



PINLICO

P. CONFREY WEBB

PIMLICO

P. Confrey Webb



Strategic Book Publishing and Rights Co.

Copyright © 2014 P. Confrey Webb. All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, or by any information storage retrieval system, without the permission, in writing, of the publisher.

Strategic Book Publishing and Rights Co.
12620 FM 1960, Suite A4-507
Houston, TX 77065

www.sbpra.com

ISBN: 978-1-63135-420-5

Design: Dedicated Book Services, (www.netdbs.com)

CHAPTER 1

His pulse quickened as he stuffed the package from the safe deposit box into a plastic bag and slipped the empty container into the open wall slot. He closed the box door and pressed the call button. Moments later Mr. Wilkins, the bank manager, came into the vault room and noticed Dan holding a plastic bag.

“All finished, Mr. Fletcher?”

“Yes, thank you,” Dan said as he joined Wilkins at the deposit box. Wilkins inserted his key in the lock beside his, and they locked the box into the vault. Wilkins accompanied Dan out of the room and closed the door. Wilkins paused until he heard the door lock engage, and then motioned for Dan to go ahead. He followed him up the short flight of stone stairs to the main customer transaction area.

Dan stopped at the foyer exit. Wilkins reached out and clasped Dan’s hand and said, “Have a pleasant day, Inspector Fletcher.”

“Thank you, Mr. Wilkins, I appreciate your help.”

Fletcher pushed through the glass doors, raising his free hand to his brow to shield his eyes from the sun’s reflection off the glass on the building opposite the bank. Then, as a cloud hid the sun, he saw two uniformed police officers standing in front of a police cruiser parked at the curb. Police tape extended from either side of the bank entrance to the police cruiser. The heavysset police officer nudged his slim companion, and they both stared in his direction. Dan assumed they were interested in someone behind him; he spun around to find out whom that was, but saw no one. He turned back to face the officers, and as he did, he saw two of his important friends from the Chamber of Commerce and

the Lions Club waiting with the other curious eyewitnesses behind the police tape.

Dan stepped toward the police officers and asked, “Why the police cordon?” The officers did not answer, but continued to stare at him. The stockier officer raised his arm and tapped on the cruiser roof, and the cruiser doors swung open as two plainclothes officers climbed out and held their warrant cards in front of them. The plainclothes officer who got out of the door on the curbside was the first to reach him.

“Inspector Daniel Fletcher, I am Commander Mark Hadden from Special Branch. I believe you have a large sum of money that you demanded from the Dawson Transport Company in return for your assurance that their transport would be exempt from a thorough inspection at the Port of Dover.” Hadden scowled as he continued. “That, Inspector, in my book, is a felony. Therefore I want you to hand the plastic bag to my colleague, Sergeant Mike Goddard.”

Dan already knew of Mark Hadden’s antagonistic reputation and hardball attitude from his associates at Thames House. The word on the grapevine was that Hadden was full of his own importance, and the tag his associates had given him was “piss and vinegar.” The staff at Thames House believed Hadden had achieved his rank of commander over many other worthy candidates because he served as a Worshipful Master of a Masonic temple. Dan’s first encounter with Hadden confirmed that his reputation was appropriate, and he expected to receive the rough edge of his personality. Hadden’s sidekick, Sergeant Mike Goddard, was new to him. He guessed from his unblemished complexion that he was in his mid-twenties. Goddard stepped forward as Dan stood and gaped incredulously at Hadden’s statement. When Dan saw the sergeant’s outstretched hand he knew it was not a practical joke; reluctantly he handed him the plastic bag.

Dan locked eyes with Mark Hadden. “Commander, this is a terrible mistake. I was about to deliver the contents in the bag to the evidence room at the police station.” Hadden raised an eyebrow in mock surprise, and before Dan could

speak, the commander held up his index finger to silence him as he waited for Goddard to verify the contents of the plastic bag.

After twenty painful seconds, Goddard told the commander, "It's a huge bundle of used banknotes, sir."

A twisted smile formed on Mark Hadden's face, and as he lowered his finger, he said, "Don't worry, Inspector, we will make sure the package arrives safely at the police station. We need you to come with us as well, to help us in our enquiries."

