

**P206**

**Chapter Twenty-Three: 1:15am (pps206-209)**

*Toni arrives at the Kremlin*

KF: Each time Toni comes in contact with the police, she hankers for the old days; then, each time she brings off a small triumph, she exults that her skills still have a value.

KF: Steve reports to Toni what he overheard one of the gang say, that they have to make the rendezvous by noon today.

PG: The disastrous consequences of having the lethal virus moved across the countryside should be emphasized as this, rather than the gang's personal viciousness, is what will keep the reader totally immersed in your story. The world is terrified by the prospect of bioterrorism, and I think you can play on this fear. KF: That would require a much bigger police response.

AB: I kept on wondering why no one suggested sending a helicopter in addition to the snow plough to look for the robbers given the stakes involved. NG/AB: Glasgow police have one helicopter. But in this situation military helicopters from either Prestwich or HMS Gannet are 40 minutes away. The Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBRA) would be able to make this happen.

NG/AB: Staffing at Stirling police HQ at 2am on Xmas Day would be 1 inspector, 2 sergeants and 6 constables. There would also be a duty superintendent on call. There would be 20-30 officers on duty at distant outposts, and that's it. However, they would quickly call in many more personnel to deal with an incident such as this. "All hands to the pump." The on-call superintendent would phone the CBRN commander, who would notify the Assistant Chief Constable, who would probably notify the chief constable.

# 1:15 a.m.

Carl Osborne braked his Jaguar to a halt alongside the gatehouse of the Kremlin. Toni was sitting in the passenger seat beside him. Her own car had refused to start after the accident, and she had been forced to beg a lift from him.

She handed him her pass and her mother's pension book. "Give these to the guard with your press card," she told him. All visitors had to show identification.

Carl wound the window down and handed over the documents.

Looking across him, Toni saw Rob McKinnon. "Hi, Rob, it's me," she called. "I've got two visitors with me."

"Hello, Ms Gallo," said the guard. "Is that lady in the back holding a dog?"

"Don't ask," she said.

He copied the names down from the press card and the pension book and handed them back. "You'll find Steve in reception."

"Are the phones fixed yet?"

"No, the repair crew went to get spare parts."

"Okay."

The guard lifted the barrier and Carl drove in.

Toni suppressed a wave of irritation at Hibernian Telecom. On a night like tonight,

they should have brought with them all the parts they needed. The weather was continuing to get worse, and the roads might soon be impassable. She doubted that they would be back before morning.

Carl pulled up at the main entrance. "Wait here," Toni said, and sprang out before he could argue. She ran up the steps between the stone lions and pushed through the door. She was surprised to see there was no one at the reception desk.

She hesitated. One of the guards might be on patrol, but they should not have gone together. They could be anywhere in the building—and the front door was unguarded.

She headed for the control room. The monitors would show her where the missing guards were.

She was astonished to find the control room empty.

*Bigger reaction*  
 (This was bad.) Four guards were missing. It was not just a divergence from procedure. Something was wrong. *How upset is she feeling?*

She looked again at the monitors. Most of them showed empty rooms. If four guards were on patrol in the building, one of them should appear on a monitor within a few seconds. There was no movement anywhere.

Then something caught her eye. She looked more closely at the feed from the camera just inside BSL4. What was that on the right hand side of the screen?

It looked remarkably like a group of people sitting on the floor.

Were they dead?

She peered at the black-and-white picture. One of the people moved. They were not dead, then. So why were they on the floor?

A moment later she realised they were tied up.

*Suggest you integrate the above with more frenzy and panic*

"No, no!" she said aloud.

She felt doomed. First Mark Ross, now this. Where had she gone wrong? She had done everything she could to make this place secure—and she had failed utterly. ~~For a~~ ~~moment,~~ she wanted to sit down on the floor and cry.

The moment passed. She turned for the door, her first instinct being to rush to BSDL4 and untie the captives—but she repressed it. Stop, think, plan, she told herself. The perpetrators could still be in the building. What was the most important task? To make sure she was not the only person who knew about this.

She picked up the phone on the desk. It was dead, of course. The fault in the system was probably part of whatever was going on. She took her mobile from her pocket and called the police.

A man's voice said: "Regional headquarters, Sergeant Dawes."

"This is Toni Gallo, in charge of security at Oxenford Medical. There's been an incident here. Four of my security guards have been attacked and tied up."

Sergeant Dawes said: "Are the perpetrators on the premises?"

"I don't know." In fact, Toni guessed the departed telephone repair crew were the culprits, but she did not know for sure, and she wanted the police here as soon as possible.

"Anyone injured?"

"I don't know. As soon as I get off the phone, I'm going to check. But I wanted to tell you first."

"I'm glad you did, but it's going to be difficult to get a car to you up there. The roads are bad even here in town."

"This could be a biohazard incident. A young man died yesterday of a virus that

*Would she ask that they come armed?  
Does she carry a weapon, and if not  
might she be scared about not having  
one?*

escaped from here.”

“We’ll do our best.”

“I believe Frank Hackett is on duty tonight. Is he in the building?”

“He’s on call, but he’s not here.”

“I strongly recommend you phone him at home and wake him up and tell him about this.”

“I don’t know about that.”

“We have a fault on the phones here, probably caused by the intruders. Please take my mobile number.” She read it out, and Dawes repeated it. “Ask Frank to call me right away.”

“I’ve got the message.”

Toni hung up.

She hurried out of the control room and along the corridor to BSL4. She swiped her pass through the card reader, held her fingertip to the scanner, and passed through the airlock. There were Steve, Susan, Don and Stu, in a row against the wall, all bound hand and foot. Susan looked as if she had walked into a door: her nose was swollen and there was blood on her chin and chest. Don had a nasty-looking abrasion on his forehead.

Toni knelt down and began to untie them, starting with Steve. “What the hell happened here?” she said.

*How worried would she be that they  
may be infected?*