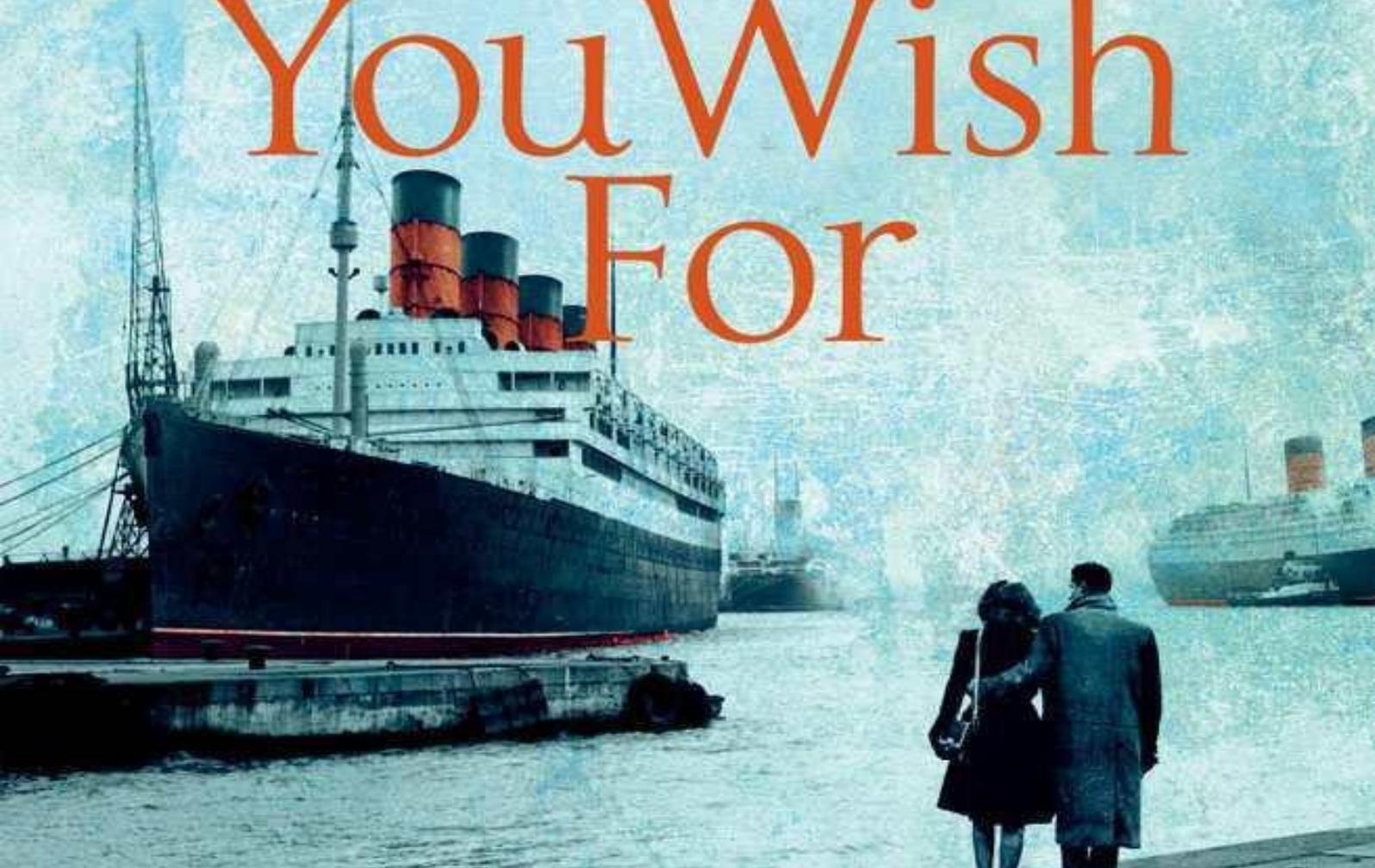


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Be Careful  
What  
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# JEFFREY ARCHER

