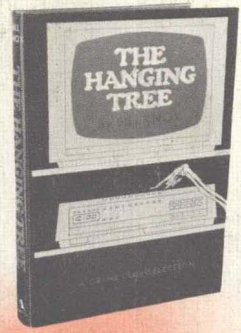
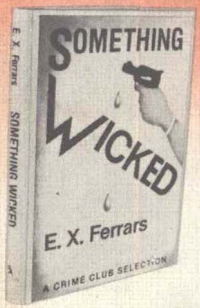
The Hanging Tree

BY BILL KNOX





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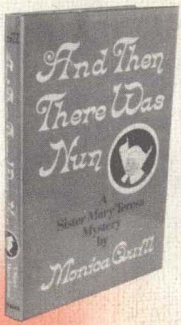

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PRELUDE

There was more than one area like Donaldhill in the city of Glasgow. Come to that, there was more than one area like Donaldhill in any city.

But it looked particularly drab that grey Scottish morning in September.

Donaldhill was streets of old tenement buildings, broken here and there by an occasional block of modern high-rise local authority housing. The few shops kept their windows guarded by metal shutters, sometimes by day as well as night. If you lived in Donaldhill you took graffiti and broken windows for granted and used that extra lock on your door after dark. If you lived in one of the old tenements, you looked up in envy at the high-rise blocks because their people had bathrooms. If you lived in a high-rise, you looked down at the tenements and wondered if they knew about damp that grew mould on your bedding or vandals who lit fires in the elevator shafts.

Not that many people admitted to living in Donaldhill. It helped, particularly when you applied for a job, to give a different address—a relative or a friend might oblige.

Donaldhill had the highest percentage of citizens over pension age. In between, three out of every five of the adult working population were unemployed, drew some kind of social security benefit, watched TV most of the day, and clung by their fingertips to the hope that things would get better.

Somehow.

It was 8:45 A.M. and the three men in the brightly painted florist's van didn't live in Donaldhill. The van had been stolen the previous night, on the other side of the city. Two of the men were hidden in the back, one with a sawn-off shotgun cradled on his lap. He was humming nervously under his breath. His companion, more relaxed, couldn't stop sniffing and decided he had a cold coming on. The third man, the oldest, lounged openly in the driving seat. Anyone passing could see he was reading a newspaper—the sports pages.

The van was parked directly across the street from Donaldhill's

post office, one of a row of small shops. The post office wouldn't open until 9 A.M. but about a score of people were waiting outside. They stood patiently, ignoring the chill wind and the puddles left by overnight rain.

It was Tuesday, the day they could draw their pension or cash their fortnightly benefit cheque.

A first sign of life showed in the post office building and the metal shutter of the outer door rolled up. A woman counter clerk appeared, managed to look around yet ignore the queue, then went back inside. The glass inner door slammed shut.

The queue shuffled their feet for a moment then settled down again. A few more people arrived. One was a girl, pregnant and pushing a pram. The man just ahead of her had a mongrel dog on a lead. The girl spoke to the dog and it wagged its tail but backed away. Donaldhill dogs usually did.

A small red Royal Mail van arrived five minutes later and stopped at the kerb. There were two uniformed postmen aboard. The man in the passenger seat got out, crossed to the post office, and knocked on the door. The same woman appeared behind the glass, smiled a greeting, and nodded.

The postman turned. He was old enough to be cautious. He glanced at the queue and noted the florist's van, the man behind its wheel still reading his newspaper. Then he tensed as a yellow Ford coupe pulled in behind the mail van. A man jumped out, hurried into one of the other shops, and emerged carrying a carton of milk.

Relaxing, the postman waited until the coupe drove off. Strolling back to the mail van, he nodded. The driver emerged. Each postman took a small canvas sack from the vehicle and they started to walk towards the post office.

The rear doors of the florist's van burst open. Two figures clad in anonymous blue overalls jumped out and sprinted over. One clutched the sawn-off shotgun, the other swung a heavy hammer. Knitted balaclava hoods totally masked their faces, apart from slits cut for the eyes.

Both postmen froze where they stood. Behind them, a woman in the queue screamed and dropped her shopping bag.

"Put down an' back off," rasped the bandit with the shotgun. "You're not paid hero rates."

The older postman, all colour drained from his face, let his sack fall. His driver hesitated uncertainly and the heavy hammer swung vi-

ciously, smashing his shoulder. He screamed, staggered, almost collapsed, and the other canvas sack fell from his grasp.

