

Author's note: this story is a sequel to 2013's "Psychic Movements."
<http://robertfordfiction.com/2013-psychic-movements/>

Christmas Story 2018

London Calling

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I do not surprise easily because I'm psychic.

My phone booped with a text message from Sylvia. "I need your help."

Sylvia was an ex-girlfriend who worked for the British government in the international criminal investigation division of Scotland Yard or the Secret Service, depending on the whims of the British government. (It was a re-org a week with them.)

Before I could answer, the phone pinged again. "There will be a knock on your door."

On cue, there was a knock on the door. The fact someone was that close to my door without me feeling it was interesting.

My phone pinged. "It will be a large Scottish lad named Glenn. He works for MI6."

I opened my door. Glenn was massive. 6 foot 4 at least. "You must be Glenn," I said. He was flanked by 2 RCMP officers neither of whom were exactly diminutive.

"Yes, sir. Your phone should now be confirming what I'm going to ask."

My phone pinged. "He's there to take you to the airport."

"Really," I said.

"Yes sir. We're here to escort you to Pearson for a flight to London. A matter of some urgency."

"But I have ..."

The slightly less large RCMP officer stepped forward with a document. "Your absence has been cleared with Toronto Police Department, Mr. Collins. You are cleared to go."

"But I'll need ..."

"Just grab your passport sir and a coat," said Glenn. "I have a travel backpack equipped to your specifications as provided by Agent Dashwood." AKA Sylvia.

My phone pinged. "I have the right underwear for you. Don't worry. Two days max."

I was shown to an unmarked police car and, with the lights flashing, I was whisked to the airport by Glenn. Not much of a talker and literally not much of a thinker. He could compartmentalize in a way I'd only seen in people when they meditate.

"I assume you *don't* know why Sylvia is bringing me to London." I said to Glenn.

"That's right."

"Were you in Toronto already or did you fly in for this?"

"I was here already."

Not a thing. Normally when you ask people questions their minds flit over interrelated details. Not this guy.

"Where'd you grow up? You sound more Aberdeen to me than Glasgow."

"Naim. It's closer to Inverness." He was polite. If my memory of Scottish geography was correct, Inverness is about 100 miles from Aberdeen.

And with that detail, all I got was an image of him as a little boy scraping his knee. Sheesh, when people think of their home town, I normally get a ton of detail.

"I can see why Sylvia picked you."

"I've only met Agent Dashwood once over video chat."

Nothing. At this point I gave up. Sylvia flat out refused by text message to tell me anything about this. I looked more closely at the contents of the backpack. Toiletry kit, two pants, two shirts, two pairs of underwear and socks.

Glenn parked the car in what looked like an illegal spot at the international departures area. One of the RCMP vehicles drove on, but the other stayed. He walked me right to the departure gate for BA92. From what I could gather we were very close to the departure time. The young gate agent was taken with Glenn, surprise surprise. Backpack in hand, I walked down the jetway.

A flight attendant greeted me; she knew nothing except I was a VIP. She hustled me to my comfortable Business Class seat. I could feel that Glenn did not leave the gate until the plane doors were closed. They were not interested in me trying to sneak off the flight.

Shortly after take off, a flight attendant handed me an envelope. "Someone made quite an effort to get this to you Mr. Collins." I opened the envelope. It was from Sylvia, handwritten.

Thanks, dear heart, for jumping on this flight. You'll see when you get here why I need your peculiar talents. Her Majesty's Government is covering the bill for this so please try to enjoy the in-flight service. You are going to land early morning local time, so grab some shuteye. I'll explain everything then.

Funny, I thought. She knew perfectly well I don't sleep on planes.

The next thing I knew I was being asked if I wanted breakfast. I had somehow fallen asleep shortly after reading Sylvia's note. In fact, I was still holding her note. I put it in my backpack and noticed on my index finger and thumb a slight discolouration and residue. Sleep inducing drugs on the paper? Hmm. She really didn't want me thinking too much before seeing her.