THE CLIFTON CHRONICLES

VOLUME FOUR

BE CAREFUL WHAT  
YOU WISH FOR

MACMILLAN

TO  
GWYNETH

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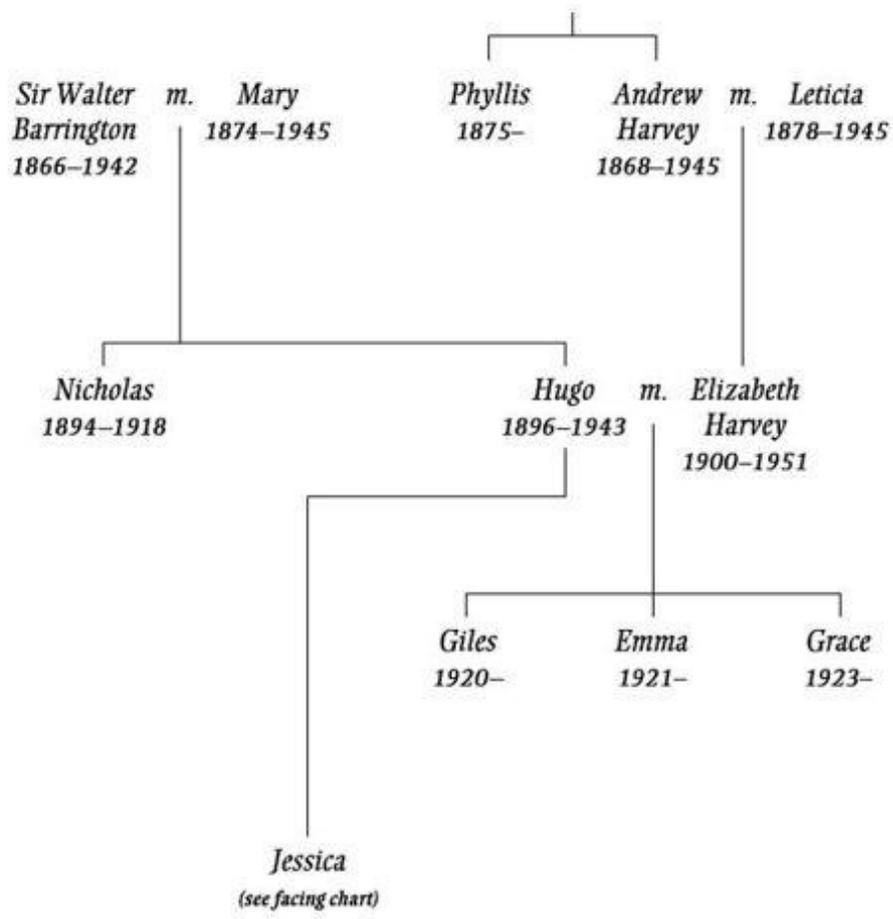
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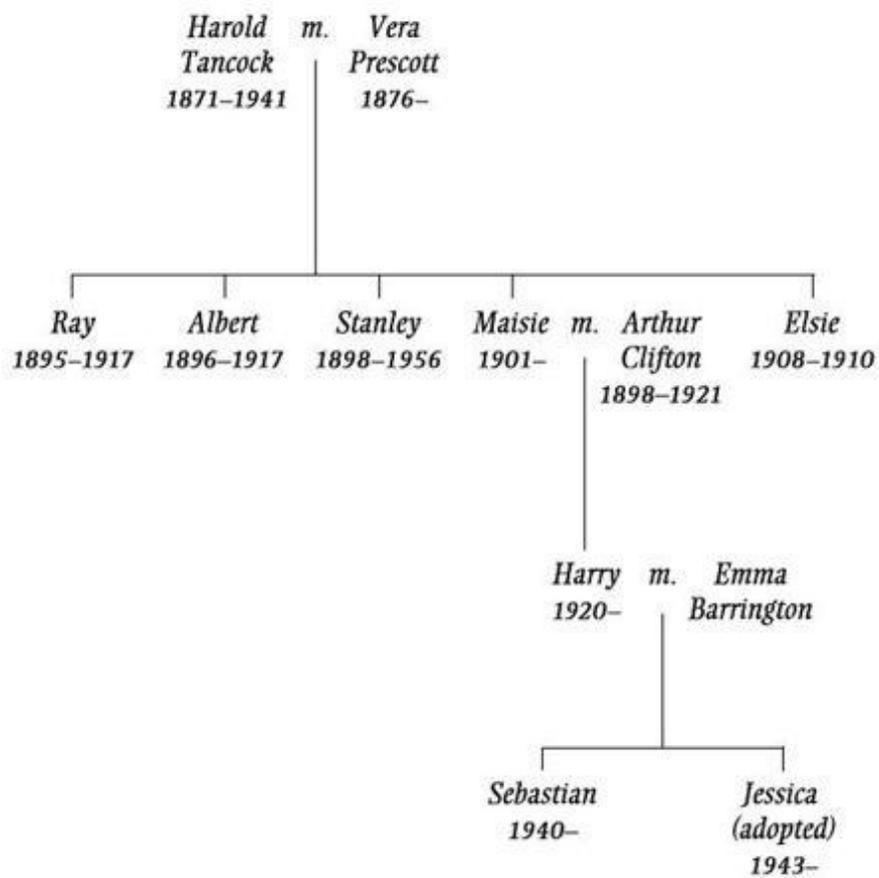
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**VOLUME FIVE OF THE CLIFTON CHRONICLES**