For a moment, the shotgun's stubby barrels swung towards the queue. But no-one had moved, no-one spoke. Across the street, the florist's van started up. Grabbing a sack each, the two hooded figures turned and ran.

They didn't see the motor-cyclist. He was young, he wore a white crash helmet, a white sweater, and his faded jeans were tucked into cowboy boots. He had been riding along with only half his attention on the road. The first he realised was that two running men were dead ahead of him.

He braked hard, desperately. The machine skidded and almost toppled but he managed to stop. Then he stared, open-mouthed, an unsuspecting barrier between the men and their van.

Triggered at a range of less than eight feet, both barrels of the shotgun blasted him out of the saddle and left him sprawled on the roadway. The motor cycle toppled across his legs.

The two bandits sprinted past and jumped into the back of the florist's van. It began accelerating, rear doors still open and swinging.

Five seconds later it vanished round a corner.

The postman driver was down on his knees, moaning, nursing his shattered arm. At the post office, the woman clerk stared out with her face pressed against the glass door. The people in the queue stayed where they were, paralysed by the sudden violence.

Moistening his lips, the unhurt postman ran to the fallen motor-cyclist. He saw what the shotgun had done and turned away, retching, closing his eyes, wanting to shut out the sight.

"Hey," said a voice beside him. "You all right, pal?"

The postman managed to nod. The old man who had joined him was small, white-haired, frail in appearance but totally calm. He remembered seeing him earlier, in the post office queue.

"Aye." The old man clicked his loose dentures sadly and gestured towards the dead rider. "Messy, eh? Still, I've seen worse—when I was in the army. First World War, the real one." He hesitated. "Those bags they got—was that the pension money?"

"Yes," said the postman.

He could hear a police siren, still faint and distant. The post office door had opened and people from the queue were helping his injured companion.

"We'll need witnesses," he said tonelessly. "You saw it all, didn't you, dad?"

"Me?" The pensioner shook his head in alarmed innocence. "Bad eyesight—my age. Sorry."

"I did," said a new, determined voice.

It was the girl with the pram. She was white-faced and still trembling, but she nodded as he looked at her. The postman sighed, hearing the siren coming nearer. She was very young and very pregnant. He thought of his own daughter.

"No, you didn't," he said gruffly.

"But—"

"Be sensible, lassie." He smiled bitterly. "Thanks. But get lost. There'll be others."

He hoped to God he was right. The crowd was still growing, eager to see what would happen next. But how many had been in the post office queue, how many would admit it? Maybe murder would make a difference, but Donaldhill made a religion out of not being involved.

The girl seemed ready to argue. Then she bit her lip, sighed, nodded, and wheeled the pram away.

"Hey." It was the old man again.

"Now what do you want?" asked the postman.

"How much did they get?"

"About seventy thousand pounds."

"Jeeze." The old man scowled. "What about my pension money?"

"There'll be another delivery," said the postman wearily. "Soon."

He looked again at the toppled motor cycle, at the dead young man in cowboy boots. There wasn't enough of his face left to know who he had been. Suddenly the postman felt totally helpless and wanted to cry.

"Hey," said the old man petulantly, touching his arm. "About that money. When's 'soon,' eh?"

CHAPTER ONE

"Superintendent, we've talked about a citizen's rights when involved with the police." Debby Kinster, a TV news reporter who still somehow managed to look as fresh-faced and innocent as the girl next door, leaned forward a little under the studio lights. "Do you think the average citizen knows enough about those rights?"

"Your average criminal does." Detective Superintendent Colin Thane, joint deputy commander of the Scottish Crime Squad, shifted in the discomfort of the interview chair and tried to ignore the television camera a few feet away. "He'll recite chapter and verse."

Debby Kinster gave one of those slight frowns which amounted to her professional trademark.

"Everyone has rights, Superintendent. Or do the police not always see it that way?"

"Everyone has rights," agreed Thane dryly. "No exceptions."

He reckoned there couldn't be more than a minute left of the agreed interview time. So far, it hadn't gone too badly. They'd talked in general terms about the police and the public, but he hadn't felt under attack. Not the way he'd been warned it might be.

"For instance, police in this country can't hold anyone for more than six hours without making a formal charge," said Debby Kinster. "That's the law, Superintendent." She smiled, showing perfect white teeth which might have been aimed at his jugular. "So what happened last week, why did you hold a man for fourteen hours?"

