

There were three men in the black Humvee; tall, lanky Jamaicans with diamond earrings, chunky gold chains around their necks and diamond-studded Rolex watches on their wrists. They were all wearing expensive leather jackets, Armani jeans and limited edition Nike trainers and had dreadlocks hanging halfway down their backs. The driver was Carlton Richie, he had just turned thirty and was taking his friends to an illegal drinking den in Willesden, in the north west of London. Sitting next to him was Glenford Barrow, the youngest member of the crew. Barrow's nickname was Shotty because of his predilection for resolving disputes with a sawn-off shotgun. In the back seat was Kemar Davis, the biggest of the three men. He tipped the scales at a little over a hundred and twenty kilos and it was all solid muscle. Davis looked at his watch. 'Are we there yet, man? I need a piss.'

'How old are you, six?' asked Richie. 'Why didn't you go before you got into the car?'

'I didn't want to go when I got into the car,' said Davis. 'Now I do. And if you don't get me there soon I'll be pissing all over the back of your seat.'

'Like fuck you will,' said Richie.

They stopped arguing when they heard the blip of a siren being switched on and off and lights flashed in his driving mirror. 'Fuck,' said Richie, looking in his mirror. 'Five-0.'

Davis twisted around in his seat and looked through the rear window. 'Pork in a can,' he said. 'What the fuck do they want, we didn't do nuffink.'

'Is anyone carrying?' asked Richie, pulling over to the side of the road. They were in a side street about half a mile from their destination. His two companions shook their heads. 'What about the boot, anything in there?'

'Nuffink,' said Davis.

'And no one's got any gear?'

More shaking heads.

Richie parked the car and sat with his hands on the steering wheel. He shrugged his shoulders. 'Just chill,' he said. 'We're carrying nothing, we've done nothing, they've got nothing.'

'Fucking Babylon pigs,' spat Davis.

‘Chill,’ repeated Richie. ‘They just wanna give the black man a hard time, that’s all. Ten minutes, we’ll be on our way. Keep your hands where they can see them, don’t give them no excuse.’

The two men sat where they were as two uniformed police officers carrying flashlights walked from the van, one either side of the Humvee. The policeman on Richie’s side of the car tapped on the window with the base of his flashlight and motioned for him to wind down the window. Richie did as he was told and smiled up at the policeman, showing a single gold canine among his pristine white teeth. ‘Good evening officer,’ he said. ‘Is there a problem?’

‘Driving licence,’ said the policeman. He was about Richie’s age with a sallow complexion and a small white scar across his chin. He was wearing a fluorescent jacket over his uniform and a peaked cap.

Richie moved his hand slowly down to his jeans and took out his wallet. ‘I wasn’t speeding, was I?’ he asked.

The policeman said nothing and continued to stare impassively at Richie. Richie slid out his driving licence and handed it to the policeman. He studied the licence and then shone his flashlight into Richie’s face. ‘Name?’

‘It’s on the licence, innit?’

‘Name,’ repeated the policeman. The second officer bent down and shone his flashlight through the passenger window, playing the beam over Barrow’s chest and arms.

‘Carlton Richie,’ said Richie.

‘Date of birth?’

Richie took a deep breath, sighed, then recited his birth date in a bored voice.

‘Get out of the vehicle, please,’ said the policeman.

‘What’s the problem?’ asked Richie.

‘Just get out of the car or I’ll drag you out,’ said the policeman, shining his torch into Richie’s eyes.

‘I haven’t done anything,’ protested Richie, putting his hand up to shade his eyes.

‘Get out of the car,’ repeated the policeman.

Richie sighed and opened the door. The policeman stepped back as the door opened. Richie climbed out, glaring at the officer. ‘This is wrong,’ he said.

The policeman sneered at Richie, then grabbed him by the collar of his jacket and spun him around and slammed him against the car. He kicked Richie’s legs apart. ‘Keep your hands on the car,’ he said. He went through Richie’s pockets, pulling out his wallet and mobile phone and placing them on the car roof. ‘I ain’t carrying nuffink,’ said Richie.

The second policeman pulled open the passenger door. ‘You, out!’ he snapped at Barrow. Barrow did as he was told and placed his hands on the roof of the car.

‘This is bullshit, man,’ said Richie.

The policeman slammed the flashlight against the back of Richie’s neck. ‘When I want you to talk I’ll tell you,’ he hissed.

‘You are in so much fucking shit,’ said Richie. ‘I know my rights and you’re trampling all over them.’

