ok?

“*Si Señor. Genial.*” Pablo replied with the same amiable, vacuous smile.

At least the new arrival could remember that he was hungry when they got home, so Gillian stuck a frozen pizza in the oven and about twenty minutes later they were sitting in the living room, Pablo at the table shovelling laden slices into his mouth lubricated with a bottle of San Miguel. In a whispered conversation while the Spaniard was left amiably looking round him, Gillian concurred with David’s view on the Anthony Quinn resemblance. Since it didn’t really matter what they called him she suggested they try Antonio which she thought fitted a lot

better. And with that the mystery man had the beginnings of an identity.

“So, Antonio,” David began in Spanish, after explaining the change. “I’m sure the police have asked you all this many times, but just so we understand as much as we can, do you have any idea why you’re in Edinburgh. Do you live here? Are you on holiday? Maybe here for business?”

The visitor sadly shook his head.

“It’s a mystery,” he said. “I really have no idea. The first thing I remember was walking along the street near the concert hall. I wasn’t drunk but I didn’t know where I was or what I was doing there. I spoke to a few people but what do you say? Excuse me - do you know who I am? What city is this? What day is it? Most of them just ignored me but then I spoke to a young couple from Columbia. We spoke in Spanish and they realised I was serious. So they phoned the police. I was taken to the police station. Then I met the man you spoke to.”

“Sergeant Harper,” David filled in.

“Yes. Then they got a doctor and I was taken to a hospital. They did a lot of tests but said there were nothing they could do for me. I hadn’t had a stroke or a heart attack. Vital signs were normal. Unfortunately, I didn’t have any identification on me. So that’s it. I am as you see me. And by the way, thank you for taking me in. The thought of going back out on the street again ... “ Antonio shuddered. It looked like things were finally beginning to sink in. John Donne was wrong - Antonio *was* an island. All the bridges appeared to have collapsed. It was a terrifying thought.

“You mentioned the concert hall,” Gillian remarked after a pause. “Do you know which concert hall?”

Antonio shook his head.

“Queen’s Hall,” David replied. “Clerk Street. That’s where police

picked him up. Do you think you'd been at a concert, Antonio?" he asked. The same empty shrug and shake of the head.

"I have no idea," he said sadly. "But I think I like music. Maybe..."

"And you have no idea if you come from Spain or any other Spanish speaking country?" Gillian asked but only got the same sad shake of the head.

"I'm sorry, Señora. Maybe I come from the moon..."

"Well, I doubt that," David put in dryly. "Anyway, I think I recognise your accent - let's try something." And with that he dropped into a flow of something that sounded a little *like* Spanish to Gillian but certainly wasn't the standard language. Surprisingly, Antonio responded immediately in exactly the same patois with a smile on his face for the first time.

"Well - that's progress," David remarked with satisfaction.

"Can you translate for the uninitiated?" Gillian asked. "What just happened?"

"I thought Antonio here sounded a bit Andalusian. It's quite a strong accent. Some different words for things. And non-Andalusians say they only pronounce half of every word anyway. You know I used to sell stuff throughout the south. I just thought I'd try a little bit out. With a mixture of some *gitano* terms as well. Andalusia has the strongest gypsy culture in all of Spain. So it looks like you might be Andalusian, my friend!"

"*Gracias a Dios,*" Antonio muttered. "That feels better already!"

Gillian was "working from home" the following day and Monday was usually David's day off after all the busyness of a Sunday so they took a slow start the following morning. Not as slow as Antonio though. He still hadn't surfaced by 10.30 so David made him a coffee and

knocked gently on the door. There was a groan from within that might have been “*sz*”. He went in and found their guest struggling to escape from the downie.

“Can you remember if you like coffee?” David asked.

“That I’m sure of,” Antonio replied, sleepily hauling himself into a sitting position.

“Ok. I’ll let you get ready to face the day. There are towels on the chair there and the shower is just down the hall. If you like I can give you shirts and trousers - we’re about the same size I think.”

Half an hour later, Antonio finally emerged into the living room, hair neatly combed, wearing a pair of David’s jeans and a pastel lemon shirt. He smiled and was actually looking quite relaxed. Gillian thought he looked like his doppelgänger on a day off from filming.

“*Buenos días Señor y Señora,*” he began then added in English “Thank you very much for looking after me. I am happy to speak English with you. You know, when in Edinburgh...”

Gillian went over and gave him the customary two kisses.

“We’re happy to help,” she said. “It must be incredibly disorientating. I mean not knowing anything about yourself - your history, your friends - what you like and don’t like. Even what you do for a living. Are you a doctor, maybe? A writer? A teacher?”

Antonio shrugged.

“Your guess is as good as mine,” he said. “Is that the expression?”

“Yes it is,” David confirmed. “Your English sounds not bad, actually. I think you must be an educated man. And you were well dressed last night. So we can at least say a well dressed, educated, polite, Andalusian who likes coffee. It’s a start, I suppose.”

“Something else,” Antonio began, hesitantly. “It’s a bit embarrassing, I’m afraid. Do you mind?”

And with that he began to unbutton his shirt. Gillian raised an eyebrow but said nothing. Once Antonio had undone three or four buttons it pulled it open. There, right across his chest was what looked like a two storey viaduct with two tall central arches built of huge stone blocks with smaller arches on either side. It was so realistic, David wouldn't have been surprised to see an animated stream train puffing across. Antonio simply held his shirt open with a hopeful expression as if asking what two plus two might be, a fact he seemed to have unaccountably forgotten. He was disappointed.

"It's a viaduct," Gillian stated the obvious.

"It is," David agreed.

"Any idea where?" Antonio asked.

"Well there's one a bit like that on the M80 just at Castlecary on the road to Glasgow," Gillian commented "but I doubt that's a location that holds a special meaning. You've no idea yourself?"

"None whatever. It seems a pretty weird thing to have tattooed on your chest. Maybe a road from somewhere or to somewhere that meant something. Who knows?"

David simply shrugged as Antonio buttoned up again. A bit embarrassed and none the wiser. They proceeded to gather round the table for more coffee and Antonio's breakfast. David had hunted out a large format road atlas. He started naming the major towns and cities of Andalusia: Granada, Sevilla, Jaén, Córdoba, Malaga, Almería, Huelva, Cádiz, Jerez de la Frontera - all the while hoping something might register. Nothing. Not a blink. Antonio looked interested and was genuinely trying to concentrate but there was not a flicker of recognition over any of them. Since his accent wouldn't be limited by an administrative boundary, David then tried a few more towns to the north or east. Still nothing. Antonio was beginning to look pained by this time.

He ran his hand through his hair, scratched his beard and drummed his fingers on the table until Gillian thought they'd gone far enough with that.

“What did you mother like to cook?” she asked abruptly.

“Fried fish,” Antonio replied without hesitation then stopped in surprise.

“Where did that come from?” he asked, mystified.

“I don't know where the memory came from,” David commented “but fried fish is certainly a very typical Andalusian dish - maybe that's a confirmation.”

Gillian thought she'd push her luck.

“Do you like football?” she asked, reasonably enough, since football has probably now taken over from Catholicism as the national religion of Spain. This drew a blank though.

Antonio shook his head.

“I've no idea,” he said. “I don't think I *dislike* it. I've no feeling one way or the other.”

“Basketball, handball, swimming, cycling?” David tried, to no better response.

“What about wine then?” Gillian tried, going back to the food and drink theme.

“*Jerez*,” Antonio replied giving sherry its proper Spanish name.

“Manzanilla Pasada,” he added with raised eyebrows, surprised by the words coming out of his own mouth.

David smiled.

“How interesting. That's a very local variety. Actually quite hard to get outside of Spain. And definitely Andalusian. I think we must be on the right track.”

“Great,” said Gillian. “That's maybe enough for now though. I'm

pretty up to date with what I had to do today so I was thinking we might go out and take a walk past Queen's Hall. There might be something in the vicinity that could jog your memory. Would you feel up to that?"

Antonio nodded.

"Sure - why not," he said. "But would you mind if I borrow a coat? I *do* remember I was freezing wandering around last night."

"Of course," David replied. "The coat cupboard is in the hall. Before the shower room."

Antonio disappeared.

"Well done you," David said to Gillian. "Am I allowed to refer to female intuition these days?"

"Stab in the dark," she replied. "But I don't feel we're quite as ignorant as an hour ago. Let's see what comes next."

Antonio came back in with a heavy great coat, a scarf and one of David's collection of fedoras.

"Are these ok?" he asked.

"Sure," David replied but then suddenly noticed that Antonio didn't seem to be paying attention. He was looking past David over towards the window where Gillian's music stand stood from the previous evening. Antonio wandered over as if unable to resist. David and Gillian watched with interest. He stood behind the stand and surveyed the sheet music. Then he began to hum. Softly at first. Beginning with a few bars of the orchestra introduction then he skipped on to the beginning of the flute part. He grew more confident. It was light and dancing - exactly as David had heard Gillian playing it the previous evening. And it didn't seem to be costing him any effort. On and on. Delicate and graceful with perfect timing. He hummed louder as the piece progressed, now adding conducting movements with one hand. It was a revelation. He was even adding in the string part during the rests. He came to the end of the

page and looked up, again embarrassed.

