

**P56**

**Chapter Six: 9.30am (pps56-62)**

*Daisy tortures Kit*

KF: Harry was brought up in Govan, a working-class neighbourhood near old docks, now a vast windy council estate. It includes Ibrox Park, home of the Protestant football team, Rangers. (Celtic are Catholic, started by the Irish immigrants to Glasgow in the nineteenth century.) He has moved a long way socially, but a short distance geographically—across the Paisley Road to Dumbreck, a district of gracious old double-fronted houses interspersed with new building.

AZ: The physical action is strong, but we'd be more involved if we suffered with him more.

- Does he feel any remorse for having gotten involved with these monsters, for having broken his promise to his father?
- Might he debate whether or not he's better off dead?
- Has he considered fleeing and regrets that he did not?
- What, if anything, would he know about Daisy's sex life?

AZ: Kit designed and installed a security system for Harry's gambling parlor and possibly his home as well. Kit may even feel like he's a friend of the family; so that when he's attacked by Daisy, it's a rude shock for him to discover that he's not.

AZ: Was Nigel behind some famous robbery in the past?

# 9.30 a.m.

poker, blackjack<sup>56</sup>, roulette, dice  
gamble where?

Harry McGarry, known as Harry Mac, lived in a large suburban house on the outskirts of Glasgow. The place was decorated like an expensive hotel, with reproduction furniture and framed prints on the wall, but no personal touches: no family photographs, no pets, no ornaments, no flowers. Kit waited <sup>feeling how?</sup> in the spacious hall, staring at the striped yellow wallpaper, watched by a fat bodyguard in a black suit. In this house, three weeks ago, he had first met Nigel Buchanan.

Harry Mac ran most of the illegal gambling in Scotland and the north of England. He worked with his daughter, Diana, always called Daisy. The nickname was ironic: she was a violent, sadistic thug. Harry had let Kit gamble on credit, expecting that his father would pay. Daddy had paid, too. He had coughed up fifty grand, thereby confirming Harry's faith in him. Kit had promised his father he would never gamble again, but the temptation had been too strong. Next time his debt reached fifty thousand he had gone back to his father. But, this time, Stanley Oxenford had put his foot down. "Not another penny," he had said. And he meant it.

He had left Kit with no alternative but to try to win back what he owed.

Kit's debt went up to a quarter of a million.

At that point, three weeks ago, he had been summoned to Harry's house.

after having been fined for embezzling?  
Kit's being a computer whiz doesn't quite square with his being a terrible gambler?

**P57**

EF: Is Harry necessary? He disappears. Conflate him with Nigel. KF: Or eliminate Nigel and make Harry a bit brighter.

KF: In this flashback, Daisy and Elton are present as well as Harry and Nigel.

AZ: Make the villains more interesting. At present, there's nothing going on between them.

- Nigel, I see, as the king of thieves. He has stolen jewels from Asprey, bullion from the Bank of England. I suggest that we establish that he's meticulously worked over Kit's plan with him. He's a man who leaves nothing to chance and double-checks everything. But he's had a lot of praise for Kit's plan and this had meant the world to Kit. Harry too is in awe of Nigel. It could be rumored that he lives like an emperor in a vast estate on some tax shelter island or maybe Lichtenstein. KF: Yes.
- Daisy, who can be a thug, but who is not necessarily ugly, is smitten by him. On past visits to Scotland, she's enjoyed sex with him and now longs to leave her father and make a life with him. KF: No.
- But unknown to her, he's bisexual and his real love is Elton. This could get traumatically revealed to her at some point in the climax or maybe earlier. KF: No.
- Elton might have had no formal education and he could use non-grammatical ghetto speech; but he could have the instincts and speed of a feral animal combined with a saucy good humor when he's feeling lighthearted. From the outset, he mistrusts Kit, sees nothing but trouble coming from the son of a rich man. KF: Yes. An intelligent, funny, but heartless South London villain.: Elton is a valued technical expert who has worked with Nigel (or Harry) for some years. Apart from the areas where Kit is the expert, Elton is in charge of all gadgetry: cars, guns, disguises, the briefcase.

AZ: He's also hostile to Daisy, despises the little attentions she shows to Nigel, and even tries to get her thrown out of their group. To him, a woman in their lives or in their work is anathema.

He had been terrified. He thought they were going to beat him up. When he was shown into the drawing room, with its yellow silk seating, he wondered how they would prevent the blood spoiling the upholstery. "There's a gentleman here wants to ask you a question," Harry had said. Kit could not imagine what question any of Harry's friends would want to ask him, unless it was *Where's the fucking money?*

The gentleman in question was Nigel Buchanan, a quietly intimidating man in his thirties wearing expensive casual clothes: a cashmere jacket, dark slacks, an open-neck shirt. Speaking in a soft London accent, he said: "Can you get me inside the Level Four laboratory at Oxenford Medical?"