Thane stared at her. He'd been set up, lulled along, left beautifully positioned for the kill. Worse, it was true.

"Well, Superintendent?" She was waiting.

"It happened," admitted Thane. He glanced down at the little microphone clipped to his tie and decided he could happily wring Debby Kinster's neck. "It wasn't deliberate."

It hadn't even been his fault, but he had been leading the investigation team. An operation lasting nearly two months had ended with ten arrests. A whole series of jewellery store robberies had been cleared up, a small mountain of stolen jewellery had been recovered.

"Then if it wasn't deliberate, why?" demanded Debby Kinster.

He caught a glimpse of his face in the studio monitor and felt even worse.

"An administrative—uh—failure," he said weakly. "Nobody's perfect."

"Not even the police?" she asked with sarcasm.

It had been close to confusion that night. Some of the gang were talking, some were denying everything. The list of charges read like a book, people were trying to take statements, sort out that jewellery, a prisoner's wife had appeared on the scene—no-one was certain how—and had gone into hysterics.

It was only when it was almost over that someone had remembered Midge Reilly. Middle-aged, small-time, mild, he'd worked as a look-out on only two of the raids and had been strictly hired help.

Midge was nobody's priority. Forgotten, he'd been found curled up asleep in his cell.

"You could have charged him, if it hadn't been for your 'administrative failure'?"

"Yes."

"But because of it, he was released?"

"That's right."

Except it hadn't ended there. Five minutes after he'd been showed out into the street, Midge Reilly walked in again saying he wanted to surrender and plead guilty. Otherwise, too many of his friends would decide he had been an informer and life would be extremely unpleasant.

So they'd locked him up again. Then several unfortunate cops had been roasted.

"Any final comment, Superintendent?" asked Debby Kinster. Almost without pausing, she gave a sudden grin at the camera. "Cut—he's suffered enough."

Still grinning, she came over and helped unclip the tie microphone. Thane got out of the chair, shook his head ruefully, and drew a deep breath.

"Who the hell told you?" he demanded.

"Tell you, and I'd be in real trouble." Her blue eyes twinkled. "But I loved the story—all of it."

The studio door swung open. The Scottish Police College staff officer who came in looked at Thane and gave a roar of laughter.

"You look mauled," he declared with delight. "Colin, that tape

could set the police image back at least five years. Wait till you see the playback!"

But at least it hadn't been for real, just closed-circuit exercise within the secure confines of the Police College, which was running a series of special one-day media seminars for senior officers from every Scottish force.

Thane's group, a dozen in all, had spent the morning being lectured on the need for better police relations with the media—and the dangers if they went too far. The closed-circuit interviews began after lunch, one person at a time being taken from the group, who weren't allowed to see what was going on.

But the College staff didn't organise the experience for comic relief. Trusted professionals from the television world were invited along when the studio was in use. They were fed police to interview, encouraged to try any dirty trick possible.

The intended lesson was simple. Next time, the television cameras might be for real. Next time, the man or woman being interviewed would remember what might happen and think ahead. Even if that meant disappearing in the opposite direction.

"Ready for the last of them?" asked the staff officer. Debby Kinster nodded and he turned to Thane again. "Colin, you've to phone your boss. Use my office if you want. He called a few minutes ago, but I said you were busy."

"He'd like that," said Thane. He gave a wry smile to the girl. "Thanks. What's it like when you play rough?"

"You didn't do too badly." She winked at him, then turned to study her clipboard.

He went out of the studio. The woman coming in, the next victim, was a chief inspector from Edinburgh.

"How was it?" she muttered.

"Easy," lied Thane.

That was what he had been told.

The staff officer's room was a short distance along a corridor. It had a large picture window with a view of manicured lawns, disciplined shrubbery, and a backing of open parkland and distant hills.

Closing the door, perching himself on the edge of a desk, Colin Thane lifted the telephone and dialled the Scottish Crime Squad headquarters number in Glasgow.

He was a tall, grey-eyed man in his early forties. He wore a light-

weight grey tweed suit with a white shirt and a plain, knitted maroon tie, his thick dark hair was in need of a trim, and the scales at home had begun telling him he was a few pounds overweight. But he still had most of the athletic build which went back to when he had been a reasonably rated entrant in the annual police boxing championships—though that had ended when he became tired of being knocked out in the semifinal bouts.