“Now we know something else about you,” David remarked.

“That was perfect,” Gillian said. “Do you know that piece?”

Antonio gave the bewildered half shrug they were growing to recognise as his response to anything involving a question mark.

“Apparently,” he said.

“Do you want to try the flute? Maybe you can play.”

She handed him the instrument but he didn't seem to know what to do with it. She had to place his fingers individually on the keys, one by one. He lifted the mouthpiece and blew but only got the sound of air over metal. He dropped it from his mouth in frustration.

“Maybe a musician but not a flute player it would seem,” he said.

Then “Wait there,” Gillian commanded and disappeared, reappearing a few seconds later with a very old, very scratched, nylon strung guitar that looked like it had done military service. She handed it to him.

“Try this then...”

Antonio took the guitar and sat down on a dining room chair. He held it delicately as if it were a priceless artefact or a living thing. Automatically he fitted the curve in the lower edge of the body not onto his right thigh like a folk singer but onto his left. Then he lifted it again. Something wasn't right. He cast around and spotted a low stool next to the bookcase.

“*Con permiso, Señora,*” he said softly, lapsing into gentle Spanish as if in a dream.

First he took his coat off then lifted the stool over and sat back down. Placing his right foot on the stool he settled the curve of the guitar back onto his now slightly raised left thigh. His left hand went to the neck and curved lovingly around the lower frets. His right arm he

placed across the upper curve of the body with his hand bent at the wrist to hang poised at right angles to the strings. No-one spoke. Antonio looked up nervously then back to the guitar. Slowly he began to pluck the strings as his left hand began to pick out the notes. Hesitantly at first then with more confidence, soon it was dancing and darted over the fretboard as his right hand plucked and stoked by turns. A delicate pavane filled the air, the melody from the upper strings with a continuous contrapuntal bass. Gillian knew about a dozen chords and could manage a passable Kumbaya on a good day if playing for tone deaf children watching tv. She watched transfixed.

Suddenly Antonio stopped and checked in mid bar. He examined the guitar fingerboard as if willing it to tell him where to put his fingers then started to pick out a low rhythmic bass pattern, repeated again and again. Then, softly at first, the melody. Then suddenly, out of nowhere, a series of electric runs flashing like fireworks. Then, suddenly, without warning, they were in the middle of a wild flamenco. Along with the insistent pulsing bass and and starbursts in the upper registers, the room was now pulsating with thunderclap chords and a repetitive beat on the fingerboard. Antonio's fingers flew, a look of utter concentration on his face, now frowning slightly towards the strings then up to the ceiling, eyes closed and smiling.

The piece lasted only two of three minutes but it felt like an hour. More notes seemed to be crammed into every second and every bar than there was space for. He finished with a final flourish and looked up with the pleasure of a toddler who has managed to successfully bridge the gap from the sofa to the chair without falling over. David and Gillian began to applaud to his further embarrassment. He smiled. Gillian reached across to take the guitar but he held onto it like a shield.

“Well - that was interesting,” David finally managed. “And it may

answer what you were doing in the vicinity of Queen's Hall."

They arrived outside the venue just as a young man with long, red hair tied back in a ponytail and a huge, ginger beard was unlocking one of the two glass fronted notice boards either side of the main door. He reached in, ripped an old poster down and rolled it up.

"Excuse me," David interrupted him. "Do you mind if I have that - just as a souvenir."

"Sure pal. No problem. Fabulous concert by the way."

Then, as he handed it over, he noticed Gillian on one side of David and another man standing next to her. He did a double take then seemed to be suddenly lost for words. He reached over the locked gate and held out a hand towards Antonio.

"An absolute privilege, sir," he said shyly. "A wonderful night. Thank you so much." Then, with much greater care he handed over the poster.

They walked 50 yards up the street, past the box-office and took a table in the Wee Boulangerie. David unrolled the poster and held it up. Antonio's own smiling face was looking back at him. The date was the previous evening. Amazingly he was indeed an Antonio. Gillian gave David a told-you-so look. But now he had something more. He was Antonio "La Paloma" - flamenco legend. Gillian tapped her phone, typed something in then held it up. There he was on stage. A drummer sat on his left and a young man doing nothing but clapping on his right. The music was fast and furious before the clip came to an end to huge cheering and stamping.

"Do you think you might be Antonio La Paloma?" Gillian asked gently.

"It seems I might be," Antonio admitted. "It sounds like there might be worse people to be."

“And I think I have an idea what that tattoo means,” David commented but would say no more.

After coffee, taken mostly in silence as they pondered the possibilities, they went back to the flat and David fished out his laptop and laid it on the dining table. First he opened a Wikipedia page and, with Antonio on one side and Gillian on the other, they scrolled down and read. There was an account of his early life in a village near Granada coming from *gitano* gypsy stock. He got his first guitar at the age of six. He showed early promise and began lessons with a local teacher. At that time flamenco was gaining a new audience, first with the emergence of the French virtuoso, Manitas de Plata - silver fingers - then Paco de Lucia, a Spanish player who reached an even wider audience. However Antonio La Paloma (real name Antonio Salazar Montoya - nicknamed Paloma, the dove, for his sensitive playing style) showed interest in classical music as well as flamenco and at age 16 made a recording of Rodriguez’ famous Concierto de Aranjuez. This brought him a commercial audience and at age 18 he travelled to England to study with John Williams. The article then proceeded to tell the story of his professional life - always apparently pulled between pure flamenco and Spanish classical traditions and sometime not fully accepted by either. It ended with details of his private life - married to Marisol and with three children, all now working in music. They had a house in Granada and another in Segovia, north of Madrid. The article finished with a discography and references.

All this time, Antonio sat with his chin in his hand resting on an elbow, eyes glued to the screen. Sometimes he would put a hand on David’s wrist to pause the flow and give him a few more seconds since he read more slowly in English. It all seemed to be entirely new information. He particularly studied the photo of himself and Marisol, a

dark haired, dark eyed, dark skinned beauty. He let out a huge sigh.

“Do you recognise her?” Gillian asked gently.

Antonio shook his head.

“Not a glimmer,” he muttered. “But I’m looking forward to getting to know her!”

“Are you ready for more?” David asked gently. “There’s a website - www.antoniopaloma.co.es? Do you want to look at it or have you seen enough for now?”

“No,” Antonio announced firmly. “I’ve got to find out who I am. Let’s go.”

David clicked the link. The page popped up. A full screen close up of Antonio caressing his guitar was added to by buttons for Biography, Discography, Tour Dates, Gallery and Contact. On a whim, David clicked Contact without consulting Antonio. There was a fill in form on the page but also a line at the bottom that said *Click here for tour bookings*. Again he clicked. Now there was a Spanish mobile phone number. He looked inquiringly at Antonio who held his gaze for a few seconds then briefly nodded. David took out his phone, tapped out the number then turned it onto speaker and laid it on the table. They could hear the familiar Spanish mobile ring tone. It rang twice, three times then a click and a voice.

“*Si - quien es? Tienes noticias?*” asked an anxious female voice with a strong American accent. Who is it? Do you have any news?

Susan Montefiori was a girl with a gripe. Not the normal kind about unsuitable boyfriends, the prohibitive cost of drugs these days or how she never got the grades she deserved. Nor even about bulges in the wrong places and not enough in the right places. It was a very unusual gripe - maybe even unique - which made it all the harder to explain or

justify and almost impossible to seek any help for. Her family, of course, thought she was just a spoiled, ungrateful brat, her teachers tended to agree and her friends just thought she was weird. But for her, at least, it was a real gripe and a very serious problem that threatened her future and indeed her present.

Susan's problem wasn't that she had no talents and couldn't find anything to be good at. Quite the opposite. She came from a highly musical family. Her grandfather had been conductor at the Met, her grandmother a famous diva and on the other side she had a violinist and a composer. Which all made it a bit predictable that her father would be a successful and much sought after bassoonist and her mother a fine concert pianist who specialised in Chopin but would sometimes lower herself to Gershwin. Her elder brother had struggled a bit to match up so, while still quite a respectable violinist, had ended up an impresario after a spell producing for Deutsche Grammophon. Her younger sister had gone into opera, had now made chorus with the Los Angeles Metropolitan and was desperately hoping to be the star of Delibes' *Lakmé* in a forthcoming production. She insisted in practising her half of the Flower Duet in the bathroom in the morning which almost drove Susan to violence.

The problem was that, through no choice of her own and with minimal effort, Susan had been gifted with perfect pitch and a facility for almost any instrument she tried out. At the age of six, the horrible screeches pushy parents steel themselves for from violin learners, lasted barely a week. After a year she was somewhat hesitantly having a go at *The Lark Ascending*. But she soon got bored and wouldn't practice so the violin went back. Piano was fun for a bit but she preferred improvising and trying out jazz chords rather than the Nocturnes she was supposed to be working on. The piano didn't go back as it was her

mother's but it might as well have. Likewise cello, oboe and flute. Her parents, Richard and Phoebe, were by this time losing patience, counting up the cost of new instruments, and running out of teachers willing to take the stropky teenager on.