Kit had suggested Christmas Eve for the robbery, as the only night of the year when he could be sure no one would be working in the lab. Nigel had hesitated, saying his deadline was noon on Christmas Day; but in the end he had seen Kit's logic.

And he offered Kit a fee of a quarter of a million pounds.

Later, Harry had explained that Nigel was a professional thief who stole only to order, for a prearranged price. "Works of art, special jewellery, industrial secrets, nuclear warheads. If you wanted the Magna Carta he'd steal it for you—at a price."

Harry did not know, and Nigel had not said, what he wanted to steal from Oxenford Medical. Kit was able to enlighten him. "My father has invented a new drug that cures <sup>potentially fatal</sup> viruses, ~~illnesses~~. He's testing it on animals, but he's pretty sure it will work on humans. A sample of it would be worth millions to one of the big pharmaceutical companies."

Kit had spent the next three weeks developing and refining a scheme to circumvent all the complex measures he had put in place precisely to prevent this kind of thing at the Kremlin. And now, today, he had to tell Harry the deal was off. ~~Oxenford Medical had just~~

suffered a major breach of security. Tonight of all nights, Toni Gallo would have the place buttoned up tight. It would be madness to try to steal the drug now. They would have to wait until the panic died down and everybody relaxed again. Nigel's deadline would just have to be postponed. *undeviated*

Kit did not relish telling Harry this.

At last he was summoned to Harry's presence. He followed the bodyguard through the laundry at the back of the house into the pool pavilion. *indoor or out? glazed roof?*

It was built to look like an Edwardian orangery, with glazed tiles in sombre colours, the pool itself an unpleasant shade of dark green. Some interior decorator had proposed this, Kit guessed, and Harry had said yes without looking at the plans.

Harry was a stocky man of fifty with the grey skin of a lifelong smoker. He sat at a wrought-iron table, dressed in a purple towelling robe, drinking dark coffee from a small china cup and reading *The Sun*. The newspaper was open at the horoscope page. Daisy was in the water, swimming laps tirelessly. Kit was startled to see that she seemed to be naked except for gloves, a pair of goggles, and a latex helmet covering her shaved head. She always wore gloves.

"I don't need to see you, laddie," Harry said. "I don't want to see you. I don't know anything about you or what you're doing tonight. And I've never met anyone called Nigel Buchanan. Are you catching my drift?" He did not offer Kit a cup of coffee.

The air was hot and humid. Kit was wearing his best suit, a midnight-blue mohair, with a white shirt open at the neck. It seemed an effort to breathe, and his skin felt uncomfortably damp under his clothes. "I had to talk you," Kit said. "Haven't you seen the news?"

**P59**

IT Harry spitting into the pool made me want to gag! V. successful image, then!

“What if I have?”

Kit suppressed a surge of irritation. Men such as Harry could never bring themselves to admit not knowing something. “There’s a big flap on at Oxenford Medical,” he said patiently. “A technician died of a virus.”

“What do you want me to do, send flowers?”

“They’ll be tightening up their security. This is the worst possible time to try to rob the place. It’s difficult enough anyway. They have a state-of-the-art alarm system. And the woman in charge of it all is as tough as a rubber steak.”

“What a whinger you are.”

Kit leaned on the back of a chair. Harry had not asked him to sit down, so he remained standing, feeling awkward. “We have to call it off.”

“Let me explain something to you.” Harry took a cigarette from a packet on the table and lit it with a gold lighter. Then he coughed, an old smoker’s cough from the depths of his lungs. When the spasm passed, he spat into the pool and drank some more coffee. Then he resumed. “For one thing, I’ve said it’s going to happen. Now you may not realise this, being so well brought up, but when a man says something is going to happen, and then it doesn’t, people think he’s a wanker.”

“Yes, but—“

“Don’t even dream of interrupting me.”

Kit shut up.

“For another thing, Nigel Buchanan is not some drugged-up schoolboy wanting to rob Woolworth’s in Govan. He’s connected with some highly respected people in London. When you’re dealing with folk like that, even more you don’t want to look like a wanker.”

He paused, as if expecting a response, but Kit said nothing.

“And for a third thing, you owe me a quarter of a million pounds. No one has ever owed me that much money for as long as you have and still been able to walk without crutches. I trust I’m making myself clear.”