## THE BARRINGTONS



## THE CLIFTONS



## PROLOGUE

SEBASTIAN tightened his grip on the steering wheel of the little MG. The lorry behind him touched his rear bumper and jolted the car forward, sending its number plate flying high into the air. Sebastian tried to advance a couple more feet, but he couldn't go any faster without running into the lorry in front of him and being squeezed between the two of them like a concertina.

A few seconds later they were nudged forward a second time as the lorry behind them drove into the back of the MG with considerably more force, pushing it to within a foot of the lorry in front. It was only when the rear lorry hit them a third time that Bruno's words *Are you certain you're making the right decision?* flashed into Sebastian's mind. He glanced across at his friend Bruno who was white with fear, clinging on to the dashboard with both hands.

'They're trying to kill us,' he screamed. 'For God's sake, Seb, do something!'

Sebastian looked helplessly across at the southbound traffic to see a steady stream of vehicles heading in the opposite direction.

When the lorry in front began to slow down, he knew that if they were to have any hope of surviving, he had to make a decision, and make it quickly. He glanced across to the other side of the road, desperately searching for a gap in the traffic. When the lorry behind hit him for a fourth time, he knew he'd been left with no choice.

He yanked the steering wheel firmly to the right, careered across the grass verge and straight into the face of the oncoming vehicles. Sebastian pressed his foot hard down on the accelerator and prayed they would reach the safety of the wide open fields that stretched in front of him before a car could hit them.

A van and a car threw on their brakes and swerved to avoid the little MG as it shot across the road in front of them. Just for a moment, Sebastian thought he might make it, until he saw the tree looming up in front of him. He took his foot off the accelerator and swung the steering wheel to the left, but it was too late. The last thing Sebastian heard was Bruno screaming.

# **HARRY AND EMMA**

**1957–1958**

# 1

HARRY CLIFTON was woken by the sound of a phone ringing.

He was in the middle of a dream, but couldn't remember what it was about. Perhaps the insistent metallic sound was just part of his dream. He reluctantly turned over and blinked at the little phosphorescent green hands on the bedside clock: 6.43 a.m. He smiled. Only one person would consider calling him at that time in the morning. He picked up the phone and murmured in an exaggeratedly sleepy voice, 'Good morning, my darling.' There was no immediate response, and for a moment Harry wondered if the hotel operator had put the call through to the wrong room. He was about to replace the receiver when he heard sobbing. 'Is that you, Emma?'

'Yes,' came the reply.

'What's the matter?' he asked soothingly.

'Sebastian is dead.'

Harry didn't reply immediately, because he now wanted to believe he was still dreaming. 'How can that be possible?' he eventually said. 'I spoke to him only yesterday.'

'He was killed this morning,' said Emma, clearly only able to manage a few words at a time.

Harry sat bolt upright, suddenly wide awake.

'In a car accident,' continued Emma between sobs.

Harry tried to remain calm as he waited for her to tell him exactly what had happened.

'They were travelling up to Cambridge together.'

'They?' repeated Harry.

'Sebastian and Bruno.'

'Is Bruno still alive?'

'Yes. But he's in a hospital in Harlow, and they're not sure if he'll make it through the night.'

Harry threw back the blanket and placed his feet on the carpet. He was freezing, and felt sick. 'I'll take a taxi to the airport immediately and catch the first flight back to London.'