For the moment he was puzzled. Waiting for the number to ring out, he remembered how he'd been dispatched without any option to the one-day seminar. Jack Hart, the Squad commander, had decided someone had to go and had declared Thane had nothing on his plate that couldn't simmer unattended for another day.

So what had changed?

He heard the Squad switchboard operator come on the line, asked for Hart's extension, and was put through.

"I appreciate you calling back," said Hart sarcastically. "I really do."

Thane winced. Hart was normally a calm, quietly effective individual who didn't ruffle easily. He had been a good cop, now he was a better administrator. When he sounded on edge, something was wrong.

"Trouble?" he asked.

"Yes. I'm being leaned on—hard." From Hart, it was an unusual admission. "We've been caught early, wrong-footed, on a full target situation. It's immediate."

Thane frowned at the mouthpiece, knowing that had to mean trouble. The way the Crime Squad normally functioned, their Criminal Intelligence section quietly gathered details on specific criminals or situations. Then, when the timing seemed right, Jack Hart activated a target operation. But Thane couldn't think which of the current options could have firmed so rapidly.

"So"—Hart accepted his silence—"I need you back. You're handling it, with your usual team and any help you need. I've got someone from Crown Office sitting across from me."

Thane whistled to himself. Crown Office represented the ultimate authority behind criminal prosecutions. When they stepped in, top civil servants with government-issue briefcases, it mattered. Even Jack Hart, who ranked as a Detective Chief Superintendent, had to do what he was told.

"When do you want me back?" he asked.

"Now." Hart stopped and swore. Thane heard a quick murmur of voices, then Hart came back on the line again. "I've another call. Hold on."

Thane waited. Outside the window, a peacock was strutting along the edge of a bank of rose-bushes. A small team of gardeners were at work near an old stone stableyard.

Not many countries used a castle as their police training college. But Tulliallan Castle, a large Victorian extravagance with a much earlier history, had been a deliberate choice. It was located in its own considerable grounds in a quiet stretch of rural Clackmannan. It was less than an hour's travel from Glasgow and Edinburgh, reasonably convenient for most other Scottish forces, and had offered plenty of space for development.

Tulliallan Castle, with its mock turrets and battlements, elegant drawing rooms, and panelled woodwork, had been in the early stages of dilapidation when the new owners took over. Dormitory blocks had been built on, a gymnasium, swimming pool, and other extensions added. The vaulted main hall no longer had tapestries and paintings—instead there were displays of ceremonial batons and old police cutlasses, showcases of police badges from all over the world.

Still waiting, able to hear the continued murmur of voices at the other end of the line but nothing more, Thane sighed and tried to stay patient.

The peacock strutted past again. He gave a half-smile at the sight.

The castle's previous owners wouldn't have appreciated the uniformed squads who now tramped its corridors to and from lectures on subjects as varied as the questioning of rape victims and the problems of juvenile offenders. They would have been aghast at the way a tarmac skid-pan for pursuit driving tuition had been laid out beside the main driveway. But they couldn't have faulted the gardens.

The gardeners were bussed in daily, picked inmates from one of Her Majesty's prisons. So far, none of the castle peacocks had gone missing.

"Sorry," said Jack Hart abruptly, coming back on the line. "But it mattered. There's a man arriving at the airport on the next shuttle flight from London—we're collecting. He's what's called an interested party. But he's also an expert—we need him."

"For what?" demanded Thane. "Look, I—"

"You want to know what the hell's going on," agreed Hart. "All

right, it begins with an armed hold-up over at Donaldhill this morning. A passing motor-cyclist rode into the middle of it, uninvited." He paused then went on, his voice flat and unemotional. "One of the hold-up team panicked, fired a shotgun, and killed our motor-cyclist."

"Rough," said Thane. But he was still puzzled. Armed hold-ups weren't a usual Crime Squad interest. They went after bigger things. He frowned. "You said 'our' motor-cyclist."

"I did," said Hart. "Forget the hold-up team. They were locked up before lunch."

"So I've got a dead man as a target?" asked Thane incredulously.

"As a start point," corrected Hart. He gave a wry chuckle. "At least it's different. Ready for the details?"

"Yes." Thane reached for the pad and pen on the staff officer's desk.

"His name, Edward Douglas. He was single, an unemployed graduate, age early twenties, home address Fifty-six Baron Avenue. That's north of the river, Millside Division—your old territory."