Once the plane had landed and the door opened, two Heathrow security agents came on board and asked for me. A couple of people around me looked shocked and were wondering if they had flown near a criminal. "No worries," I said, "my ride is here."

I was whisked out the door, off the jetway and into a waiting vehicle. The side door of the van slid open. I could see Sylvia at the wheel. A UK Border Agency officer was in the van waiting. The two security agents followed in me into the seats. It was a bit tight for space in the van.

"Welcome to London," she said. "Please provide your passport to Mr. Henderson and he'll do his job while we drive in the direction of our job."

There was a lot I wanted to say to her, but with three strangers in the van, I stayed silent.

Once off the active airway, the security and customs guys exited the vehicle. "Come up front with me," said Sylvia.

Before she drove off, she hugged me and kissed me. "You are still so cute. Not fair." In her 40s, she had her sporty figure and wonderful lines about the face. The scar on her cheek which used to make her tough-looking was blending into her unique combination of laugh and worry lines.

She switched on the vehicle's sirens and lights and drove like a madwoman.

What you need to know about Sylvia is that we had a prolonged fling two years ago after meeting at a conference for forensics and profiling held by the Society for Police and Criminal Psychology.

She is an abnormally good empath. Typically, folks with this level of sensitivity to other people's feelings can't manage all the input and become anti-social. Sylvia could manage it all and is brilliant in victim and suspect interviews.

She figured out early that I could pluck *actual* thoughts from people's heads.

"Sweetheart, I need you not to go peering into my head. I'm blocking you all the ways you taught me and this is all because I have a crime scene I need you to look at cold."

"Fair enough, but did you have to drug me?"

"I know you don't sleep on planes and I needed you fresh."

"Any chance 'fresh' can have *double entendre*?"

"I love it when you speak German."

I kept the chit-chat in the car on current events, the goings-on of mutual friends and so forth.

We eventually pulled up to a boutique hotel right near Piccadilly. There was a police presence out front and she handed me an ID to put around my neck. She displayed hers and we entered the hotel and went to the 3rd floor. It was about 5 degrees C outside but as we exited the "lift," I could tell it was getting colder. A uniformed officer let us into the crime scene.

"You refrigerated the scene?"

"This happened two days ago, as far as we can tell, and I ordered it cooled off until you could get here."

I put on anti-contamination gear and started my walk through of the 2-bedroom suite room. I couldn't help but wonder how bad the nightly rate for this room would be. Hundreds of pounds I suspected.

There were three bodies. The first two were in the main living area in front of the TV. They looked like they'd hit the ground like sacks of potatoes.

Sylvia stood behind me and observed.

One was in a hotel robe and the other in a suit. Both seemed to be male.

The state of decomposition was all wrong.

I now knew why she asked me to inspect this scene. There was no way Sylvia wasn't going to feel the waves of surprise coming off me, no matter how well I might try to hide it.

"Two days?" I asked.

"As best we can tell based on date of check-in and CCTV footage."

I walked into the bedroom where the third victim, in a similar state of decomposition was on the bed. He seemed to have fallen and crumpled on one side.

About five years ago I met a woman named Kendra who could teleport. There were no shimmering lights or technology. She would simply pop from one place to another. She helped me catch a rare female serial killer – one who nearly killed me. But to save me, Kendra – at my insistence – teleported *with* the killer, which instantly turned her into a dead semi-decomposed state. Exactly the same as I was looking at.

I hadn't seen Kendra in years. We were close friends for a while but I think my line of police work was too depressing. Or maybe I was too depressing a friend.

Making things more complicated is that Sylvia was literally the only person I'd told about Kendra. A year or so ago, we were on the serious relationship track and I'd told her about my guilt about the way I asked Kendra to deal with the serial killer – Kendra should not have been asked to do that.