Finally, Susan solved everybody's problem by getting up early one morning before anyone was around and leaving with Jason in his truck, not very originally known as the Passion Wagon. Her first move was to dump the Susan. Montefiori sounded a bit exotic and cool but Susan was just plain homely and sensible. So she became Suzanne. Work was easy to find, playing piano in bars and nightclubs. She even sang some of her own songs but patrons thought she was trying to be a new, not so good, Suzanne Vega so she gave that up. She also gave up Jason, who, like playing in the clubs and most things she'd ever done in her life was no longer a challenge. She was good and in demand but unreliable, demanding and headstrong. One night a frustrated club owner decided to give her a piece of his mind after she'd arrived late, high on something or other and refused a patron's request to play *My Way*.

"You know your problem," he shouted at her. "You've had everything far too easy. You've never had to work at it. You're an eighteen-year-old baby. Get out of here and don't come back until you've found something difficult and had to struggle, sweat and fail. Then you might have grown up a bit!"

She was shocked at the unaccustomed rejection but, when it stopped hurting, pondered his advice. Maybe he was right. So what would be the hardest thing she could do? It had to be something in music of course - she wasn't about to work in porn or train as an optician. So what was toughest? Not just the toughest instrument and music but the toughest to be accepted in. Here she was, a privileged, white kid from an affluent American background. What would take her the maximum distance from

that and provide the maximum obstacles to overcome and for that reason would never leave her bored. She thought it over then two days later emptied her Bank of America account, caught a flight to Madrid, took the AVE to Sevilla and enrolled in a flamenco guitar school.

If she'd been aiming for hard she wasn't disappointed. Not only would her fingers simply not do what she told them to but the musical style was incomprehensible. Normal time signatures went out the window. Chords that rock guitarists played were almost unknown. Instead there were forms known as *Palos*, there was microtonality where the player or singer has to move in intervals of less than a semitone, endless ornamentation making the normal Baroque seem quite staid by comparison and rhythms that seemed to deliberately clash between singer and guitarist. Then there was the playing that didn't even involve the strings at all. She had to master hand claps, rapping the table and striking the body of the guitar. She had expected that her lack of Spanish would be a problem but hadn't counted on a massive vocabulary to describe concepts and rhythms that didn't exist in any Spanish she could have learned in Berkeley. As well as trying to pick up the basic Spanish she needed to survive, she also had to try to master the local *gitano* gypsy dialect. She lived in a *piso* with girls from Japan and Australia and went every day to the only flamenco school she could find that would even teach girls. And everything was taught in the *gitano* dialect with a heavy Andalusian accent where half of even the words she did know weren't pronounced.

It was crazy, ridiculous, frustrating and impossible and she loved it. When her teacher grudgingly pronounced his first *bueno* she felt like dancing in the street. When she got a *muy bien* she thought she'd died and gone to heaven. She met then moved in with Ricardo who worked at a bar in the Triana district and even phoned and spoke to her parents

who, up to that point, didn't know if she were alive or dead. Then something happened that once again changed her life direction in a surprising way. Ricardo took her to a concert at the Teatro Maestranza de Sevilla featuring someone he said she needed to hear.

“A guitar player?” she asked.

“*The* guitar player,” he replied mysteriously but would say no more.

It was a revelation. After eight months at the school and practising every day until her fingers bled she thought she knew enough to at least begin to understand the basics, that point where you know enough to know how much you don't know. When she heard Antonio “La Paloma” play, she realised she knew nothing. Nothing at all. His fingers didn't move, they danced. The sound that filled the hall seemed to bear no relation to what his hands were doing. He had a lightness yet surety of touch that made the guitar into a living thing that sang. He played flamenco but also classical and a blend of the two. For his encore he played a joyous rendition of Duke Ellington's Caravan beginning with a haunting drum beat on the body of the guitar before moving into the main melody. It sounded as if it had been intended for guitar all along rather than the original horns and clarinet. She went home walking on air but also feeling that she should burn her guitar or throw it into the Guadalquivir without a second thought and watch it drift off downstream.

The following morning she skipped class for the first time ever and tried to find out what hotel he was in. She knocked on his door and introduced herself to the slightly bemused Señor Salazar - she felt it was a liberty to call him either Antonio or La Paloma. He graciously invited her in and since his English was better than her Spanish they talked in her native tongue for two hours. It turned out that he didn't have a full-time agent or manager. She thought as much. His presence on line and

booking arrangements seemed chaotic. Either he or his wife would get a phone call from an impresario in Paris or Tokyo or New York who would book him and arrange travel and accommodation. He would play the concert then wait for the next phone call. Suzanne knew from her parents and her brother's work that this was no way to run a musical career. She told him that henceforth she would be his agent. She would redesign his web site (which was appalling), get him a Facebook page and Twitter account and do all the posts and admin. She would start arranging tours rather than one-off concerts and she would deal with the record companies. She would even deal with his accountant, keep track of all his expenses and try to bring his tax bill down. Antonio was not sure what to make of it. This was a huge amount of work, no? He was doing well enough and comfortable but didn't make enough to pay a full time manager. How would she live?

How much do you make in an average year, she asked. Not turnover. Profit after expenses. He told her. I will live, she replied, by making you the amount of money you should be making, not this pittance. For the first year I will survive on 5% of the gross - before expenses - then if I haven't doubled your income you can fire me. If I have, I'll take 20% of the new figure which will still be at least 60% more than you earn now. If that trend continues we both make more money and you get the recognition you deserve. Antonio ran a hand through his hair and scratched his chin. He couldn't see the flaw so they shook hands in the American manner. No contract was needed. She had decided that if she couldn't be the best flamenco guitarist, she would at least devote herself to promoting the man who was the best.

Suzanne made it to Gillian's front door in less than fifteen minutes. When David answered the banging she swept past him, grabbed Antonio

and clung on as if he might turn into smoke at any second. Antonio, on the other hand, might never have clapped eyes on this woman in his life before and looked at David in bewilderment. He didn't want to peel her off but couldn't return the embrace so ended up patting her shoulders in a kindly but distracted way looking round for a clue as to what he should do now. Suzanne slowly realised something wasn't right and stood back with a confused expression.

“Antonio?” she stuttered. “Are you all right? What's going on?”

David Hidalgo gently cleared his throat.

“Suzanne?” he began. “My name is David Hidalgo. I spoke to you on the phone. I'm afraid I didn't quite manage to explain the entire situation. I'm afraid Antonio seems to entirely lost all memory of who he is and what he does. He remembers how to play and speak but not much else.”

Suzanne looked at David as if he'd lost his marbles.

“What? You're saying he doesn't know me? Antonio - tell them who I am!”

Antonio looked even more uncomfortable if that were possible. He spread his hands in a gesture of powerlessness.

“I'm very sorry,” he said. “David tells me you're my road manager and bookings agent, but I'm afraid I simply don't remember. I'm terribly sorry.”

Suzanne turned on David.

“Are you serious?” she demanded. “These things happen in the movies not real life. How about you tell me what'd really going on.”

Gillian felt David might be needing some backup.

“I'm afraid it's true,” she said. “The police picked Antonio up wandering around town without any identification and no idea who he was. They had him medically examined but there wasn't a stroke or

anything else abnormal. He'd just completely lost his memory. We've been trying to piece together what we can."

"And who exactly are you, then?" Suzanne demanded, now beginning to transition from confusion to anger. "What the hell is happening?"

"I'm Gillian Lockhart. I'm David's fiancée. The police asked if we'd be willing to look after Antonio while they made inquiries in Spain then maybe he could go home and gradually reconnect."

"But why are you involved at all? You don't know him!"

"That's true," David agreed. "We have no authority. I'm a Spanish speaker, that's all. Somebody I know in the police asked if I'd be willing to look after him just while arrangements are being made."

"What arrangements?" Suzanne insisted. "I'm his manager. I make arrangements!"

David held up his hands.

"That's absolutely fine," he conceded. "We're not trying to stop you. The police couldn't hold him and it wasn't safe to leave him on the street."

"Where did they find him?"

"Just outside Queen's Hall."

Suzanne gave a snort of disgust.

"Ha - like they couldn't just have looked at the poster if they wanted to know who he was!"

Throughout this conversation Antonio had moving from simply bewildered to actually distressed. He sat down heavily.

"This is all my fault," he moaned. "If I could just remember who I was..."

Suzanne instantly forgot to be angry, went over, knelt at his feet and took his hands between hers.

“Do you really not know who I am?” she asked softly. “I’m Suzanne. We’ve been through so much together. I help you bring your music to the world.”

Antonio shut his eyes, shook his head and said nothing. He wouldn’t even look at her.