Kit nodded, ~~but kept his mouth shut. He was so scared he felt he might throw up.~~ <sup>to glare to speak,</sup> x

“So don’t tell me we have to call it off.” Harry picked up the *The Sun* as if the conversation was over.

~~Kit forced himself to speak.~~ <sup>Kit</sup> “I meant postpone it, not call it off,” <sup>to say</sup> he managed. “We can do it another day, when the fuss has died down.” x

Harry ~~spoke without looking~~ <sup>did not look</sup> up from his horoscope. “Midday on Christmas Day, Nigel said. And I want my money.” ✓

~~Kit felt as if he were talking to the wall.~~ <sup>Kit</sup> “There’s no point in doing it if we’re going to get caught!” ~~he~~ said desperately. “Everyone will just have to wait a little longer, that’s all.” x

Harry glanced toward the pool and made a beckoning gesture with his hand. Daisy must have been watching him while swimming, for she immediately climbed out of the pool. She did not take off the rubber cap, the goggles or the gloves. She had muscular shoulders and arms. Her shallow breasts hardly moved as she walked. Kit saw that she had a tattoo over one breast and a nipple ring in the other. When she came closer, he realised that she was shaved all over. ~~She had a flat belly and lean thighs, and her pubic mound was prominent.~~ x

Every detail was visible, not just to Kit but to her father, if he cared to look. Kit felt weird.

Harry did not seem to notice. “Kit wants us to wait for our money, Daisy.” He stood up and tightened the belt of his robe. “Explain to him how we feel about that—I’m too tired.” He put the newspaper under his arm and walked away.

Daisy grabbed Kit by the lapels of his best suit. "Look," Kit pleaded, "I just want to make sure this doesn't end in disaster for all of us." Then Daisy jerked him sideways. He lost his balance. Before he could fall to the ground, she threw him into the pool.

If the worst thing she did was ruin his suit, he was thinking—then, as he got his head above the surface, she jumped on him, her knees smashing into his back and shoulder painfully, so that he cried out and then swallowed water as his head went under.

They were at the shallow end, and when his feet touched the bottom he struggled to stand upright. Then his head was clamped by Daisy's arm and he was pulled off balance again. She held him face down under the water.

He held his breath, expecting her to punch him, or something, but she remained still. Needing to breathe, he began to struggle, trying to break her hold, but it was useless. He became angry, and lashed out feebly with his arms and legs. He felt like a small child in a tantrum, flailing helplessly in the grip of its mother.

His need for air became desperate, and he fought down panic as he resisted the urge to open his mouth and gasp. He realised that Daisy had his head under her left arm and was down on one knee with her own head just above the surface. He made himself still, so that his feet floated down. He got his legs under him and his feet found the security of the bottom. Then he put all his strength into an upward jerk of his body, to dislodge Daisy's hold. She hardly moved, just tightened her grip on his head. It was like having his skull squeezed by steel pincers.

He opened his eyes. His cheek was pressed against her bony ribs. He twisted his head an inch, opened his mouth, and bit her. He felt her flinch, and her grip weakened a little. He clamped his jaws together, trying to bite all the way through the fold of skin between his

teeth. Then he felt her gloved hand on his face and her fingers pushing into his eyes. Reflexively, he tried to pull away, and involuntarily relaxed his mouth and let her flesh slip from his bite.

Panic overcame him. He could not hold his breath any longer. His body, starved of oxygen, forced him to gasp for air, and water rushed into his lungs. He found himself coughing and vomiting at the same time, and after each spasm more water poured down his throat. He realised he could die of this.

Then she seemed to relent. She jerked his head out of the water. He opened his mouth wide and sucked in blessed pure air. He coughed a jet of water out of his lungs. Then, before he could take another breath, she shoved his head under the surface again, and instead of air he inhaled water.

Panic turned to something worse. Mad with fear, he thrashed about under the water. Terror gave him strength, and Daisy struggled to hold him still, but he could not get his head up. He no longer tried to keep his mouth shut, but let the water flood into him.

Daisy pulled his head out again.

He spewed water and drew in a precious gasp of air. Then his head was submerged again.

He screamed, but no sound came out. His struggles weakened. He knew Harry had not intended for Daisy to kill him, for then there would be no robbery—but Daisy was not sane, and she might just go too far. He decided he was going to die. His eyes were open, showing him only a green blur; then his vision began to darken, as if night were falling.

At last he passed out.

The physical action is strong but we'd be more involved ~~but~~ if we suffered with him more. Does he feel any remorse for having gotten involved with these monsters, for having broken his promise to his father? Might he debate whether or not he'd be better off dead? Has he considered fleeing and regrets that he hasn't? What, if anything, would he know about Daisy's sex life?