For the first time since inspecting the bodies, I looked right at Sylvia. She'd done a very good job of hiding her thoughts and now I was no longer Mr. Nice Guy. I wanted all the information she had. She knew better than to try to block me. Two of the three deceased men in the room were foreign nationals. Saudis. One a senior diplomat and another a member of the General Intelligence Directorate (GID). This based on the assumption that the bodies belonged to the IDs found on the premises. The third body, which was in the suit, had no ID so far. I could tell someone had checked the suit for a wallet, but found none.

"Did your team search for the wallet in the suit? If so, was the suit disturbed *before* they looked for ID?"

"We believe the suit had been disturbed post-mortem – i.e. before we searched," she said.

Beyond that they didn't know much. Her investigative branch was always brought in on the foreign national killings. Earlier in the year, the assassination attempts in Salisbury had her group hopping.

"So?" she asked. "What's the deal?"

"Let's say I'm thinking outside the box. Question 1: is there any evidence of a fourth person in the room? Video surveillance?"

"No video of another person."

"Let's review the positioning of the bodies. If we start in the bedroom, I am thinking he died with his arms straight holding himself partly off the bed and then fell to one side. The other two were in the living area and died standing up, then collapsed."

"What role was the fourth person playing before killing them?"

"What do you mean?" Sylvia asked.

"The killer was in the room. The guy in the bedroom and the guy in the bathrobe were very comfortable. What's the deal with the guy in the suit?"

I walked back in the bedroom. I was looking for any sign of a woman's presence, but it was clean. Whoever she was, she'd taken the suit's ID and any trace of herself.

"Mr. Collins," said Sylvia. "You look like a man with a theory."

"OK, I figure the guy in the suit was the broker for an expensive prostitute that Saudi A and Saudi B were going to enjoy. The woman killed the three of them. The other scenario is drugs but there's no indication of even alcohol in this room. Which for the UK is atypical."

"Cause of death?" asked Sylvia.

"I need to think **and** the walls have ears **and** you need to take these bodies for a more detailed forensic examination. **And** you need to look for trace DNA in and around the bed. **And** ... coffee." Into Sylvia's mind, I put an image of The Wolseley, which I hoped was still in business.

Sylvia nodded.

It took about an hour, but we made it to The Wolseley, eating breakfast, and we were both pretty sure we weren't being spied on.

"So, I'm dying of curiosity," Sylvia said. "Am I right? Was it her?"

"Hard to say. The decomposition was consistent with my one experience."

"But you don't think it's her," said Sylvia.

"No. First of all, she wouldn't be in that situation. Think about it. She doesn't need to do that work. Even if she were there for a good reason, as soon as it got hairy, pop, gone. The other option is a pre-meditated attack. If so, then, why leave the bodies at all? Pop. Top of Mount Elbrus. Pop, back home putting a kettle on."

"Can you reach out to her to find out?"

"I can try but ... what am I going to say, 'Hey Kendra, did you happen to off a couple of Saudi big wigs and a sex trafficker?'"

"You're the psychic; perhaps you can be subtle about it?"

Her phone pinged. "They want me at the morgue. Finish your breakfast and we'll talk later. If you're lucky there'll be old-friends-hooking-up-for-the-first-time-in-a-while sex. Tonight. Because I promised your bosses I'd only keep you two days."

Obviously, I had to contact Kendra. But Sylvia worked with the spooks that inspired James Bond *and* London has more CCTV cameras than Montreal has helpings of poutine.

Kendra and I had a close friendship (without benefits) four years ago. But before we parted ways, she made me promise **not** to contact her psychically, but rather by coded cell phone message and only if it were life-and-death.

I was pretty sure Sylvia kept her spy-boys away while we spoke, but I was starting to sense closed, disciplined minds like Glenn's. With British Intelligence likely watching me, I needed to use a phone that wasn't my own.

There was the hustle and bustle in London that picks up on Christmas week. Perhaps a little pick pocketing would work. "We've got to pick a pocket or two" from *Oliver* went through my mind. It was time for me to finish eating and walk like a tourist.