“Look, I realise this is incredibly stressful and confusing for everyone,” Gillian said. “It’s going to take some time to sort out. How about some coffee then we can try to share what each of us does know.”

Ten minutes later, sipping coffee round the dining room table, Suzanne had calmed down and began to explain what she’d been through since the previous evening. Queen’s Hall was the first night of a short Scottish tour and had gone very well. After Antonio had finished, got his standing ovation and done his encore she had hurried backstage to get things ready for him to change into casual clothes, have a strong cup of his favourite coffee then get things packed up and back to the hotel before heading out to the railway station early the following morning. Then he hadn’t appeared. She had waited five, ten, fifteen minutes and still no Antonio. She knew he would sometimes delay a bit to sign copies of the programme or even chat with a youngster who wanted to play like him but in general he was a man of fixed habits and he liked to close the dressing room door, change his clothes, drink a coffee and unwind, then they might go out for a late night bite to eat. And still he didn’t appear. She had everything as ready as could be and had nothing else to occupy her so she fidgeted and fretted. Then finally, after more than twenty minutes she went back out into the auditorium. The crowd had cleared and the ushers were going round picking up litter. A couple of front of house staff were chatting quietly beside the stage. She went up to them and asked where Antonio was. They had no idea. A cleaner said she thought he had maybe gone to the toilet so she asked a male member of

staff to go and check. Nothing. Now she was beginning to worry. What had happened? She headed out into the street and looked right and left. The evening was cold but dry. The usual Sunday evening traffic was prowling back and forward. The expected numbers of students out for a late night drink or heading to a party were wandering about. Of Antonio there was no sign at all.

“By this time I was seriously worried,” she concluded. “I wondered if the strain had been too much. That he’d finally snapped and done something stupid.”

“You mean the pressure of playing and performing well?” Gillian asked.

Suzanne gave a bitter laugh.

“Not at all,” she said. “He loves to play. That’s when he’s most alive. The fact is that Antonio Paloma is a wanted man right now.”

“Wanted?” David asked, glancing at Antonio who was by now studying Suzanne intently.

She nodded.

“I don’t know how to explain this, Antonio,” she said, again taking his hands in hers.

“You’re accused of a serious crime. Spanish police are looking for you. You insisted you would fulfil your contract and play the tour then we’d go back and sort it out.”

“Crime? What crime?” he asked again confused.

She hesitated.

“Attempted murder,” she said softly.

“What?” Antonio said aghast. “Murder? I couldn’t murder anyone. Who am I supposed to have tried to murder?”

Suzanne looked down again then summoned the courage. She looked up into Antonio’s face.

“Your wife,” she whispered.

Suzanne had assumed that once she had found Antonio and sorted out whatever minor mishap might have overtaken him, they'd go back to their hotel and get organised to go on with their tour - two nights in Glasgow then single dates in Perth, Dundee, Inverness and Kirkwall in Orkney. Antonio had wanted to see the place shipwrecked Armada sailors had ended up. It soon became clear that this was not going to happen. She had to tell him the story in excruciating detail as he sat with his head in his hands and David and Gillian looked on helpless. It was alleged by investigators that his marriage had been in trouble for years and that now he wanted to move on. Matters had come to a head and one night after a furious row - neighbours had reported the sounds of a disturbance - things had escalated and he had attacked his wife with a poker and left her for dead. She had suffered a fractured skull and broken bones trying to defend herself. She was currently still in intensive care in a coma. It wasn't known whether she would live and even if she did if she'd suffer lasting brain damage.

“But why?” he asked, appalled. “What was so bad that I would attempt to kill my wife to be rid of her?”

“They say she wouldn't agree to the divorce.”

“But why did I want a divorce in the first place?” he insisted, unable to take it all in. “She's a beautiful woman.”

“To be with someone younger.”

“Who?” Antonio demanded again.

David thought he knew what was coming next and stole a quick glance at Gillian who looked as if she had also guessed.

“Who?” Antonio repeated even more insistently when Suzanne failed to reply. “Who?”

She was silent for a second time and but this time when she did speak she couldn't look Antonio in the face at all.

"Me," she said.

More coffee seemed wholly inadequate to the situation however it was all David could think of to help defuse things. Gillian sat next to the now not only confused and ignorant but also distraught Antonio while David went to the kitchen and put the kettle on. Suzanne was methodically ripping a paper tissue into fragments. She had always thought of herself as a strong woman but this was uncharted territory. They had already left for the tour when the warrant had been issued. He'd previously given no indication of anything out of the ordinary and as far as Suzanne had been aware he had kissed his wife at the door and taken a taxi to the airport where they'd arranged to meet as they had so many times before. Then, once they were already in the UK it hit the news. Suzanne had been living with the feeling for some time that there was something important and troubling that Antonio hadn't been telling her but she was sure that the discovery of his wife in a pool of blood by a cleaner came as a total shock. It would take some time for an international warrant to be arranged and Antonio was insistent that the tour would go on right up until the moment that men in uniform arrived at his door. That shocked her. Why weren't they heading back to Spain for him to be by his wife's side if he were innocent? That is, if he was even allowed to see her and not simply thrown in the slammer. It was weirder than weird.

Despite his determination to carry on however she could tell that he was under enormous pressure. The usual calm, gentle manner was gone. Now he was constantly agitated and couldn't settle to anything. He paced up and down in hotel rooms and fussed over details he normally had

perfect confidence in her dealing with. His only moments of peace were when he was playing. Only then did his face take on its customary look of transportation to another world as the notes cascaded from his fingers. She wondered how long this could last without something breaking. Now she knew. The shock, the anguish, the inability to do anything, the sense of accusation and some secret he wasn't sharing finally had their impact on a mind which then reacted by blocking it all out in forgetfulness. However, part of that doomsday response was also to block out almost everything else except his ability to walk and talk and play. Apparently almost everything else was gone. Whether and how they got it back might make the difference between finding out what really happened and years in prison. About the only thing Suzanne could now be sure of was that Antonio did not attempt to murder his wife and that there was something key to knowing who did that he had been keeping from her.

They drank their coffee in silence interrupted only by Antonio firing out odd questions at intervals as they occurred to him, mostly requests to Suzanne for her to repeat something she'd already told him. He seemed to need to hear it five or ten times to take it in. Naturally, he had no recollection of anything between himself and Suzanne and she assured him that there wasn't anything. She, Antonio and his wife, Marisol, had had a perfectly trusting three way relationship. Marisol told her things about her husband she would only have started with a confidante not with a rival and Suzanne shared funny details of tours and concerts that might cast Antonio in a somewhat comic light. They laughed together about his foibles and the little eccentricities that probably all went with the artistic temperament. They were friends who trusted each other as well as business associates. So Suzanne was devastated to hear of what had happened to her friend and couldn't

understand either what Antonio was accused of that he wouldn't immediately return to Spain to defend himself and be with his wife. But uncharacteristically he was insistent and wouldn't discuss it. After the tour, was all he would say.

Finally, an hour or so later, Suzanne felt they had overstayed their welcome and needed to get back to the hotel and regroup. Just what they were going to do next she hadn't decided but it was clear that Antonio was incapable of deciding anything. However, when she began gathering up their things - not that they were much - Antonio surprised her.

"I'm staying here," he announced. "I mean - if these lovely people will permit me."

"Of course," Gillian replied immediately. "You're not in the way. This is an awful situation. We'll help you in any way we can."

"I am deeply grateful, Señora," Antonio bowed his head in her direction. "And to you Señor. It feels like I've fallen into a nightmare. Nothing is clear or what it seems. The time since I arrived here has given me the only stability I seem to have. I'd like to hold onto that."

"Of course," David confirmed. "You'd be very welcome. I'm afraid we only have one guest room though, Suzanne. Though we have a fold down bed we could put together in the evening if you wanted to stay."

But Suzanne shook her head.

"I'd rather be in the hotel," she said. "I'm going to have a lot of work to do over the next few days cancelling things. I think I need a bit of space to do that. But I'll always be available if you need to call me or discuss something. Though you know about as much as I do now - which is practically nothing."

Then, just as she was getting up to go, a thought seemed to strike David.

"Antonio's mobile phone," he said. "He didn't have any personal

possessions on him when he was picked up. I take it he has a mobile? It might be handy to have in case anyone gets in touch with anything helpful.”

Suzanne shrugged.

“Sure,” she said, fishing it out. “It won’t do you any good though. I’m afraid Antonio regarded his phone as his one bit of privacy from his nosy assistant. He never told me the password and I think we can assume he doesn’t remember it now.”

Antonio’s hangdog look confirmed that.

“Well, nevertheless,” David continued. “Might be useful. We’ll see.”

Suzanne left and Antonio, who, by now, looked utterly exhausted, asked if he might be permitted to go and lie down for a bit, leaving David and Gillian alone.

“Well, if it means anything, I’d say he doesn’t look like a man who could batter his wife around the head with a poker,” Gillian commented sipping her coffee and nibbling a digestive biscuit. “Even if Suzanne might be a very nice alternative and it’s obvious she worships the ground he walks on.”