"Commander, it's all a big mistake, I tell you." Hadden ignored Dan's outburst, snapping the restraints on his wrists and hustling him into the rear of the police cruiser. Hadden stuck his head into the rear compartment, inches away from Dan's face.

"So you are Grant Mullins's golden boy. Well, you have certainly fucked up big time. Your bubble has burst, Fletcher."

Dan decided that a response to this now-confirmed asshole was a waste of his breath, so he remained silent for the short ride to the Chittenden police station.

The uniformed police officer who guided him to the interview room at the station seemed familiar. Dan could not recall his name. The interview room was the one he used quite often. The police officer led him to the steel seat reserved for the interviewee and removed the wrist restraints. Dan rubbed his wrists to restore his circulation and eyed the police officer as he shuffled backward to the chair by the door. As the officer sat, Dan saw a nervous tic in his left eye, and this jogged his memory. *The officer's name is Moscrop—yes, it is Gordon Moscrop. I worked with him over a year ago.* Gordon looked uneasy about his duty: to prevent him from leaving the room. Dan smiled at his absurd situation, and from his new perspective he looked around at the dark green walls and the cold gray metal furniture. He agreed that the color scheme would cause a reluctant attendee to feel depressed. It felt strange to sit on the wrong side of the table in his own interview room.

While he waited for Commander Hadden to begin the interview, he thought of how ironic his arrest was. His day had begun on an emotional high. He had anticipated praise from his boss, Superintendent Grant Mullins, when he reported the major success of the sting operation at the Port of Dover. He was excited because his seconded customs officers had assisted him in the confiscation of a large amount of narcotics found in a Dawson haulage transport. He had singled out the transport for a more rigorous search after the vehicle had cleared through the primary check by customs. However, in a cruel twist of fate, instead of celebrating the Dover success he was in a serious situation because Special Branch believed he accepted a bribe. He needed to clear his name from the trumped-up extortion charge.

Mark Hadden came into the room and interrupted his thoughts. Dan glanced at his wristwatch and noted that Hadden had let him sweat for fifteen minutes; he guessed he used the one-way mirror to observe his discomfort. Hadden greeted him with the same derisive smirk he had given him when he told him he intended to take the money to the evidence room at the police station. Hadden thumped his notebook on the table and said, "You know the drill, Inspector." The commander reached over to the recorder, flipped the switch to the on position, and stated the time, the date, and who was present.

Dan did know the drill, but he was furious at his wrongful arrest and the embarrassment he had felt as his friends witnessed Hadden put the wrist restraint on him. He imagined they would surmise he had robbed the bank. Unable to contain his anger any longer, Fletcher stood, grabbed the table's edge, leaned over to the recorder, and shouted, "Someone in this fucking station set up my arrest! I was on my way to log the package of money into the police station evidence room when I was wrongfully arrested."

"OK, Inspector, let's cut out the theatrics, and for the record, can we go over your explanation one more time?"

“I just wanted to make sure my statement is on the record.” He glared back at Hadden as the commander clucked his tongue.

“OK, Inspector, now can we move on and get down to specifics?” It was a rhetorical question, so Dan did not answer. Hadden checked his notes as Dan repeated his explanation of how he had received the money and why he carried it.

The commander, now satisfied with the information, stated that the interview was over. He switched off the recorder, turned to Dan, and said, “I will read to you the statement I will have typed for your signature.” He picked up his notebook and read what he had written. “As I, Inspector Daniel Fletcher, stepped out of the bank I carried a plastic bag with 10,000 pounds in used banknotes. Commander Hadden informed me that the solicitor for Dawson had stated that his client claimed, ‘A Detective Inspector Daniel Fletcher demanded 20,000 pounds for his assurance that our transport would bypass customs scrutiny at the Port of Dover.’”

Commander Hadden did not receive an objection from Fletcher because Dan’s mind was elsewhere. Hadden shrugged and left the room to have the report typed. Dan felt relief as the commander’s hectoring ended and took solace in the thought that he could rely on Grant Mullins, his long-time friend, to come to his aid. He was confident he could convince his boss that his arrest was a setup. He envisioned a number of scenarios, each with a positive outcome. His reverie ended as Hadden returned with the report and slid it across the table.