Along Piccadilly, I found a drug dealer moving cash. He looked like any other bloke on the street. I projected into his mind the memory of his mother dying right as I bumped into him. There was a three second window while his searing mind was basically blinded. I liberated one of his envelopes of cash. Then I said, "hey man, are you OK?"

He replied that he was OK; the tears in his eyes prevented him from seeing me.

It took a lot more walking along to find someone who wasn't so fussed about his or her phone and would be able to use the cash. I found a shopper in a bookstore who had a phone in an easily accessible bag. With the money I dropped off, she'd be able to buy about 12 new iPhones.

I headed to a toilet, as they say in London, and found a stall. I didn't have much time before the folks following me would wonder if this was up to more than a hardy BM.

I had picked the password from the mind of the owner of the stolen phone; I punched it in. I initiated a sync of her contacts and data to her cloud account. Then I texted Kendra.

I really hoped that she was able to chat, wherever she was.

She pinged me back. I summarized the situation and asked for a meeting.

She said once I had a secure location to either send a picture or use my mind tricks.

I dismantled the phone, flushed the SIM card, and left the stall. I kept the phone, in parts, in my pocket.

The real trick was to find alone time. I had two shadows who had both shown concern at my length of time in the toilet.

Something occurred to me. Why do I have *two* people tailing me? Why any, for that matter. I was some profiling nerd from Canada, not a high value target. Unless of course Sylvia's bosses knew what I could do and wanted to exploit me. Ugh.

I kept my pretend shopping spree going and headed in the direction of Trafalgar Square. I was walking down Haymarket – was surprised to see a Planet Hollywood – and deliberately dropped a pen. My first shadow was closer than he thought; I abruptly ran in the opposite direction, picked up my pen and stood face-to-face with the first shadow, a young sandy haired, pale complexion sort.

"Hey," I said, "did you know there's a second tail on me?"

He was genuinely shocked I'd made him and he thought, *why the hell would he tell me that?*

"Yes. She's south Asian in appearance, about 5 foot 1 and wearing a green winter coat. She's kind of pretty." I also could tell she was concerned that I had stopped to talk to someone. I was fairly sure these two were both British Intelligence, but they did not know they were on the same job.

"I'm sorry I just don't understand," he said, lying.

"It doesn't matter," I said, at which point I shoved him hard to the sidewalk and ran into traffic (carefully) on Haymarket and bolted down Orange Street. As I'd hoped, when the lady shadow started to follow me, my first shadow intercepted her.

I had no doubt that they'd catch me as cardio training isn't one of my things, but took Jermyn Street and scooted back onto Piccadilly. I ran into the Holiday Inn (it was full) but then darted across the street to book a room at The Ritz London. Amazingly, this close to Christmas, they had a room. I used my son's credit card to delay MI6 (or whoever) from tracing me. (My kid was not going to be happy to see a £600 charge on the card.)

But, the shadows were out of psychic range now. I had lost them.

Now I really had to contact Kendra. Years ago, I had made a long-distance psychic connection with her, but out of respect had not used it since. I sat in the chair in the room and tried to relax, then reached out with a picture of the hotel and the room number.

Whup.

"Wow, Stephen, The Ritz. Either you're moving up in the world or you are insane."

She was there. Looking as cool, well-dressed, urbane and beautiful as I'd last seen her four years ago.

And then, unexpectedly, I burst into tears.

I don't do that. Cry, that is. I attributed it to the stress of fleeing trained professionals and then seeing Kendra for the first time in years.

"Are you OK?" she asked. "I mean clearly you aren't OK, but are you OK **now**?"

"Just a little stressed," I said. "And so glad to see you."

"OK. Now, tell me *everything*."

After I related the whole experience including how I figuratively and literally arrived at The Ritz, Kendra looked like she was smelling a rat. I don't try to read her mind because years ago I promised I wouldn't.

"I don't have to be psychic to see you're skeptical. Lay it out for me."