“I’m with you there,” David agreed. “Though appearances can be deceptive. Suzanne is indeed a very pleasant young woman. All that time together on the road. She’s his girl Friday who looks after all his needs and attend to his every whim. Could play to a man’s vanity, you know. Till he gets to thinking perhaps he looks distinguished rather than just old and that his extra weight isn’t as important as his wisdom and stature.”

“Hmm. Sounds like you’ve been thinking this all out, Señor Hidalgo,” Gillian commented dryly. “Who’s your girl Friday then? Not Mrs MacInnes I suppose.”

David had to laugh. Their indomitable secretary / treasurer / general factotum at Southside Fellowship had been many things to him - voice of reason, solid anchor in difficult days and even agony aunt - but he'd never thought of her as girlfriend material.

"None but you, my love," he said. "And my girl Saturday through to Thursday as well if you need any reassurance."

"I don't," she smiled. "And you're my 24/7 man. If you need any reassurance."

When Antonio reappeared an hour later, he seemed surprisingly rejuvenated. For almost the first time he was smiling and presented himself at the living room door, bare to the waistline and triumphant.

"I am Antonio Salazar Montoya," he said as if declaring himself heir to the throne. "I was born on 27th April, 1957 in Jaén in Andalusia. My father, Rodrigo was a guitar maker and my mother, Isabel, sold flowers in the market. We came from a *gitano* family but my parents decided to give us all a good education and move more into the mainstream. They stopped wearing traditional dress and tried to speak good Spanish. I got my own first guitar when I was six and gave my first concert when I was eight. See - I can remember!"

Gillian clapped her hands and David beamed.

"Well done," he said. "How did that happen? Did it come to you in a dream?"

Antonio shrugged but was still smiling.

"No idea," he replied happily. "But I don't care. It seems to be coming back. I even remember my first girlfriend - Rosa - a lovely, sweet child. We went to the cinema and sat in the back row!"

Gillian smiled.

"Very appropriate too," she said. "But can you remember anything

more recent? Like ...” she hesitated. “I mean about your wife or why you felt the need to finish the tour?”

At that, Antonio was again crestfallen.

“I’m afraid not, Señora,” he said sadly. “I wish I could. Sometimes I think I get an image in my mind then it vanishes and I have no idea if it was real or only my imagination. And I would like to know why I have a viaduct tattooed on my chest!”

“I think I can maybe help with that,” David said. “I’ve been thinking about it. I think it’s not a viaduct at all. It’s an aqueduct. The Roman aqueduct in Segovia.”

“Hmm. Sounds familiar,” said Gillian. “Have I been there?”

“No - if you had you would remember. Here. Look.” He quickly flipped his laptop open and did an image search. The screen immediately lit up with a cascade of graceful arches spanning a narrow valley in the centre of town, a row of smaller arches balanced delicately on top of the main span of solid pillars. The whole effect was one of strength but also grace and beauty. In the photo the blocks were bathed in evening sun. Diners were sitting at a cafe *terrazza* in its shadow. It was exactly the same as what now adorned Antonio’s chest.

“One of the wonders of the Roman world,” David went on. “It’s thought to be first century, built to take water from the Rio Frio into the city. And the whole thing put together without a single speck of cement.”

“All very interesting - and impressive,” Gillian interrupted, “and it certainly looks like what’s on Antonio’s chest - sorry for describing your chest like an art gallery ...” Antonio indicated he wasn’t offended. “But if it is the Roman aqueduct of Segovia, the question is why is the Roman aqueduct of Segovia worth tattooing yourself with?”

“Any ideas, Antonio?” David asked coyly.

Antonio was frowning as if doing hard sums.

“Andres Segovia?” he finally said, not quite a statement but also not quite a question.

“I think so,” David confirmed. “It’s a joke - or maybe a homage. Andres Segovia was maybe the most celebrated Spanish classical guitarists of the twentieth century. As well as a string of awards he was even made a hereditary marquis by the king. He was an absolute icon. I’m betting that Antonio here was a pupil or maybe pupil of a pupil and wanted to show his debt to Segovia in a round about way.”

“And the aqueduct brings water and life into the city,” Antonio spoke up unexpectedly. He had a far away look on his face. “Segovia brought me my life’s passion. His music was my life for about twenty years. I can remember.”

“Which is also maybe why you have a house in Segovia,” Gillian suggested.

“I suppose so. Another piece in the puzzle. It finally feels like maybe my life is beginning to make sense again.”

“Great,” David agreed. “But sorry to bring us all back to earth. Segovia is certainly helpful but we’ve also got to deal with why you’re a wanted man. We’ve only known each other less than 24 hours but even at that I find it hard to imagine you battering anyone half to death with a poker. I was wondering if we could maybe have a go at your phone. There might be something there that would help us or could maybe jog your memory.”

Antonio nodded.

“Ok,” he said. “Let’s try,” and handed it over. Unfortunately it wasn’t a very modern model and didn’t have fingerprint recognition so needed a six number password.

“Hmm. That’s a pity,” Gillian commented sadly. “And I bet you only

get three goes before it locks up for an hour or so. At least that's what mine does."

"So how about we try something obvious," David suggested. "We might hit it lucky. What about your date of birth, Antonio? You said you can remember it."

"Ok. I think it's 270459. Try that."

David did, waited a second then held up the screen. Gillian leaned forward and read.

"Oops," she said "*You have incorrectly attempted to unlock the phone 1 time. After 9 more unsuccessful attempts the phone will be reset to factory default and all user data will be lost.*"

"Oh dear," David pondered. "Like the prospect of a hanging on the morrow that tends to concentrate the mind wonderfully. How about if we write down some likely possibilities then rank the top nine. Just so we don't waste options on things that seem less likely. Bearing in mind of course that if it's a random number the odds are pretty high against us."

"I doubt I would do that," Antonio remarked in his first attempt at a joke. "Have I ever told you I have a dreadful memory?"

Gillian smiled.

"But not before food," she said. "You two get to work on that and I'll put something on. It's after two o'clock you know!"

Twenty minutes later three plates of Heinz tomato soup, a loaf of crusty bread, a pat of President butter, a block of cheese and a bowl of fruit had appeared on the table."

"Not up to my usual standards, I'm afraid," Gillian apologised. "But enough for a code breaking session. Probably what they ate in Bletchley Park. It's what we call a ploughman's lunch. Maybe good for guitarists as well."

As they started sawing slices of bread and spooning up the soup,

David explained what they'd come up with. By judicious internet searching and a couple of texts to Suzanne, they'd got Antonio's wife's birthday, their eldest son's birthday (up to that point it hadn't quite registered that Antonio had children), his father's birthday, his mother's birthday, the date she'd died, Andres Segovia's birthday, the saint's day of San Antonio (13th June) and even the date of birth of Fernando Sor, a famous guitar composer of the early 19th century. That came to eight choices. David was hesitant to use up their last one in case nothing worked and they wanted to keep one last go in reserve. It turned out they needed it. After the soup was gone, most of the bread gone and each had crunched their way through a golden delicious each they could put it off no longer and started keying in their guesses. No, no and no were the disheartening results. Eight times. Shoulders drooped, heads dropped and there were sighs of frustration.

"Well, I vote we leave the last one open," David muttered. "Chances are we'll be wrong then too, whatever we key in but at least if we leave it then we still leave ourselves a glimmer of hope."

Antonio nodded dolefully.

"Maybe the phone won't help us anyway," he suggested in a vain attempt to look on the bright side.

"I'm really surprised Segovia's birthday wasn't it," Gillian remarked. "I was sure that was going to be right. Is there anything else about Segovia that could be a possibility. I'm not saying to key it in but just to take a note of if all else fails and we decide to try the last guess."

Antonio shook his head.

"I've no idea," he remarked bleakly. "His first public concert? The date he became a marquis? His bank account number?"

Gillian gave a sigh.

"Well, none of these probably," she concurred. That brought them

to another halt. David went and made more coffee and brought a plate of biscuits back. Gillian opened up the Andres Segovia Wikipedia page again, and read it through again.

“Segovia was obviously a huge influence on you, Antonio,” she mused. “Can you remember when that started. Did you hear him play on a record for example? That might have a serial number. Or you saw him on television. Are his works numbered like Mozart’s. Maybe there was a significant piece. Maybe the first one you mastered?”

Antonio shook his head again and looked out the window for inspiration.

“No,” he said. “At least I don’t remember anything like that. We were a poor family. We didn’t have a record player or a television when I was young. I started playing a guitar my father had made that went wrong and he couldn’t sell. Then I got lessons in exchange for flowers from my mother’s stall. I think my teacher took me on in exchange for a new guitar and fresh flowers for his window sill. I do remember being laughed at by kids in the street for having to carry a guitar in one hand and a bouquet of flowers in the other every week. No, I didn’t hear Segovia till later I think.” He sat with a thoughtful expression desperately trying to bring it back. “Actually,” he continued hesitantly, “I think I maybe saw him play live the first time. Yes - I’m sure. My father had made a good sale to a local flamenco player and he bought us all tickets to see Segovia play. Yes. It’s actually coming back now. It was an open air concert in the park in Jaén. It was spring. I remember the chairs laid out in rows. We sat under a cherry tree. My mother brought a basket of bread and chorizo.”