"White wine, TV snacks, and all-night parties—or it used to be." Thane scribbled quickly, tore the sheet from the pad, then glanced at his wrist-watch, thinking of the thirty-five-mile drive back to the city. "I can be there by four P.M."

"Do that," said Hart briefly. "Here's what it's about. Ever heard of *The Hanging Tree?*"

Thane hesitated. "The Hollywood thing?"

"That 'thing' is a damned great major budget American blockbuster movie," snapped Hart, giving way to his feelings. "Still being launched in the States, winning Academy Award nominations, the lot. It shouldn't even be in Europe yet. But friend Douglas was carrying three video copies of *The Hanging Tree* in his saddle-bags—pirate copies. It's the first time they've turned up anywhere."

Things began to make sense for Thane. For several weeks, on Hart's orders, their Criminal Intelligence team had been gathering a target file on pirate videotapes and their distributors.

"We've got ourselves a front-line courier," Hart went on bitterly. *"The Hanging Tree* was being protected like the crown jewels by the Americans, so now total hell is breaking loose—at several levels. Interpol want in on the act, I've even had the Foreign Office making pious noises."

"And all we've got is Douglas?"

"Douglas and *The Hanging Tree,"* confirmed Hart. "So far he

hasn't been identified as far as the media are concerned—but we can't keep that going much longer." He gave a growl which rasped over the line. "Colin, I don't know if you need it, but take a warning. At street level, pirate videos probably rate about as criminal as parking tickets—and a lot more entertaining. But get to the top and you're talking organised crime, dirty as it comes."

There was an irony in it. Thane knew that Jack Hart was a self-confessed home video addict—plenty of police were, because of the hours they worked. But he also knew Hart was right. He'd seen some of what was in the Criminal Intelligence file—the way in which, in a very short time, the whole illegal business of pirate videotapes had come out of nowhere to rate as one of the fastest growing rackets in existence. The kind of racket that made fortunes for the people behind it.

"Did the Americans know *The Hanging Tree* had been copied—stolen?" he asked.

"No," said Hart. "They thought they had it guarded round the clock."

"Then how about Douglas—have we anything more on him?"

"No trace of any police record, nothing yet from the computer," said Hart. "But start at his home, get anything you can there—then I need you here for a meeting by five. See you then."

Hart went off the line. Thane sighed to himself, then as he replaced the receiver, the room door opened and the college staff-officer came in.

"We're finished," he told Thane briskly. "All we need is a couple of minutes to rewind the tapes then we can start the playback session." He nodded at the telephone. "Get through all right?"

Thane nodded. "I've got to leave."

"Right now?" The staff-officer's face fell. "Hell, what about your playback?"

"My loss," said Thane woodenly. "But I can tell you what to do with it."

"Very funny," said the staff-officer. "All right, why the summons?"

"You know how it goes." Thane grinned at him. "My agent came up with a better offer."

"Like what?" asked the staff-officer. "Co-starring with Genghis Khan? You'd have made a good comedy duo." Then he paused. "Good luck with it—whatever it is."

Thane left him. On the way out, he stopped in one of the corridors

to let a squad of recruits pass. They were all young, their uniforms still looked new, and a lean, hungry-looking sergeant instructor was barking at their heels as they marched. The sergeant instructor met Thane's eyes and gave a quick wink which spoke louder than words.

The squad disappeared from sight. Moving on, Thane passed the ceremonial batons in the main hallway, went out of the castle, and began to cross to where he'd left his car.

Another group of recruits, clad in blue track suits, were practising unarmed combat on a piece of open ground under the watchful glare of another sergeant instructor. The best of them was a slim girl with jet-black hair. She gave a sudden twisting turn, heaved, and the lanky six-foot male who had been her partner went straight over her shoulder. The girl laughed and stood back. The sergeant instructor took two paces, got behind her, grabbed her in an armlock, and deposited her on the ground with a thump before she realised what was happening.

"One thug down can mean his mate is still waiting," he roared. "I keep telling you! How about remembering it?"

It was harsh but he was right, thought Thane as he walked on.

The College had only a few short weeks in which to teach its recruit intakes a great deal on their initial training courses. Then they'd return to their various forces, still beginners, to be paired off with an experienced cop for a spell, for the next stage of the learning process—on the streets.

The ones who lasted would come back to Tulliallan Castle again and again throughout their careers, no matter what rank they achieved over the years. There was always another training course, a new lecture schedule.

Society had come to demand police who could think—even if it didn't always get them.