'I'm going straight to the hospital,' said Emma. She didn't add anything else, and Harry wondered for a moment if the line had gone dead. Then he heard her whisper, 'They need someone to identify his body.'



Emma replaced the receiver, but it was some time before she could gather enough strength to stand up. She eventually made her way unsteadily across the room,

clinging on to several pieces of furniture, like a sailor in a storm. She opened the drawing room door to find Marsden standing in the hall, his head bowed. She had never known their old retainer to show the slightest emotion in front of a member of the family, and hardly recognized the shrunken figure now clutching on to the mantelpiece for support; the usual mask of self-composure had been replaced with the cruel reality of death.

‘Mabel has packed an overnight case for you, madam,’ he stammered, ‘and if you’ll allow me, I’ll drive you to the hospital.’

‘Thank you, Marsden, that’s most considerate of you,’ Emma said as he opened the front door for her.

Marsden took her arm as they made their way down the steps towards the car; the first time he’d ever touched the mistress. He opened the door, and she climbed in and sank into the leather upholstery, as if she was an old lady. Marsden switched on the ignition, shifted the gear lever into first and set out on the long journey from the Manor House to the Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow.

Emma suddenly realized she hadn’t rung her brother or sister to let them know what had happened. She would call Grace and Giles this evening, when they were more likely to be alone. This was not something she wanted to share when strangers might be present. And then she felt a piercing pain in her stomach, as if she’d been stabbed. Who was going to tell Jessica that she would never see her brother again? Would she ever be the same cheerful little girl who ran around Seb like an obedient puppy, tail wagging with unbridled adoration? Jessica must not hear the news from someone else’s lips, which meant that Emma would have to return to the Manor House as quickly as possible.

Marsden pulled into the forecourt of the local garage, where he usually filled up on a Friday afternoon. When the petrol pump attendant spotted Mrs Clifton sitting in the back seat of the green Austin A30, he touched the rim of his cap. She didn’t acknowledge him, and the young man wondered if he’d done something wrong. He filled the tank and then lifted the bonnet to check the oil. Once he’d slammed the bonnet back down he touched the rim of his hat again, but Marsden drove off without a word, not parting with the usual sixpence.

‘What’s got into them?’ murmured the young man as the car disappeared.

Once they were back on the road, Emma tried to recall the exact words the Peterhouse college admissions tutor had used when he haltingly told her the news. *I’m sorry to have to tell you, Mrs Clifton, that your son has been killed in a motor car accident.* Beyond the stark statement, Mr Padgett seemed to know very little – but then, as he explained, he was no more than the messenger.

Questions kept colliding in Emma’s mind. Why had her son been travelling to Cambridge by car, when she’d bought him a train ticket only a couple of days before? Who had been driving, Sebastian or Bruno? Were they going too fast? Had a tyre burst? Had another car been involved? So many questions, but she doubted if anyone knew all the answers.

A few minutes after the tutor had called, the police had rung to ask if Mr Clifton would be able to visit the hospital to identify the body. Emma explained that her husband was in New York on a book tour. She might not have agreed to take his place if she’d realized that he would be back in England the following day. Thank God he

was coming by plane and wouldn't have to spend five days crossing the Atlantic, mourning alone.

As Marsden drove through unfamiliar towns, Chippenham, Newbury, Slough, Don Pedro Martinez interrupted Emma's thoughts more than once. Was it possible that he could have been seeking revenge for what had taken place in Southampton just a few weeks ago? But if the other person in the car was Martinez's son Bruno, that didn't make any sense. Emma's thoughts returned to Sebastian as Marsden left the Great West Road and turned north in the direction of the A1; the road Sebastian had been travelling on only hours before. Emma had once read that in times of personal tragedy, all anyone wanted to do was turn the clock back. She was no different.

The journey passed quickly, as Sebastian was rarely out of her mind. She recalled his birth, when Harry was in prison on the other side of the world, his first steps at the age of eight months and four days, his first word, 'More', and his first day at school, when he jumped out of the car even before Harry had had time to put on the brakes, then later at Beechcroft Abbey, when the headmaster had wanted to expel him but granted Seb a reprieve when he won a scholarship to Cambridge. So much to look forward to, so much to achieve, all made history in a moment. And finally, her dreadful mistake when she'd allowed the cabinet secretary to persuade her that Seb should become involved with the government's plans to bring Don Pedro Martinez to justice. If she'd refused Sir Alan Redmayne's request, her only son would still be alive. If, if . . .

