

Beware Sister

By Pat Creswell

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Sam crashed out of sleep.

It was Am's flat around her. Her fitful sleep had followed the adrenalin soaked evening. It had not helped at all. Her mind took up four, or was it five days ago. The Principal of the Long Beach Systems education centre had come in and asked her to leave the class for a message. She knew then.

When she was eight the headmaster had done the same. Her mother had been killed in a road accident. Then at University the Rector and her tutor arrived. Her father had died. The main man always means bad news. She was learning about Long Beach's router technology, the switchgear of the internet. She had to learn the basics at a commercial class before the Special Services taught her about the "extras" their planted technicians had put in. Then suddenly this man was telling her Am was dead. Murdered. Her little sis, Am. Dead. They thought her reaction was shock and the WPC took her home and made tea. But it wasn't shock. No, not shock.

The doorbell rang again. The clock said 11.30 am. Sam opened the door.

"Hi!" A pause. "It's Samantha isn't it!" Gillian was beaming. "Remember me? Gillian, Amanda's friend from Oxford?"

Sam remembered. Well it was after Oxford really. Gillian and Am were not that close at Oxford, but the friendship had blossomed since. Am went into Customs and Excise investigations trying to follow Sam's "secret stuff". Gillian took punters to Greek ruins, but she had an uncle near

Am's flat and they had bumped into each other on the street. After that she made a habit of dropping in whenever she was visiting. Usually like this, unexpectedly. "Is Am in?"

"Am's been m. . . , killed." The words were out. Gillian was in the flat. She was holding Sam. She was consoling her before Sam was even reacting. The next few minutes were a blur, or was it longer than that? Sam's mind was at full speed. What could she tell Gillian? She hadn't prepared. Bad form. But then relief came. "Look we've got to get you out of here. We can go to my uncle's. Just round the corner. Sam, just get dressed. Bertie will know how to help." To Sam's great relief Gillian let her go into the bedroom alone. Her thoughts swirled back into her mind.

She was back four days again. Sam had to find out what had happened to little Am. She started with DCI Goodwood at Chelsea nick. He was sorry and not very helpful. When Sam asked to see Am's body he tried to put her off by talking of autopsies. He obviously didn't know Sam was Special Services, like her dad. She now suspected the worst. The tearful sister act worked and she hinted about a drink. After a few large ones Goodwood started to open up. A PC had been called to a break in at a lock up garage in Fulham by the owner Jimmie Smith. Just a small machine shop really, nothing special, nothing worth stealing. But the PC looked around a bit and suddenly it all changed. The blood had gushed up the wall. Sam knew what that meant and it hardened her. The body, or the parts of it were found in a derelict warehouse. Cut up with a metal saw. "Poor kid, were you close?"

"Very, in our own way."

"So you know she worked in Customs then? Investigations?"

Of course Sam did and that was the next visit. Am had a partner, Jed, and Sam found him the next day. No reserve this time, he was in shock and could not stop talking. They

were investigating Robbie McCarthy, a wheeler-dealer, literally according to Jed. They suspected McCarthy was ringing limos to Eastern Europe and bringing back payment in crack. Very lucrative, but they couldn't get real evidence on him. And the police seemed to skirt round him as well. They had been trying for a warrant to search his Fulham offices but it was so slow. Am had called Jed late on the night she died. She'd been watching the offices and seen McCarthy leave. She was going in and asked Jed to get his butt round there fast. He told her to wait until he was there as backup. Well either the place wasn't empty or McCarthy came back, or whatever, because when Jed arrived there was no sign of anything happening. No Am in sight. When he tried her flat there was no answer there, and her mobile was turned off. The next he knew the police had found her body and were crawling all over their investigation. To Jed it was obvious. McCarthy had found her, tortured her in the lockup to find what she knew and finally cut her up. Sam took that scenario easily to heart. She carefully asked more about McCarthy. Where was his office? Did he know the owner of the lockup? What did he look like? What type of car did he have? Jed obliged with the lot. "Sam" he said reaching out to hold her forearm. "You look very distant, like in shock. Can I get help, get you something?" No, not shock.

McCarthy was easy to find. Her Service field craft was hardly challenged by it. He was behaving totally normally, as if nothing had happened. The Jag was parked outside the office. From the alley across the road she watched him come and go, fixing his appearance and the way he behaved in her mind. Then she went and prepared.