"Superintendent—Mr. Thane . . ."

The shout made Thane turn. The sergeant instructor from the unarmed combat class came hurrying over and Thane recognised him. He'd been a detective constable with the Squad, promoted to sergeant at the end of the usual three-year secondment and being transferred again.

"Just wanted to ask how the lads were, sir," said the man, grinning. "Still got Francey Dunbar as your sergeant?"

"I can't get rid of him," said Thane. "Things haven't changed much. How are you getting along?"

"Here?" The sergeant instructor glanced over his shoulder towards the waiting recruits. "This bunch aren't too bad and being here is pretty fair. Still . . ." He looked almost wistfully at Thane. "Anyway, give my best to the lads, will you, sir?"

"I'll do that," promised Thane.

He watched the man trot back to his class, suddenly remembering his name was Vass. He'd left the Crime Squad within days of Thane's arrival—though that was now almost a year in the past.

Before that, Thane had ranked as a detective chief inspector, C.I.D. chief for Glasgow's Millside Division. Millside was a tough, unglamorous slice of the city's dockland and slums, with a fringe of the good life just to make things awkward. But it had been his patch, he'd run it and known it—and he'd felt strangely lost when he'd been summoned to Headquarters, promoted to detective superintendent, and told at the same time that he was being moved, seconded to the Scottish Crime Squad.

Then it had been like being sent into exile. Now Millside Division seemed an age away. He'd be going back as an outsider.

He reached his car, a mud-spattered Ford from the Squad pool. Getting behind the wheel, he glanced at the gift-wrapped package on the passenger seat and winced to himself.

If Jack Hart's meeting went on for long, he might have a different kind of problem. Even a cop should be able to plan a night out with his wife on their wedding anniversary.

He started the Ford and tried to think about videotapes.

The journey took just under an hour, first along minor roads to Kincardine Bridge, then over its long span across the muddy upper reaches of the River Forth, from there to join the busy trunk M-80 motorway from the north for Glasgow.

The traffic moved smoothly most of the way except at the city boundary, where a skidding truck had demolished a delivery van and wreckage blocked two whole lanes. Thane took his turn in the queue to ease past the result, then switched on the Ford's wipers as a slight drizzle of rain began falling.

Grey under the clouds, the Glasgow skyline lay ahead. It was a mixture of tall, modern office blocks and slim church spires, of dark slate tenement roofs and bleak factory chimneys. Few of the chimneys were smoking. Too many of the factories had locked gates and "For Sale" notices.

Glasgow knew what recession meant.

The drizzle of rain faded again as Thane made a right turn at a set of lights and used a back-street route which avoided the city centre and saved time. Suburban bungalows gave way to older buildings. He drove through an industrial estate where only about half of the firms still seemed to be operating and the rest had broken windows.

Then, minutes later, he reached his destination.

It hadn't changed.

Baron Avenue had been built in the '30s, a product of the concrete shoebox school of architecture. A collection of three-storey blocks of small apartments, it had drifted down-market and become shabby. The original communal gardens had been concreted over.

But it was exactly suited to the singles and young, childless couples who had moved in. They worked in offices or pooled student grants. They tolerated rock music at 3 A.M. and car doors banging at any hour.

Or, if they didn't, most of them left. Baron Avenue lived that way, seldom featuring in crime reports beyond the occasional brawl or burglary, and preferred older generations to visit on Sunday afternoons.

Driving into it, Colin Thane kept the Ford's speed to a crawl and checked the numbers on the blocks. Then he saw an easier guide, a grey Mini from the Crime Squad pool parked at the kerb. He drew in behind the car and got out.

Number 56 was a few yards along. A thin, dark-haired man wearing a black leather jacket, faded jeans, and a grey cotton sweat-shirt leaned against the brickwork at the entrance. He straightened a little as Thane approached and gave a twist of a smile.

"Taking a break, Francey?" asked Thane with mild sarcasm.

"Hiding, sir." Detective Sergeant Francey Dunbar pointed towards the entrance. "Douglas's girl-friend arrived ten minutes ago. She didn't know."

Thane grimaced. "Who's with her?"

"Sandra," said Dunbar. "She can handle it."

Thane nodded. Sandra Craig, a detective constable on his regular team, took a normal share of whatever came along. But there were times when sex equality wasn't a two-way traffic, when a woman to woman situation made sense.

"Anyone else here?" he asked.

"Not right now," answered Dunbar. He was just over medium