"Even with the fact I'm jealous of Sylvia, I don't think she's telling you everything. There are a couple of possibilities. These bodies were faked to look like they died by teleportation. Or is there another teleporter who was assigned to kill these guys and leave their bodies?"

My mind had a lot of questions. "If they faked it, they did so for what reason?"

"Come on, Stephen. Us. Visualize a psychic and teleporter in the labs of a major government."

"Shit. I can't see her doing that."

"Maybe she doesn't know she's doing it. Pretend she told someone or kept a journal or talks in her sleep. Whatever. Some shithead in the secret service might want to test that we exist."

"You said, 'another teleporter'. Is there another one?"

"I met a 97-year-old woman in Sri Lanka who could go short distances."

"How did you ... ?"

"Long story," Kendra interrupted, "which I'll tell you at another time. So, there could be another teleporter. But, I would not know where to start."

The hotel room phone rang. We both stared at it.

"That can't be good," said Kendra.

I waited one more ring and picked it up. Before I could even say hello, I heard, "You have 10 minutes tops before they break in. Meet me at the Sin Bin. 69278" I put the phone down.

"Well?" asked Kendra.

"That was Sylvia. She said we have 10 minutes max before they break in here. I suggest you get out of here now."

Kendra handed me my backpack, grabbed me and hugged me close. She smelled lovely and I could feel her pulse pounding. Then she held my hands and said, "I learned a new trick."

The next thing I knew I was collapsed on the grass in Regent's Park, about two-and-a-half miles away, throwing up.

"Fuck, did you just ...?"

"Yes. Yes I did."

"That's some trick," I said. The enormity of the fact she'd figured out how to transport *with* someone was mind-blowing.

"Now, as you've observed," she said, "there are side-effects. We have to find food fast or we will both become hypoglycemic and pass out."

I looked around. "The Zoo is near here," I said.

We found our way into the Zoo, paying cash, and went to a food kiosk.

"Wow," I said, "I feel like I've been on an ultra low carb diet for a week. When did you figure this out?"

"A couple of months ago. I had a job to rescue some vital documents from a fire in California. There was a dog trapped in the house. I had to try. And it worked. Close proximity. Touch. Emotional contact. Fear."

"How many times have you tried it with people before me?"

"None."

"I really wish I hadn't asked that question."

"Let's change the subject!" said Kendra. "What now, spy-boy?"

"Sylvia gave me, in code – sort of – a location to meet her. I suggest we go and, assuming it's not a trap, try to figure this out with her."

We bought funny hats from the Zoo shop and tried to alter our appearance. With CCTV everywhere, I was concerned I would be identified, so we left right away.

Kendra and I took the Tube to Earl's Court. It was funny, the woman who could teleport was baffled by public transit.

The Sin Bin was a tiny flat Sylvia kept in her sister's name in Earl's Court. She would retreat into calm surroundings when her work got to her. With her hyper empathy skills, this retreat was crucial to her sanity.

We were outside Nando's Chicken, above which was the flat. Both of us had discussed the idea of how to make sure the place wasn't a trap. I was pretty sure the flat was empty, but Kendra was going to teleport in-and-out to be sure. I didn't have an operating phone so she couldn't text me. I had to put the picture of what the interior of the flat looked like into her head. She vanished and the next 30 seconds were torture.

Whup. She was back and said, "Coast is clear. Let's buy take out chicken before going up."

I used the passcode Sylvia gave me to access the front door; the code also worked on the hidden keypad under the decorative plate.

Once we were inside, we looked around. Kendra found the contrast amusing – a Buddhist prayer room and a party girl's bedroom, separated only by a small bathroom. The incense, prayer table, floor cushions, various statues of Buddha seemed not in keeping with the Andy Warhol colours and satin sheets.

The place was as I remembered it. We had meditated together in one room and made love in the other.