‘Fuck your rights,’ said the policeman.

‘You can’t say that,’ said Richie. He turned to face the officer. ‘You can’t say that to me. I’ve got me rights. Me human rights.’

‘I can say what I want,’ said the policeman. ‘It’s a free country. And it’s my free country. You see, we know who are you, and we know what you’ve done.’

‘What?’ said Richie.

‘You’re name’s Orane Williams, and you’re wanted for three murders in St Catherine, back in Jamaica.’

‘Like fuck.’

‘Yeah, just like fuck,’ said the policeman. ‘You’re a big wheel in the Clansman Massive. Drugs, extortion, prostitution.’ He pointed his flashlight at the man in the back seat. And the big man there, he’s Leonardo Sachell but the Clansman crew call him DaVinci.’

‘So?’ said Richie.

‘So you’re a murdering scumbag, and we’re fed up with you running amok in our country.’ He prodded Richie in the chest with the flashlight. ‘Our country, scumbag. You hear that? This is our country. And we’ve had enough.’

‘That’s assault,’ said Richie. ‘You’ve just assaulted me.’

The policeman prodded him again, harder this time.

Richie picked up his mobile phone. ‘I’m calling me lawyer,’ he said. ‘I’m allowed me phone call.’

The policeman smiled as Richie tapped out a number on his mobile. When Richie put the phone against his ear, the policeman grabbed it, threw it to the ground and stamped on it.

Richie stared at the shattered pieces of metal and plastic, shaking his head in disbelief. ‘I’m gonna report you to the Commission For Racial Equality, the Human Rights Commission, the Police Complaints Authority, I’m going to...’

The policeman hit Richie across the face, splitting his lips and breaking two of his front teeth. Richie clasped a hand across his bleeding mouth, his eyes wide and fearful.

The side door of the police van opened and three police officers climbed out. They were wearing riot gear – black overalls, boots, and blue helmets with visors. ‘You’re not going to do anything, scumbag,’ said the policeman.

‘You can’t do that!’ shouted Barrow. He second officer kicked him in the knee and Barrow went down, howling.

Davis roared and kicked open the rear passenger door. He stormed out, his hands bunching into fists, his dreadlocks flailing behind him.

Two of the policemen in riot gear pulled blue and yellow Taser guns from nylon holsters on their thighs. They both pointed their weapons at Davis and fired. Twin barbed darts shot out from each gun, trailing fine wires behind them. All four darts hit Davis in the chest and he immediately went rigid, then fell to the ground, every muscle in his body in spasm.

‘Who are you going to report that to, arsehole?’ the officer asked. ‘The RSPCA?’

‘What do you want?’ asked Richie, lowering his voice to a conspiratorial whisper. ‘Do you want a piece, is that it? Is this a shakedown? Because all you gotta do is ask. How much do

you want?’ He prodded his broken teeth and winced.

The policeman smiled. ‘What have you got?’

Richie shrugged. ‘I could go a grand,’ he said. ‘A grand a week.’

The officer nodded slowly. ‘Sounds like a plan,’ he said.

‘You didn’t have to break me fucking teeth, man,’ said Richie. He rubbed his hand across his bleeding lips.

The officer’s grin widened. ‘That? That’s just the start,’ he said. He raised his flashlight and brought it crashing down on the side of Richie’s head.

Richie opened his eyes. His head was throbbing and he could taste blood in his mouth. He cleared his throat and spat and bloody phlegm trickled down his nose and across his forehead. He realised that he was hanging upside down, his head was a few inches above the floor and his dreadlocks were dragging across the concrete. His hands were tied behind his back and when he strained to look up he saw that his ankles were chained to a girder in the roof. His chest hurt every time he breathed. He looked to his left and saw Barrow, also suspended upside down. Barrow’s eyes were closed and his left eye was puffed up and the cheek was cut and bruised.

‘You awake there, Orane, or Carlton, or whatever you want to call yourself?’ It was the policeman, the one who’d hit him with the flashlight.

‘What the fuck do you want?’ asked Richie.

Something hard slammed into Richie’s chest and he felt a rib crack. He roared in pain and struggled but his wrists were too tightly bound. He thrashed around and then gradually went still. The policeman walked in front of him, swinging a cricket bat. ‘Do you play cricket, Orane?’ he said.

Richie shook his head. His chest felt as if it was on fire.