As they reached the outskirts of Harlow, Emma glanced out of the side window to see a signpost directing them to the Princess Alexandra Hospital. She tried to concentrate on what would be expected of her. A few minutes later Marsden drove through a set of wrought-iron gates that never closed, before drawing up outside the main entrance of the hospital. Emma got out of the car and began walking towards the front door while Marsden went in search of a parking space.

She gave the young receptionist her name, and the cheerful smile on the girl's face was replaced with a look of pity. 'Would you be kind enough to wait for a moment, Mrs Clifton,' she said as she picked up a phone. 'I'll let Mr Owen know you're here.'

'Mr Owen?'

'He was the consultant on duty when your son was admitted this morning.'

Emma nodded and began pacing restlessly up and down the corridor, jumbled thoughts replacing jumbled memories. *Who, why, when* . . . She only stopped pacing when a starched-collared, smartly dressed nurse enquired, 'Are you Mrs Clifton?' Emma nodded. 'Please come with me.'

The nurse led Emma along a green-walled corridor. No words were spoken. But then, what could either of them say? They came to a halt outside a door which displayed the name 'Mr William Owen FRCS'. The nurse knocked, opened the door and stood aside to allow Emma to enter.

A tall, thin, balding man with an undertaker's doleful visage rose from behind his desk. Emma wondered if that face ever smiled. 'Good afternoon, Mrs Clifton,' he said, before ushering her into the only comfortable chair in the room. 'I'm so sorry we have to meet in such sad circumstances,' he added.

Emma felt sorry for the poor man. How many times a day did he have to deliver those same words? From the look on his face, it didn't get any easier.

‘I’m afraid there’s rather a lot of paperwork to be completed, but I fear the coroner will require a formal identification before we can think about that.’

Emma bowed her head and burst into tears, wishing, as Harry had suggested, that she’d allowed him to carry out the unbearable task. Mr Owen leapt up from behind his desk, crouched down beside her and said, ‘I’m so sorry, Mrs Clifton.’



Harold Guinzburg couldn’t have been more considerate and helpful.

Harry’s publisher had booked him on to the first available flight to London, first class. At least he would be comfortable, Harold thought, although he didn’t imagine the poor man would be able to sleep. He decided this was not the time to tell him the good news, but simply asked Harry to pass on his heartfelt condolences to Emma.

When Harry checked out of the Pierre Hotel forty minutes later, he found Harold’s chauffeur standing on the sidewalk waiting to drive him to Idlewild airport. Harry climbed into the back of the limousine, as he had no desire to speak to anyone. Instinctively, his thoughts turned to Emma, and what she must be going through. He didn’t like the idea of her having to identify their son’s body. Perhaps the hospital staff would suggest she waited until he returned.

Harry didn’t give a thought to the fact he would be among the first passengers to cross the Atlantic non-stop, as he could only think about his son, and how much he’d been looking forward to going up to Cambridge to begin his first year at university. And after that . . . he’d assumed that with Seb’s natural gift for languages, he’d want to join the Foreign Office, or become a translator, or possibly even teach, or . . .

After the Comet had taken off, Harry rejected the glass of champagne offered by a smiling air hostess, but then how could she know he had nothing to smile about? He didn’t explain why he wouldn’t be eating or sleeping. During the war, when he was behind enemy lines, Harry had trained himself to stay awake for thirty-six hours, only surviving on the adrenalin of fear. He knew he wouldn’t be able to sleep until he’d seen his son for the last time, and he suspected not for some considerable time after that: the adrenalin of despair.



The consultant led Emma silently down a bleak corridor until they came to a halt outside a hermetically sealed door, with the single word, *Mortuary*, displayed in appropriately black letters on its pebbled glass pane. Mr Owen pushed open the door and stood aside to allow Emma to enter. The door closed behind her with a squelch. The sudden change in temperature made her shiver, and then her eyes settled on a trolley standing in the middle of the room. The faint outline of her son’s body was visible under the sheet.

A white-coated assistant stood at the head of the trolley, but didn’t speak.

‘Are you ready, Mrs Clifton?’ asked Mr Owen gently.

‘Yes,’ said Emma firmly, her fingernails cutting into the palms of her hands.