There was a tiny kitchen; we sat in there and waited. We talked about Christmas. I wanted to know if she was going to be in Toronto to visit her parents, who were divorced. She asked me about my grown sons. One had a baby now.

"I'd like to see you," I said. "It was a mistake to end our friendship."

"Are you getting mushy on me?" Kendra asked. "I think maybe we should get out of London alive first."

Then I felt Sylvia's presence. "She's here."

We heard the door unlocking and Sylvia entered with her side arm drawn and a small purse over her left shoulder.

"Stephen?"

"Hey Sylvia, it's just me and Kendra."

Once she saw us in the kitchen, she holstered her gun. I stood; she came over, dropped her purse, and hugged me. "I was so worried." She turned to Kendra and shook her hand. "It's a pleasure to meet you."

Then Sylvia had that slight tilt to her head when she was picking up vibes from people.

"Jesus, Stephen, you didn't tell me she was so beautiful."

Kendra was taken aback, but still had a trademark Kendra cheeky comeback. "Yeah, Stephen, what's the problem?"

"Problem?" said Sylvia, "He's totally in love with you. And, girl, you aren't far behind."

"Um," I said, "could we save the dating game issues until after you tell us what the hell is going on?"

"Honestly, I have no idea why two different groups from British Intelligence are after you."

"Our operating theory is that they are trying to capture both me and Kendra," I said. "Is there the possibility that the bodies were faked to draw us out?"

"That's an idea, but the staging of those bodies. How would they know?" asked Sylvia

"You," said Kendra, "would have had to tell them."

"But I didn't," said Sylvia.

"Did you get any information from post mortem exams?" I asked.

"The FME said the bodies looked like they'd been left for multiple days at room temperature but the clothing was not consistent with that," said Sylvia. "No cause of death was speculated."

"To stage that," I said, "it would mean you'd have to let bodies decay for a while, fit them into clothes, fake the security footage with either look-alikes or modifying the video. That's just too much work. For what?"

"It was a teleporter," said Kendra.

"But it wasn't you," said Sylvia.

"I know that," said Kendra.

"More importantly, sweetie, *I* know it. Your feelings are not those of anyone who does that kind of thing. Can I ask a favour?"

"You want to see it," said Kendra.

"Yeah," Sylvia said sheepishly.

Whup. Kendra was in the prayer room, calling out, "I guess you don't keep snacks in here, eh?"

"Bugger me," said Sylvia.

"The parlour tricks we can all do are very fun," I said, "but can we please figure this out? For example, was the third guy identified?"

"Not yet," said Sylvia.

"We have to figure out why other parts of your government are after me and, presumably, Kendra. There is of course the possibility that they found out without you knowing."

"How?"

"You had gall bladder surgery last year, right?"

"Yeah."

"I have an idea. If you'll let me do a bit of a reading of you, I might be able to find some memories. It won't take long and if we set up your prayer room for meditation that'll help. Kendra, can you keep watch? It'll look like we're in a trace."

"Sure," she said.

Sylvia was nervous but she set up a calming incense and we sat on the floor cross-legged, holding hands. I poked into her mind gently, we regulated our breathing and I asked her to think back to her surgery and remember all the little details leading up to being put under. I was picking up info as her mind rolled through. There was the black time of being under, but then when she was coming out in the recovery room, there was a man with a needle who put a little something extra in her. Then he asked questions about me. During that drugged interrogation, she mentioned my story of the teleporter.

I gently broke our connection and joint meditation session and I pushed into her mind the images and sounds of what I had received from her.

Sylvia snapped out of it. "Bastard!"

"Who was it?" I asked.

"Willoughby," she said.

That name did not mean anything to me until a torrent of her memories – including a sexual relationship between Sylvia and him in this flat – rushed into my head. The important parts included a general suspicion that Willoughby was selling services on the side, possibly to the Russians.

"We have to get out of here **right now**," said Sylvia. She ran to grab her purse. She pulled out an airline ticket. "These are your return tickets." She shoved them in my hand. "Get to the airport and get the fuck out of here." Sylvia looked at Kendra. "You too." I shoved the tickets into my backpack and strapped it to my back.