The next evening the Jag was there again. She waited in the shadows of the alley until McCarthy emerged from the door. As yesterday he stopped outside and lit a cigarette. Such a caring boss, not smoking in the office. She timed her walk well. Out of the alley, across the road, just another student in a heavy coat and jeans. McCarthy took no notice

and walked to his car. He clicked the blip and the lights flashed as the doors unlocked. He went round the front as Sam crossed the back, apparently walking away. Before he could get his mind round why the passenger-side rear door was opening he had sat in the driver's seat. The automatic was thrust into his neck. He started to raise his hands.

"Do nothing unless I tell you. Understand?" Her voice was even, but firm. He nodded. Just a kid he thought. Humour her, play along and then no problem. Maybe even a bit fun like the other night. Rape hadn't been his idea. It was Jack's but it had been a good one.

"Start the car." He did. There was something about his capturer that reminded him of the other night. He tried to catch her face in the mirror. Thin face, blond hair, nice looking, but holding a silenced gun.

"Drive slowly forward." He did. "Where to ma'am?" His voice was unworried, even mocking.

"To the lock up."

"What lock up?"

He heard the trigger cock. "The lockup," was all she said.

He shrugged. If that's where she wants to go, then OK. It was dark and very quiet, all to his advantage.

He drove straight there and pulled up outside the doors into the railway arch.

"Turn it off and throw the keys out of the window." He did and Sam slipped out of the rear door. Standing back from the car more than a door's width, she aimed the gun at McCarthy's head.

"Get out. Slowly."

He stood there as she pulled the lockup's Judas door open. She had removed the lock earlier together with the police tape. McCarthy looked worried for the first time and the cigarette dropped from his mouth. Again she stood back and ordered him in. That was the moment. His back was to her. She brought the butt of the automatic down sharply on the back of his head. He fell to the floor inside.

When he came to Sam's sweet, smiling face was first thing he focused on. It took quite a while for him to reconcile

the beauty and his predicament. Tie wraps held his arms high above his head, firmly fastening them to the wall behind him. His legs were spread eagled and tied to the rigid bases of the lathe and metal saw to either side of him. The same metal saw that had sliced through Am's living flesh and bone. He was naked from the waist down.

"Enjoy it did you?" she asked when he appeared to be completely with it.

"Bitch!"

"Was that a yes or no?"

"You'll suffer for this!"

"She was still alive when you cut her up you bastard!"

"What happened to her was nothing to what I'll do to you!"

The end of McCarthy's threat was lost in the 'thutt' from the automatic and ricochets of the bullet after it clipped the floor between his knees. His mouth stayed open.

She held the gun with both hands.

Thutt! His left knee burst open and crimson mush splashed over him. The pain made him thrash against the restraints and his screams filled the archway. Thutt! His right thigh seared more pain into him. She waited until he calmed a little. The thrashing ceased and tears of pain ran freely from his eyes.

"You haven't felt pain yet." she said softly, like a cooing lover. He looked up as she pulled the trigger again. His genitals sprayed a pink arc onto the wall. The screams and thrashing hit a climax and he passed out.

The bucket of water was as carefully aimed and timed as the bullets. His eyes flickered open. The mixture of blood and water had formed a large pool between his legs and rich, red arterial blood continued to pump into it.

"Help me..." It was a little boy's voice that tapered to nothing.

"No, sorry sweet heart, can't do that."

She took one last look at him. “Bye now.” Taking a new padlock from her coat pocket she fastened it through the loops on the door.

The next morning Freddie f’d and blinded at the lock that refused to open for his key. And a brand new lock as well. It was 10 am before he found the addition to his machine shop.

That was last night and now Gillian was calling to her from the lounge. Sam put on the lost sister act. Gillian found this difficult to deal with and turned the offer of a visit to her uncle’s place into a crusade. They went down the stairs with Gillian repeating “must get you out there”. On the street it was a route march. They crossed at the lights and went down Fulham Road. Sam was amazed at the speed Gillian was sustaining despite her high heels. They turned into The Boltons, keeping the pace going.

“Not much further dear. Bertie’ll know how to help.”

The headlong charge ended as they careered into a Policeman just as they turned into the pathway to the front door.

“Can I help you ladies?”

“What’s wrong? Is Bertie ill?”

“Bertie?” The PC looked puzzled, then looked at Gillian.

“Miss, do you know Robert McCarthy?”