Owen nodded, and the mortician pulled back the sheet to reveal a scarred and battered face that Emma recognized immediately. She screamed, collapsed on to her knees, and began to sob uncontrollably.

Mr Owen and the mortician were not surprised by this predictable reaction of a mother at the first sight of her dead son, but they were shocked when she said quietly, 'That's not Sebastian.'

## 2

AS THE TAXI drew up outside the hospital, Harry was surprised to see Emma standing by the entrance, clearly waiting for him. He was even more surprised when she ran towards him, relief etched on her face.

‘Seb’s alive,’ she shouted long before she’d reached him.

‘But you told me—’ he began as she threw her arms around him.

‘The police made a mistake. They assumed it was the owner of the car who was driving, and that therefore Seb must have been in the passenger seat.’

‘Then Bruno was the passenger?’ said Harry quietly.

‘Yes,’ said Emma, feeling a little guilty.

‘You realize what that means?’ said Harry, releasing her.

‘No. What are you getting at?’

‘The police must have told Martinez that *his* son had survived, only for him to discover later that it was Bruno who’d been killed, not Sebastian.’

Emma bowed her head. ‘Poor man,’ she said as they entered the hospital.

‘Unless . . .’ said Harry, not finishing the sentence. ‘So how’s Seb?’ he asked quietly. ‘What state is he in?’

‘Pretty bad, I’m afraid. Mr Owen told me there weren’t many bones left in his body to break. It seems he’ll be in hospital for several months, and may end up spending the rest of his life in a wheelchair.’

‘Just be thankful he’s alive,’ said Harry, placing an arm around his wife’s shoulder. ‘Will they let me see him?’

‘Yes, but only for a few minutes. And be warned, darling, he’s covered in plaster and bandages, so you might not even recognize him.’ Emma took his hand and led him up to the first floor, where they came across a woman dressed in a dark blue uniform who was bustling around, keeping a close eye on the patients while giving the occasional order to her staff.

‘I’m Miss Puddicombe,’ she announced, thrusting out her hand.

‘Matron to you,’ whispered Emma. Harry shook her hand and said, ‘Good day, Matron.’

Without another word, the diminutive figure led them through to the Bevan Ward to find two neat rows of beds, every one of them occupied. Miss Puddicombe sailed on until she reached a patient at the far end of the room. She drew a curtain around Sebastian Arthur Clifton, and then withdrew. Harry stared down at his son. His left leg was held up by a pulley, while the other one, also encased in plaster, lay flat on the bed. His head was swathed in bandages, leaving one eye to focus on his parents, but his lips didn’t move.

As Harry bent down to kiss him on the forehead, the first words Sebastian uttered

were, 'How's Bruno?'



'I'm sorry to have to question you both after all you've been through,' said Chief Inspector Miles. 'I wouldn't unless it was absolutely necessary.'

'And why is it necessary?' asked Harry, who was no stranger to detectives or their methods of extracting information.

'I'm yet to be convinced that what happened on the A1 was an accident.'

'What are you suggesting?' asked Harry, looking directly at the detective.

'I'm not suggesting anything, sir, but our back-room johnnies have carried out a thorough inspection of the vehicle, and they think one or two things just don't add up.'

'Like what?' asked Emma.

'For a start, Mrs Clifton,' said Miles, 'we can't work out why your son crossed the central reservation when he so obviously risked being hit by an oncoming vehicle.'

'Perhaps the car had a mechanical fault?' suggested Harry.

'That was our first thought,' replied Miles. 'But although the car was badly damaged, none of the tyres had burst, and the steering-wheel shaft was intact, which is almost unknown in an accident of this kind.'

'That's hardly proof of a crime being committed,' said Harry.

'No, sir,' said Miles, 'and on its own, it wouldn't have been enough for me to ask the coroner to refer the case to the DPP. But a witness has come forward with some rather disturbing evidence.'

'What did he have to say?'

'She,' said Miles, referring to his notebook. 'A Mrs Challis told us she was overtaken by an open-top MG which was just about to pass three lorries that were in convoy on the inside lane, when the front lorry moved into the outside lane, although there was no other vehicle in front of him. This meant that the driver of the MG had to brake suddenly. The third lorry then also moved across into the outside lane, again for no apparent reason, while the middle lorry maintained its speed, leaving the MG with no way to overtake or move to the safety of the inside lane. Mrs Challis went on to say that the three lorries kept the MG boxed in this position for some considerable time,' continued the detective, 'until its driver, without rhyme or reason, careered across the central reservation straight into the face of the oncoming traffic.'