I could feel their minds getting closer – those locked down MI6 minds. I was quite sure one was Glenn; he must have jumped on a flight right after mine. There were definitely three people.

"Get down, get down, get down!" I said to them.

Bullets blasted through the door and the wall. Kendra had hit the ground the second I spoke, but Sylvia lunged to protect me and took a bullet in the thigh. She screamed really loudly. The gunfire stopped.

I slid her out of what I thought was the line of fire. It was a gusher; there was blood everywhere. I grabbed a cushion from the prayer room and applied pressure. She needed medical help immediately. I looked at Kendra.

"Shit, no. Please," she said.

"What hospitals do you know in London? One you can *really* visualize?"

"What the hell are two talking about?" Sylvia was beyond frightened.

"OK honey," Kendra grabbed Sylvia hard and pressed her cheek against Sylvia's. I grabbed Sylvia's gun and moved away. I couldn't help but cringe.

"Stephen," said Kendra. "I don't care how tired this jump will make me. I'm coming back to help."

"I fucking hope so," I said.

"Sylvia," Kendra said seriously. "You may feel some ... *gastric* side effects."

Whup. They were gone. (I found out later St Thomas' Hospital's Emergency Room had quite a surprise.)

My firearm experience was limited to the basics at the gun range with the Toronto police. One problem was I didn't have a target. Or, actually, I had three targets that I couldn't see. But, with my mind, I could get a sense that they were confused by the sudden cessation of screaming. And two of them were standing by the door. The third was further away at street level.

Although Sylvia's Glock 17 had a modified grip to better fit her smaller hand, I managed to squeeze off two rounds, thigh height, through both sides of the door and snake-crawl myself into the prayer room.

My shots might have given one of them a fright, but it was far from scaring them off. But I was sure one of them was Glenn, my escort to the airport.

A few more shots came through the walls. I wasn't thinking of shooting again. It was time to penetrate Glenn's mind. I had only the one image of his childhood, where he scraped his knee. I concentrated as hard as I could to put that in his head, followed by *Glenn, it's me, Stephen Collins, don't shoot. I'm a nerd. Willoughby is compromised. Repeat Willoughby is compromised.*

And then I felt Kendra's mind. I tried to send her an image of Glenn. *Take out the other one first,* I thought.

I heard a giant whump in the hallway, I made for the door, gun still in hand, to find Glenn staring at Kendra, who was holding a large heavy frying pan and standing over a now highly concussed large man.

I had the gun pointed at Glenn. "Lower yours; I lower mine."

"What the ..." said Glenn.

I looked at Kendra. "A frying pan?"

"I got it from the hospital kitchen. What? I was hungry."

"Where's Agent Dashwood?" asked Glenn.

"Hospital; I don't know which of you morons shot her." I could feel the third mind realizing things had gone wrong. I assumed it was Willoughby and ran downstairs in pursuit. Glenn was on my heels.

On the other side of Earl's Court Road, Willoughby turned and pointed a gun at us. "Get back!" he screamed.

Glenn moved away from me, also aiming at Willoughby, making us two targets. "Drop the gun Willoughby." Personally, with a deep Scottish voice like that I was surprised Willoughby didn't do what he said.

Then I heard it. Whup (which was Kendra appearing just behind Glenn and me) and then *another* whup. The short south Asian woman – the one who was the second person shadowing me – appeared out

of nowhere right behind Willoughby. She smiled, pulled a knife, plunged it into Willoughby's neck and twisted it – which I'll never forget – then whup. Gone.

Spurting blood, Willoughby hit the ground. Pedestrians ran away screaming. Sirens could be heard. Whup. Kendra was gone. I was confident she'd connect later.

I handed Sylvia's gun to Glenn, who was stunned, and said, "Glenn, always a pleasure to see you."