Antonio had a far away look. He was there again. He was gazing out of the window and seeing not the tenement flats opposite but a tiny dapper figure dressed in a black jacket and trousers, a white shirt and a

white bow tie sitting on a distant stage. He was caressing a guitar and beautiful music was wafting out mingling with the scent of the cherry blossom.

“It was lovely, “ he said dreamily. “I was nine, I think. It was the most beautiful thing I had ever heard. Not harsh like some flamenco can be, but gentle. Every note clear and distinct. They were like sparks in the air wafting upwards. So beautiful ...”

Gillian left him dreaming and pulled the laptop round towards her. She clicked the trackpad then started typing and clicking as quietly as she could. The moment seemed frozen. Antonio was staring out of the window. David was watching him. Gillian was quietly clicking and tapping, a look of intense concentration on her face. After more than five minutes she finally smiled and pushed the laptop round.

“Second of April 1966,” she said. “There’s a fan site that’s trying to scan and upload every single programme from Segovia’s career. It was in the *Parque de Seminario* on *Camino Fuente de la Peña* in Jaén. A Saturday afternoon. Tickets were one hundred and fifty pesetas. What do you think? Maybe the date Antonio’s devotion to Segovia began would be important. Like another sort of saint’s day.”

David gave himself a shake.

“Seems plausible, “ he said. “I’ve got no better ideas. Antonio? What do you think? It’s your phone and your life. Do we take our last shot?”

Antonio was looking more focused now.

“I’m sure that was a special day,” he said. “Do you say *go for it* in English?”

“We do indeed,” Gillian confirmed. “So 020466. Try that.”

David noticed his palms were sweating as he tapped in the number. Then he held it up to make sure everyone agreed. Then he tapped Enter. Perhaps his finger was too damp as nothing changed and he had to tap

again. Then something magical happened. So easy and so normal but in this case so special. The screen cleared and filled with a neat grid of icons for apps. They were in.

Suzanne had been going through her to-do list with all the enthusiasm of a bad-tempered robot with advanced corrosion on a go slow. But she had at least been going through it. Phone call by phone call. Conversations followed a predictable format. She explained that La Paloma had been taken unexpectedly ill. No, it was a personal matter and she couldn't be more specific however suffice it to say that he had had a full medical check and they at least knew it wasn't a heart attack, stroke, mental breakdown or a brain tumour. The mention of these four horrors of the emergency room at least got the message over that we're not talking about a bad head cold here without revealing exactly what had happened. Then she had to repeat several times that there was simply no possibility that he might recover in time to play the concert and that they were in fact returning to Spain as soon as practically possible. Luckily events like this were covered by La Paloma's health insurance (which she had earlier checked) and any losses would be covered. In the meantime all ticket holders should be emailed and referred to La Paloma's website which would contain such information as they were able to share along with an undertaking to fulfil the remaining dates of the tour at a later stage as soon as he was well enough to return. In general, promoters were understanding once they grasped the severity of the matter and wished the Paloma a speedy recovery along with enthusiasm for a subsequent return. In most cases it was a sell out and they didn't expect to lose money in the long run.

She had just ordered coffee and a sandwich from room service and sat back to stretch when David's call came through. She dropped

everything, grabbed a coat, ran downstairs and hailed a taxi.

“We wanted you to see everything at the same time as we do,” David explained showing her into the living room once again. “That would save having to go through things a second time and whatever we do find is going to make a lot more sense to you than us - probably Antonio included - although he has been getting more and more recall during the day.”

“Great,” Suzanne nodded. “Any progress is good. I’ve been dreading a knock on the door from police all afternoon. The more we can find out the more we can put the case that this is not the result of a tiff with a jealous wife.”

Antonio was by now feeling a bit more like himself - or at least as much of himself as he’d managed to get back - and gave Suzanne *dos besos*. They sat on a long sofa together. David pulled a coffee table in front of them, placed the mobile on it and an A4 pad and pen next to that.

“Ok - here we go,” he muttered. “Let’s see what we find...”

They started first with email. Mainly routine rubbish. One or two best wishes for the tour. Lots of ads, a couple of scams and plenty marketing. Would he endorse a new range of plastic guitars for beginners? How about an expenses paid holiday in Ireland tutoring at a guitar camp? Would he be interested in promoting a new flamenco festival in San Francisco? Antonio smiled but shook his head at each of these tempting possibilities. Next it was Facebook Messenger. This was a little more personal but still shed no more light. There was a family chat group with pictures of birthday parties and forwarded jokes and nonsense. They scanned through the last two weeks quickly enough. David then turned to a news feed and looked for stories mentioning La Paloma either in English or in Spanish. That was depressing. It detailed

the assault and the fact that Antonio Salazar Montoya (62) was being sought by police to “help them with their inquiries”. However there was nothing that shed any more light beyond what Suzanne had already explained. Instagram and Twitter were both blanks - apparently La Paloma had not yet engaged with these modern means of letting the entire world know what you had for breakfast. Finally David found the icon for WhatsApp and thought they might as well give that a try too at least for the sake of completeness though by now he was on the verge of apologising to Suzanne for taking her away from a more important task.

He tapped and they were presented with a list of conversations. Suzanne herself came top then Marisol then his son, Fernando, then someone called Miguel. Suzanne frowned and shook her head.

“No idea who that is,” she said.

Antonio was similarly blank.

David tapped and the screen cleared to a long and recent conversation. David immediately saw it was in very colloquial Spanish peppered with *Caló*, the language of the gypsy people. He knew enough to recognise what he was seeing but couldn't translate. He looked at Antonio.

“Ideas?” he asked simply.

Antonio again shook his head but began to read, translating as he went.

“So, cousin. Here we are again. You know very well the customs of our people. You have had good fortune. Many of your relatives have not. Are you now so Spanish that you despise us? You have your houses, your cars, your fame and your income. You know the rules of our people. One who prospers shares his good fortune. Then, when he is down on his luck, the one who is now lucky will also share and help him. This has

enabled us to survive for thousands of years and will do so for thousands more. I hear you are doing very well again, cousin. You have your music sales and your tours. You don't play in the *barrios* any more - just in the big halls where the people pay big money. Well, the time has come to remember your people once again. The crisis has hit us hard. Many are poor and some are sick. We need your help. The music you sell all over the world is our music. The music of our people. You are making money from your people. So it is only right you pay something back."

Antonio looked at David.

"I don't understand," he said. "I don't know who Miguel is."

"Well, it appears that Miguel knows who you are. What did you say back to him?"

Antonio turned back to the tiny screen and read.

"*How much is it this time?* That's all I said."

"Go on," Gillian encouraged him. "What did he say to that?"

Antonio cleared his throat and began again.

"Not as much as you owe us," he read. "How much is your life and your livelihood worth. How much is the life of our people worth? Let's say fifty thousand euros could be an expression of good faith. It will do much good for many people. Who knows - maybe God will bless you even more and give you the grace to be of more help. Send it in the normal way. Or maybe God might withdraw his favour and something bad might happen. None of us want that!"

Gillian let out a long breath.

"So that's it," she said. "Blackmail. Is that the end? Did you reply?"

"Apparently I did," Antonio said. "I told him to go to hell."

That felt like a moment for something stronger than coffee and

David produced a bottle of Spanish Lepanto brandy. Antonio had a double.

“I still don’t understand it,” he said, “but maybe I don’t understand a little less than an hour ago.”

Gillian looked on, as sympathetically as she could, and put a hand on his arm.

“I think it’s like this, “ she said softly. “Whoever Miguel is, he thinks you are a cash cow he can keep on milking. I may be wrong but somehow I doubt this was going to end up with the poor and the sick he talks about. This is a criminal enterprise. You are seen as a successful man who came from gypsy roots. But instead of celebrating your success somebody just decided to milk it for what they could get. With the threat of violence if you didn’t agree. We should look at your bank accounts - if that would be ok - and see what you’ve paid in the past. And I bet it wasn’t just a couple of euros either.”

“And maybe that explains why you had to finish the tour even once you heard what happened,” Suzanne put in. “They demanded money and threatened you. You called their bluff and refused. Your wife was attacked and somehow they got the police to believe you had done it yourself. And the only way to prevent something worse would be to pay up. And for that you had to finish the tour. What a choice. No wonder you were under pressure and no wonder something had to give. I am so sorry, Antonio. I wish you’d told me. I’m sure there would have been something we could have done. Something the police could have done...”

The knock on the door from police that they had feared so much, when it came, turned out not to be an intimidating knock at all but quite a friendly phone call from DI Stuart McIntosh. His first move was to

apologise for suggesting David look after the man who became Antonio.

“Not a problem,” David replied. “Though it’s turned out to be a whole lot more interesting than just bed and breakfast.”