'Have you been able to question any of the three lorry drivers?' asked Emma.

'No. We've been unable to track down any of them, Mrs Clifton. And don't think we haven't tried.'

'But what you're suggesting is unthinkable,' said Harry. 'Who would want to kill two innocent boys?'

'I would have agreed with you, Mr Clifton, if we hadn't recently discovered that Bruno Martinez didn't originally intend to accompany your son on the journey to Cambridge.'

'How could you possibly know that?'

'Because his girlfriend, a Miss Thornton, has come forward and informed us that she had planned to go to the cinema with Bruno that day, but she had to cancel at the last moment because she'd caught a cold.' The chief inspector took a pen out of his pocket, turned a page of his notebook and looked directly at Sebastian's parents before

asking, 'Do either of you have any reason to believe that someone might have wanted to harm your son?'

'No,' said Harry.

'Yes,' said Emma.

### 3

‘JUST MAKE SURE you finish the job this time,’ Don Pedro Martinez almost shouted. ‘It shouldn’t prove too difficult,’ he added as he sat forward in his chair. ‘I was able to stroll into the hospital unchallenged yesterday morning, and at night it ought to be a whole lot easier.’

‘How do you want him disposed of?’ asked Karl, matter-of-factly.

‘Cut his throat,’ said Martinez. ‘All you’ll need is a white coat, a stethoscope and a surgeon’s knife. Just make sure it’s sharp.’

‘Might not be wise to slit the boy’s throat,’ suggested Karl. ‘Better to suffocate him with a pillow and let them assume he died as a result of his injuries.’

‘No. I want the Clifton boy to suffer a slow and painful death. In fact, the slower the better.’

‘I understand how you feel, boss, but we don’t need to give that detective any more reason to reopen his inquiries.’

Martinez looked disappointed. ‘All right then, suffocate him,’ he said reluctantly. ‘But make sure it lasts for as long as possible.’

‘Do you want me to involve Diego and Luis?’

‘No. But I want them to attend the funeral, as Sebastian’s friends, so they can report back. I want to hear that they suffered every bit as much as I did when I first realized it wasn’t Bruno who’d survived.’

‘But what about—’

The phone on Don Pedro’s desk began to ring. He grabbed it. ‘Yes?’

‘There’s a Colonel Scott-Hopkins on the line,’ said his secretary. ‘He wants to discuss a personal matter with you. Says it’s urgent.’



All four of them had rearranged their diaries so they could be at the Cabinet office in Downing Street by nine the following morning.

Sir Alan Redmayne, the cabinet secretary, had cancelled his meeting with M. Chauvel, the French Ambassador, with whom he’d planned to discuss the implications of Charles de Gaulle’s possible return to the Elysée Palace.

Sir Giles Barrington MP would not be attending the weekly shadow cabinet meeting because, as he explained to Mr Gaitskell, the Leader of the Opposition, an urgent family problem had arisen.

Harry Clifton wouldn’t be signing copies of his latest book, *Blood is Thicker than Water*, at Hatchards in Piccadilly. He’d signed a hundred copies in advance to try to placate the manager, who couldn’t hide his disappointment, especially after he’d learnt that Harry would top the bestseller list on Sunday.

Emma Barrington had postponed a meeting with Ross Buchanan to discuss the chairman's ideas for the building of a new luxury liner that, if the board backed him, would become part of the Barrington shipping line.

The four of them took their seats around an oval table in the cabinet secretary's office.

'It was good of you to see us at such short notice,' said Giles from the far end of the table. Sir Alan nodded. 'But I'm sure you can appreciate that Mr and Mrs Clifton are worried that their son's life might still be in danger.'

'I share their anxiety,' said Redmayne, 'and allow me to say how sorry I was to learn of your son's accident, Mrs Clifton. Not least because I feel partly to blame for what happened. However, let me assure you that I have not been idle. Over the weekend I spoke to Mr Owen, Chief Inspector Miles, and the local coroner. They couldn't have been more cooperative. And I have to agree with Miles, there just isn't enough evidence to prove that Don Pedro Martinez was in any way involved in the accident.' Emma's look of exasperation caused Sir Alan to quickly add, 'Nevertheless, proof and not being in any doubt are often two very different animals, and after learning that Martinez wasn't aware that his son was in the car at the time, I concluded that he just might consider striking again, however irrational that might seem.'