A second policeman appeared behind the first. He was holding a crowbar. ‘What about you,

Shotty?’ said the second officer. ‘I’d put you down as a spin bowler.’ He smacked the crowbar against Barrow’s left knee and it cracked like a dry twig. Barrow screamed in pain and tears ran down his face as he thrashed from side to side.

‘What do you want?’ screamed Richie. ‘What the fuck do you want?’

He heard a footfall behind him and he twisted around, trying to see who it was. The movement made him start to spin and he felt his stomach lurch and he threw up. Vomit spewed over his dreadlocks and stung his eyes.

‘That’s fucking disgusting,’ snarled the policeman with the cricket bat. The three policemen in riot gear fanned out behind him. Two of them were carrying large spanners and one was holding a broom handle. The one holding the broom handle was black, Richie realised.

‘Yeah, look at the mess he’s made,’ said the black officer. ‘Don’t they teach them Yardies any manners?’ He bent down and grinned at Richie. ‘What da problem my man, you eat somfink you shouldn’t oughta have, huh?’ he said in a mock Jamaican accent. He pushed the end of his broom handle between Richie’s teeth. ‘Why don’tcha chew on this, man?’

Richie gagged and tried to turn his head but the man pushed the broom handle harder. ‘What’s the problem, man, don’tcha like to swallow?’

The two men with spanners circled Davis. ‘He’s a big lad, isn’t he?’ said one. He swung the spanner and slammed it into the man’s hip. Davis grunted and glared at the policeman. ‘Hard as nails, aren’t you, Da Vinci?’ He hit him again, harder this time. Davis kept his teeth clamped together and made no sound.

‘Yeah, he’s a right hard bastard all right,’ said the policeman with the cricket bat. ‘Especially where little girls are concerned. Raped a thirteen year old in Kingston, he did.’ He walked over to where the Davis was hanging. His head was almost touching the floor, his dreadlocks piled around him like a nest of snakes. ‘Raped her and then cut her face, so that she’d never forget.’ He swung his cricket bat through the air. ‘You know what I’m gonna do, Da Vinci? I’m going smash your balls to a pulp.’ He patted the bat against Da Vinci’s groin. ‘Think about that for the next minute or two. I’m going to smack your balls and your dick so hard that you’ll never be able to have sex again. Ever.’ He grinned. ‘I reckon your dick’s going to look like a dinner plate by the time I’ve finished.’

He walked around to stand in front of Richie again. Blood was trickling down Richie’s

face, dripping through his dreadlocks and pooling on the concrete floor. 'So, let me tell you how it's going to be, Orane. Are you listening?'

Richie tried to speak but his mouth was filling with blood and he gagged. He spat out bloody phlegm. 'Yeah, I hear you.'

'My friends and I are going to beat the crap out of you. We're going to break a few bones and smash a few kneecaps and Da Vinci there is gonna lose the use of his gonads. When we're finished we're going to cut you down and then you can crawl down to the local hospital and they can patch you up, courtesy of the good old National Health. That's one of the great things about this country, we'll treat any foreign scumbags because deep down we're basically too nice for our own good. And once they've patched you up, Orane, you and your two dickhead mates are going to get on the next Air Jamaica flight to Kingston. Do you understand what I'm saying?'

Richie looked up at the black officer. 'You gonna let them treat a brother like this, man?' he asked.

Even through the visor, Richie could see the contempt in the black officer's eyes. 'You're no brother of mine, scumbag,' he said.

The officer with the cricket bat walloped Richie's shins again. 'Talk to me, not him,' he said. Now do you understand what I've said to you or do you want me to run through it again?'

Richie closed his eyes. 'I hear you,' he said.

'Because, my scumbag friend, if you're still in this country next week, me and my mates are gonna pick you up again, and we won't be as gentle with you. In fact, my little scumbag friend, we'll kill you. We'll kill you stone dead.' He smacked the cricket bat against Richie's left ankle. Richie screamed in agony. 'And if you ever tell anyone what happened, we'll kill you. Do you understand that?'

Richie nodded. The officer hit his ankle again, harder this time, and the pain was so agonising that Richie almost passed out. 'I can't hear you, Orane.'

'I understand!' screamed Richie.

'Believe me, we'll do it,' he said. 'Because what you've got to remember, my little

scumbag friend, is that we are the police and we can do what we fucking want.’ He rested the cricket bat on his shoulder and grinned over at the two men with spanners. ‘Let’s get started,’ he said. ‘I’m taking the girlfriend out for dinner tonight.’