“Well, I’m glad of that. I don’t know if you’ve made any progress but I think we now know pretty well who your mystery visitor is.”

“Yes - we do too as a matter of fact,” David confirmed. “And I think that might hold a clue as to why you’re phoning if it’s more than just a social call.”

“Yes. I’m afraid it’s not good news for your visitor,” McIntosh agreed. “We think he’s Antonio Salazar Montoya, a musician known as La Paloma, wanted in Spain for attempted murder of his wife, Marisol Gonfer. We have an international arrest warrant. The routine is we need to pick him up and hold him until Spanish officers come over to escort him back for trial.”

“Yes,” David replied. “We were expecting something like this sooner or later. As a matter of fact though we’ve been able to turn up a few things that put a slightly different light on supposed events. I imagine you’re going to send uniformed officers round - which you’re entirely entitled to do - but I wonder if you’d indulge me a bit by popping round yourself first. A couple of things we’d like to explain. Then you might be able to explain them in turn to Spanish police. Then there might be an alternative to just locking him up and throwing away the key.”

David could almost hear McIntosh’s groan at the other end of the line.

“Would you mind if I say I’m not surprised,” was his caustic reply. “Ok. If you can convince me that there’s more to it then I can speak to my opposite number then we’ll see how the croqueta crumbles.”

He turned up an hour later by which time David, Suzanne and Antonio had gone through his bank records looking for transfers of

more than €1,000. They found six payments of €10,000 each, all to the same account of a small regional *caja* bank in Andalusia. They had occurred at roughly six monthly intervals and the last had been five months before. McIntosh was quickly brought up to speed. Antonio was by now beginning to feel more in charge of his own destiny and contributed what he could, which turned out to be more and more as the conversation progressed. Miguel, it turned out, was indeed a distant cousin and at one time an aspiring flamenco guitarist himself. So professional envy might be added to the motive of simple greed. David was quite sure that Antonio was a man utterly ill-equipped to deal with criminal threats and menaces.

“Ok then. So what are you actually proposing?” McIntosh asked at length with an air of resignation and a strong sense of here we go again...

Bar Linares was no seedier than a dozen other bars in Triana, the historically Jewish but now largely *gitano* barrio of Seville. That's to say it was pretty seedy but that was just the norm. A long counter ran along one side with a selection of more or less greasy tapas in plastic dishes. The floor at the foot of the bar was littered with till receipts but in the local culture that was a good thing. The deeper the layer the more customers and the better the bar. Half a dozen old men sat on bar stools reading any of the half dozen football dailies or arguing about the hopeless local *junta*. A large screen tv mounted behind the bar was showing another replay of the *campeones* encounter between Real and Juventus in which Ronaldo had yet again whacked three past the Italians. The result was well known however and no-one was interested. Another couple of old men were playing dominos on one table in one corner while younger men who should have been working were dotted around

other corners.

Miguel and a few well built buddies had arrived a half hour before and were in a back room shovelling in olives and tiny fried fish lubricated with bottles of San Miguel. He was well known and by Triana standards a good customer. That's to say he favoured Linares to do his deals which usually consisted of something white and powdery in specified gram packets being exchanged for packets of cash. What he did in the back room was his own business as far as management was concerned and it brought in plenty custom as buyers had a *caña* or two as they waited their turn. Sometimes a big deal would be celebrated with a bottle or two of Ramón Bilbao Crianza. Last year they had had many bottles and a massive cake to celebrate Miguel's fortieth birthday. The decoration on top was a huge snowman which everyone thought was pretty funny.

David had been in a hundred bars like this one in his sales days working the south of Spain buying jamon and olives and selling whiskey and salmon. Antonio had sat on a tiny stage in the corner of a hundred more in his early days trying to make a name for himself as something different bringing flamenco and classical together. Sometimes it was well received - sometimes less so. But it wasn't a foreign world to either of them. However what they were about to attempt was very foreign and they hoped their nerves weren't showing.

At a council of war a week before in Gillian's flat seven of them had sat round a table and planned their strategy. Antonio remained a bit vague and still didn't have total recall but knew enough to know that this was important and his big chance to get free. Suzanne had never had anything to do with police or crime and was trying to either ask intelligent questions or keep quiet. McIntosh was representing Police Scotland as well as having worked with David in the past so brought both a sense of procedures and the confidence that this wasn't a nutcase

living in a fantasy land and proposing a hare-brained idea doomed to fail. Two detectives from the drug team of the Spanish *Policía Nacional* made up the numbers. They were serious but enthusiastic. This was a chance they'd been waiting for for years. Miguel "*la mano*" - Miguel the hand (originally so called for his guitar style) - was a big fish but well protected by swimming in a shoal in very friendly waters. Lots of little fish swore they knew nothing at all about what was going on and that drugs were truly a scourge on modern society. For *gitano* society in Triana, Miguel, as well as being a kingpin and *cacaque*, was something of a benefactor. He brought in lots of money which, due to the wonders of the multiplier effect also meant more money for bars, restaurants, corner shops, market traders, second-hand car salesmen and other dodgy dealers. Of course many others were horrified both at what he was doing and the harm this did to the reputation of decent law-abiding *gitano* people. But they were powerless to do anything about it.

Anyway, none of that impressed the drug squad who had been gradually moving Miguel up the list of most wanted for over ten years now. He was no longer a small operator dealing drugs for the neighbourhood. He was getting involved internationally and had connections in Colombia, South East Asia and Afghanistan. Like Al Capone finally going to jail for tax offences, there was now a chance that Miguel might go to jail for extorting a classical guitarist - not his normal modus operandi at all but still fair game. To help further, Marisol had woken up and confirmed that a masked gang of three men had attacked her and not her husband.

So, under direction from the council of war, Antonio had sent an encrypted WhatsApp message to Miguel, first of all accusing him of attacking Marisol who had nothing to do with his business finances and then informing him that as a direct result of the intimidation his health

had suffered and the tour had had to be cancelled. That meant a financial loss to Antonio of course but also to Miguel since there was now no money to pay the demand. So Miguel's greed had had the opposite effect he had intended. Nevertheless, to show his commitment to his own people and as a gesture of thanks for the career he had managed to have he was prepared to make one final payment of €10,000 - the same amount paid before then never again. And this time he would not be transferring it into an anonymous bank account but would only pay Miguel in person when he could tell him to his face what he thought of him and his cronies. He would also require a statement of how exactly the cash would be used to help the poor and the sick and he would require a report at three months and six months of the good that had been done. A friend would accompany him to the meeting to verify all that was said. Finally, he would play a free concert to demonstrate his continued deep commitment to his roots.

David had dictated most of the message and deliberately had tried to make it as unreasonable and ridiculous as possible - from Miguel's point of view. His first reaction would probably be to laugh out loud at the insolence then he might get angry. Who did this guitar player think he was? He should be taught a lesson. And his friend, whoever that might be. The plan was also that David would accompany Antonio. He explained that he had also suffered a great loss from a drug baron attacking his wife and felt Antonio's case very keenly. As a pastor it was also his duty to do good and disrupt the forces of exploitation and greed when he could. Gillian was naturally nervous but acceded mainly because she knew who and what David was - which is why she had been attracted to him in the first place. Saying no would have been like falling in love with a Formula One driver on account of his skill and courage on the track then immediately insisting that he swap his race car for a family

SUV. The man you were left with might live longer but would no longer be the man you loved at the start. So she gave him her reluctant blessing. For a totally secular person Suzanne did wonder whether a spot of prayer might be worth trying after all. The Spanish police and McIntosh for Police Scotland knew their jobs and undertook to reduce the risks to the lowest level they could while accepting that it was an inherently a very dangerous undertaking. Antonio was shaking as he hit the send button but could think of no other way. This was it. One chance in a lifetime to get free. One chance to put a criminal where he belonged. One chance to do something good for his own people by taking drugs off the street - an act of humanity much more effective than simply handing out cash.

“I need to take my mind off things,” he announced when the message had gone. “I’m going to change my guitar strings.”

“Let me help you,” offered one of the Spanish detectives with a knowing look at David.

Both men were frisked as they passed from the main bar to the back room. Both phones were impounded and Antonio’s guitar case was thoroughly searched.

“Clean,” someone said. “No weapons or wires.”

“Welcome cousin,” Miguel beamed. “I am glad we have seen sense. And for a free concert I forgive the hasty words of your message. Let me dispel your doubts - no report will be necessary. You can rest assured that your fame and success will bring great happiness in the *barrio*. Now, let’s be friends. Have a drink.”

Cañas were forthcoming and little as either of them felt like relaxing they tried to sip and look at ease.

“Is this normal practice?” David asked at length after Antonio had

introduced him as a friend.

“Is what normal practice?” Miguel replied, still sounding friendly, but on his guard.

“To take advantage of anyone who achieves success and cream off as much as you can for yourself with the threat of violence for anyone who resists.”

Now Miguel looked less happy.