'An eye for an eye,' said Harry.

'You could be right,' said the cabinet secretary. 'He clearly hasn't forgiven us for what he sees as stealing eight million pounds of his money, even if it was all counterfeit, and although he may not yet have worked out that the government was behind the operation, there's no doubt that he believes your son was personally responsible for what took place in Southampton and I am only sorry that, at the time, I did not take your understandable concern seriously enough.'

'I'm at least grateful for that,' said Emma. 'But it's not you who is continually wondering when and where Martinez will strike next. And anyone can stroll in and out of that hospital as easily as if it were a bus station.'

'I can't disagree,' said Redmayne. 'I did so myself yesterday afternoon.' This revelation caused a momentary silence that allowed him to continue. 'However, you can be assured, Mrs Clifton, that this time I've taken the necessary steps to make sure that your son is no longer in any danger.'

'Can you share with Mr and Mrs Clifton the reason for your confidence?' asked Giles.

'No, Sir Giles, I cannot.'

'Why not?' demanded Emma.

'Because on this occasion I had to involve the home secretary as well as the secretary of state for defence, so I am therefore bound by Privy Council confidentiality.'

'What sort of mumbo jumbo is that?' demanded Emma. 'Try not to forget that we're talking about my son's life.'

'Should any of this ever become public,' said Giles, turning to his sister, 'even in fifty years' time, it will be important to show that neither you nor Harry was aware that ministers of the Crown were involved.'

'I am grateful, Sir Giles,' said the cabinet secretary.

'I can just about stomach these pompous coded messages you two keep passing to

each other,' said Harry, 'as long as I can be assured that my son's life is no longer in danger, because if anything else were to happen to Sebastian, Sir Alan, there would only be one person to blame.'

'I accept your admonition, Mr Clifton. However, I am able to confirm that Martinez no longer poses a threat to Sebastian or any other member of your family. Frankly, I've bent the rules to breaking point to make sure that it's literally more than Martinez's life is worth.'

Harry still looked sceptical, and although Giles seemed to accept Sir Alan's word, he realized that he would have to become prime minister before the cabinet secretary would reveal the reason for his confidence, and perhaps not even then.

'However,' continued Sir Alan, 'one mustn't forget that Martinez is an unscrupulous and treacherous man, and I have no doubt he will still want to seek some form of revenge. And as long as he abides by the letter of the law, there's not much any of us can do about it.'

'At least we'll be prepared this time,' said Emma, only too aware what the cabinet secretary was getting at.



Colonel Scott-Hopkins knocked on the door of number 44 Eaton Square at one minute to ten. A few moments later, the front door was opened by a giant of a man who dwarfed the commanding officer of the SAS.

'My name is Scott-Hopkins. I have an appointment with Mr Martinez.'

Karl gave a slight bow, and opened the door just enough to allow Mr Martinez's guest to enter. He accompanied the colonel across the hall and knocked on the study door.

'Come in.'

When the colonel entered the room, Don Pedro rose from behind his desk and looked at his guest suspiciously. He had no idea why the SAS man needed to see him so urgently.

'Will you have a coffee, colonel?' asked Don Pedro after the two men had shaken hands. 'Or perhaps something a little stronger?'

'No, thank you, sir. It's a little early in the morning for me.'

'Then have a seat, and tell me why you wanted to see me urgently.' He paused. 'I feel sure you'll appreciate that I'm a busy man.'

'I am only too aware how busy you've been recently, Mr Martinez, so I'll come straight to the point.'

Don Pedro tried not to show any reaction as he settled back into his chair and continued to stare at the colonel.

'My simple purpose is to make sure that Sebastian Clifton has a long and peaceful life.'

The mask of arrogant confidence slipped from Martinez's face. He quickly recovered and sat bolt upright. 'What are you suggesting?' he shouted, as he gripped the arm of his chair.

'I think you know only too well, Mr Martinez. However, allow me to make the position clear. I'm here to ensure that no further harm comes to any member of the Clifton family.'