I joined the pedestrians who were running away. At a run, Earl's Court Tube Station was literally seconds away. There was a toilet on the way, where I pulled spare pants and shirt from my backpack and changed. I also ditched my jacket, which was blood-stained.

At Heathrow, I was able to swap my ticket for an earlier flight and buy a sweater to replace my coat.

I don't normally drink on airplanes, but with Business Class, and it being free, and my nerves still being stunningly shot, I felt it was OK.

Before things became too blurry, I took the time to sketch out the face of the lady who had killed Willoughby. I was curious if Sylvia knew her.

I also could not help but want to figure out what happened. I now knew who the other teleporter was, but her motivation had me mystified. To fit the facts, she must have teleported into the hotel room before the Saudis and third unknown victim arrived. Hence no video footage. Things went wrong and she killed them via teleporting. She then teleported out. *She must have been really hungry*, I thought. This also explained no video footage exiting.

I hoped that Sylvia was OK. There was no way to find out until I got to Toronto. I also had to nail down my story of how I *wasn't* at Earl's Court at the time Willoughby was murdered.

After the flight, clearing customs and taking a cab home I made it to my apartment where I flopped on my bed and fell asleep.

Wednesday December 19, 2018

The UK news had coverage of an aborted terrorist attack by a deranged government employee, who took his own life when confronted by undercover police. I could feel the wind from across the Atlantic that had been produced by the spin doctors.

Partly to enhance my cover story and partly because I felt really bad for Sylvia, I express-shipped a care package to her in hospital.

Later, I received a text from Kendra. "I'm coming to Toronto for Christmas. I told my parents I had a man I was serious about. They even agreed to be in the same room to meet you. You in?"

I sent back: "With all hands and feet. I can't wait to see you. Let me know the details when you are ready."

December 23, 2018

I received a couriered letter from London. It was a Christmas card from Sylvia.

*Dear Stephen,
I hope this Christmas card finds you and Kendra in good health. (And for God's sake, if she's not there, call her.) The nurses at the hospital and I laughed when 15 pounds of chocolate was delivered. Despite my inclinations, I shared.*

My leg is still a Godawful mess and I've got ages of physio coming. My Olympic trampoline career is

over, I fear. I did enjoy your hand drawing of that lady in your nightmares. She looks strikingly similar to a woman who works with the human trafficking division. Of course she was miles away from that mess in Earl's Court, which I presume you've seen on the news. You might have seen her around the investigation because it seems the third body was that of a man with connections to human trafficking.

Speaking of which, it turns out when they dug deeper into Willoughby's sketchy doings, he wasn't selling out to Russians, he was helping human traffickers move women into Britain. Better money apparently than selling out to the Russians.

What a cheery topic for a Christmas card! Please say hello to your sons for me and have a relaxing holiday - I know I will; I can't bloody move!!

Love, Sylvia.

P.S. Burn this after reading like a good fellow, eh?

Kendra stepped into the hall and put her arm around me. I was still getting used to her being close, but it was a wonderful situation to have to get used to. I handed her the card.

"So, that kind of clinches it, hey? Another teleporter, but one who's a killer vigilante."

December 24, 2018

I was changing in the bedroom. We were going to spend Christmas Eve with my eldest son and see the baby. I heard that distinctive whup. It was swiftly followed by another whup. It had come from the hall by the front door. I could hear Kendra in the bathroom.

I knew there was no one in the hall, but went to see, not knowing what to expect. On the floor by the door was a large pile of documents. I picked them up. In marker, the top page read, "I could use your help with this" followed by a UK telephone number. The stack of paper was case after case of human trafficking. It was distressing, so before Kendra came out and found it, I put it in a bag and stuffed it under the bed. I was not going to deal with this at Christmas.

It was going to make for a very interesting conversation with Kendra on what we do about a homicidal vigilante teleporter who may or may not know that Kendra is a teleporter.

Definitely a conversation I could postpone until after Boxing Day.