“You are not *gitano*, my friend,” he said “So I can also forgive your misunderstanding. We survive by sticking together. Our fortunes and our misfortunes are shared. La Paloma has done well. It is only fair that we ask him to contribute to the welfare of the community.”

“Or his wife is beaten up so badly she was close to death?” David continued trying to keep the waver out of his voice.

Miguel shook his head.

“You know about the carrot and the stick,” he said. “I cannot understand it but sometimes those who have succeeded do not understand their obligations. A reminder is required. It is unfortunate but sometimes necessary. I suppose La Paloma will not forget again.”

“So dealing drugs and ruining the lives of the young throughout the country isn’t enough without attempted murder?” David pressed on with a sense of trying to get to the other side of the room before the floor caved in beneath him.”

Now Miguel looked genuinely angry. He was clearly not used to being questioned by an outsider.

“You have a big mouth, *amigo*,” he replied. “I have one or two enterprises but you must realise that demand must be supplied. I supply the demand of rich kids from wealthy families who consider the *gitano* people dirt under their feet. They want to buy something that will help them party all night long so they don’t need to think about the crisis that

affects the rest of us. They will never be poor. They will never be hungry. They will never struggle to survive. They have *enchufe* - connections - Mamá or Papá will help them out. So they are *fiesteros* - they party on and don't think about anyone else. It is only fair that we should profit from their arrogance. And we do. So what? Anyway, enough of this. Paloma. Where is my money?"

"In my guitar," Antonio answered. When Miguel's henchmen had searched the guitar case they had left the lid open and Antonio now leaned over and picked up the guitar. He slipped his fingers past the bass strings and inside the sound hole. He pulled out a slim envelope, put the guitar back and handed over the envelope.

Miguel felt it.

"Now, Antonio," he said in a scolding voice. "You know I prefer cash. There can only be fifty euros in here by the feel of it."

"It's a money order," Antonio replied. "It's totally anonymous. You can hand it over at any branch of any bank and get cash. You don't even need to show ID. I made sure."

Miguel raised an eyebrow.

"Well, for your sake, let's hope you're right. Enrique..." he turned to one of his accomplices. "Take this. You know where. Come back with the cash. And while we are waiting," he turned back to Antonio, "I believe you promised us some music!"

Miguel was surprised to see the bar filling up as they went through.

"It seems you are very popular, cousin," he sounded impressed. "The word must have got out. So I get my money, you get a round of applause and everybody is happy."

What Miguel did not notice was that the bar was indeed filling up but not with well known local faces.

Tables were moved and a tiny stage was cobbled together in one corner. Antonio was given a chair and a low stool for his left foot. There was no need for amplification. As Antonio checked his tuning and ran through some warm ups, it got to the point of standing room only. Drinks were served and the audience grew quiet waiting for the warm up to end and the flamenco to start.

Antonio finished and looked around. He gave David a grim smile and began with a thunderclap chord, followed by a rhythmic beat on the body of the guitar then instantly into a wild flamenco *palo*. His left hand flew up and down the fingerboard while his right assaulted the strings as if in a test to destruction. Clapping to accompany the wild rhythm had started almost immediately and soon everyone was on their feet. Two of Miguel's men were clapping and dancing in a corner striking the floor with their heels to match the rhythm of their hands, swirling and wailing. The intensity built and built. Tonight Antonio was not the dove but the demon. Faster and faster, more and more intricate, louder and louder, building to a crescendo. Finally with one last dramatic flourish it was over. The crowd were on their feet, yelling, cheering and clapping and calling for the next one.

Then something happened that wasn't expected. A series of gunshots exploded into the ceiling.

"Everybody down!" Someone yelled.

Another series of shots.

"Everybody down!"

The last thing David saw before he hit the deck was the look of astonishment on Miguel's face and his hand clutching an envelope containing €10,000.

Antonio "La Paloma" returned to Edinburgh three months later to

play a return concert then continue with the aborted tour. After a very successful and much appreciated performance they gathered at Café Cordoba for a celebratory meal - David and Gillian, Suzanne, McIntosh, Antonio and Marisol who was accompanying her husband this time - just in case. After small talk over the mixture of starters “*para picar*” David had given in to his carnivorous instincts and was having the chuletón, Gillian meluza, Suzanne rabo de toro and the others were sharing a huge seafood platter.

“I’ve never heard what gave you the idea,” Marisol asked David. They had only met earlier that evening before the concert and hadn’t had a proper chance to go over the events which had led to Miguel and half a dozen others now being on trial for a string of drugs offences, racketeering, extortion and blackmail, money laundering, attempted murder and pages of other offences.

David finished his current mouthful of the kilo of meat in front of him and wiped his mouth.

“Inspired by your husband,” he replied modestly. “He mentioned that Miguel had been an aspiring flamenco player in his younger days before turning full-time to crime and I wondered if he would still be a sucker for La Paloma’s playing as much as I was. So I figured that while we would obviously be searched for any listening or recording devices, they wouldn’t actually search inside the guitar. That would have entailed taking all the strings off and would mean losing the concert. So we put a listening device in the guitar when your husband changed his strings before we flew back. That recorded everything that was said in the back room. My job was simply to challenge Miguel and get him to acknowledge the blackmail and the drugs operation. We had arranged that the bar would be full of plain clothes police, apparently there for the free concert. Then we had the element of surprise and were able to

outgun Miguel and his men. It wasn't as dangerous as it sounds. Honestly."

Marisol gave an involuntary shiver. She was a stunning latin beauty even despite the scars still healing on her forehead and chin.

"Well, it sounds dangerous to me," she said. "I can only thank you *"de todo corazón"* - from the bottom of my heart. Antonio never told me anything about the extortion. I think he was trying to protect me." She reached out a hand and squeezed Antonio's arm. "He never guessed that would put me in greater danger. But now we're free and he knows that anything like this he has to tell me right away. That's how it's got to be. Partners, right?" She looked at Antonio who covered his embarrassment by forking in another mouthful of paella. Gillian thought that look of slightly bewildered confusion would be her lasting image of Antonio "La Paloma".

"Sometimes I think you're like a cat with nine lives," McIntosh remarked in David's direction. "Even though you seem to be using them up with alarming speed. I hope we can get to the end of your career in crime with a few left, not like the password attempts on Antonio's phone!"

That brought a laugh round the table.

"And what about you, Suzanne?" Gillian asked. "I gather you're off to pastures new."

Suzanne smiled.

"I am," she said. "Even despite the whole thing being a total lie made up by someone with corrupt connections to the police, I've decided maybe Antonio and I have been too close for what was healthy for either of us. I'm opening a flamenco school in the San Fernando valley in California. La Paloma will be our patron which I think guarantees success and some of his many students will be instructors. So

future flamenco addicts can study while not having to flee to Spain like I did. I've got premises ready and I'm beginning the marketing campaign. We're going to kick off with a gala concert in a few months time featuring guess who!"

The rest of the evening passed in a sort of happy daze, no-one quite able to believe their luck till they finally broke up at chucking out time. After many kisses all round, Suzanne, Antonio and Marisol headed back to their hotel, McIntosh back home and David and Gillian back to Marchmont. They sat in the living room of Gillian's flat and had a final decaf coffee before David went back to the church flat in Bruntsfield. He put Chet Baker on CD player rather than flamenco.

"You are incorrigible, you know," Gillian said cuddling up on the sofa as sweet melodic trumpet sounds floated through the air.

"Guilty as charged, m'lady," David agreed without a protest. "My only redeeming feature is preferring you to hunting down criminals."

"Hmm," Gillian mused. "So, given the choice, it would be me instead of life threatening confrontations?"

He leaned round and kissed her.

"You'd better believe it," he said.

"You know, I always thought you were a bit of an exception," she continued, "but I've recently found out you're simply one of a type."

"Oh dear," he said, sounding disappointed. "What kind of type is that then?"

"Hidalgos," she replied, reaching round and picking up a book. "My cousin Ron sent me this last Christmas. It's Hugh Thomas' history of the Spanish empire - Rivers of Gold. I found this on page 47. You should know better than anyone that Hidalgo isn't just a name, it's a class of Spanish chivalry."

"Alas, the lowest class, I'm afraid," he admitted.

“Indeed. But not without merit. Thomas says that Hidalgos were able warriors, loyal to the king, good administrators, brave and creative and given to ‘impertinent acts of courage’. To be honest, I can’t think of anything more impertinent than wandering into the hornet’s nest and recording his confessions on a device hidden in a guitar then detaining the lot as they listen to a flamenco concert. That does strike me as fairly courageous and of course totally impertinent.”

David let out a long sigh.

“Yet again,” he said. “Banged to rights, your honour. I’m not sure about courageous but I’m certainly impertinent. In fact, if I hadn’t already asked you to marry me I’d do it now. How’s that for impertinent?”

“Pathetic,” Gillian answered. “After all, you know the answer, don’t you?”

“I do. And I love you,” David said. “You’re the girl who said ‘yes’ - even to an impertinent Hidalgo.”

“Is there any other kind?” she asked innocently and turned to give him her proper attention.