“Based on these stated facts, Detective Inspector Daniel Fletcher, badge number six-six-two-nine, I now charge you with a felony.”

“This is bloody ridiculous. I did not demand money from Dawson—in fact, I made sure to impound the transport because an informant told me we could find drugs hidden among the engineering parts on the manifest. Therefore, the extortion charge makes no bloody sense.”

“Inspector, would you care to tell me the name of this informant?”

“Commander, I gave my assurance that I would not reveal the person’s name, as he feared retribution.”

“That is unfortunate—it means your explanation is unsupported and not a fact.”

“My arrest was orchestrated by Dawson, and his accomplice in this police station tipped you off at Special Branch. We have an informant in the Chittenden police station, and whoever it is, he knew the change in my work schedule and knew where I put the money. It explains how you were able to intercept me at the bank.”

“Your crystal ball is cloudy, my friend.”

“Your obtuseness is wasted on me. Here, I’ll sign the damn statement.” Dan realized Mark Hadden’s interview statement showed only the relevant facts and no possible gray areas; it was pointless for Dan to argue about the stated facts because Hadden had followed procedure, so he added his signature. Hadden retrieved the document and told Officer Moscrop to secure the wrist restraints on Dan. The commander then escorted Fletcher to Grant Mullins’s office and told him to wait outside while he entered the office with the charge statement.

Earlier, Grant Mullins had learned of Special Branch’s intent to intercept Dan Fletcher and to arrest him for a felony, so he telephoned his Special Branch friend at Thames House and learned that they, as well as the Independent Complaints Commission, had received the tip-off from the Chittenden police station. His friend would not name the informer, as the same individual was part of another investigation. Grant’s dilemma was that his friend made him promise not to reveal that someone at his station had grassed on Fletcher; this was unfair for Dan Fletcher, his most reliable detective, so he decided to pull in a favor and lay the burden on his college friend, Deputy Commissioner Ace Dennison. Grant knew Ace Dennison’s office represented the conscience of

the police force. It was the deputy commissioner's duty to ensure all officers, irrespective of their position in the hierarchy, followed the established procedures. Those who failed in their duty could expect a period of retraining. In the case of serious offences, the offenders would receive a reduction in rank. Those found guilty of a felony faced imprisonment and immediate dismissal from the force. Grant was afraid of what this charge would do to his friend, so he lifted his telephone and dialed the deputy commissioner. On the third ring the familiar voice of Dennison answered.

"Ace, this is Grant Mullins. I have a delicate situation at my station. Special Branch plan to arrest Inspector Daniel Fletcher for a felony, and apparently the arrest is because of information supplied from my station. I seriously doubt that Fletcher is guilty of a felony, and Special Branch will not tell me who in my station set him up. They said they could not name the person because the person is part of another investigation. Can you help me with this?"

"Unfortunately not, Grant. However, I do need your word that you will not divulge what I am about to tell you to anyone, and this conversation never happened."

"Yes, of course."

"Grant, it is important you support the Special Branch's charge against Inspector Fletcher. We have a cancer within our ranks, and we are not sure how deep it is. I need Fletcher to go undercover to ferret out the bad apples."

"Oh, dear. This will be difficult for me. Dan is a longtime friend. Is there some way you could let him know I am aware of his mission with your office?"

"Absolutely not. You are to suspend Fletcher from duty and tell him I need to see him to review the felony charge. It is critical you show Special Branch your disdain for Fletcher's action, because they are not aware of the planned covert operation and I want to make sure Fletcher's cover is solid. Not a word to anyone—it would be a disaster if someone discovered Fletcher's real identity."

“This sounds like a cloak-and-dagger operation. How long will it take? I mean, the longer it takes, the more harm it will cause to my friendship with Fletcher.”

“You will have to deal with the situation. It is my hope that Fletcher can bring the conspiracy to a close soon. Now, Grant, I have already said too much, and I am sorry for your burden, but not a word, OK?”

“You have my word. I am not happy, but at least you have put my mind at ease about Fletcher’s integrity.” Grant agreed to go along with Dennison’s plan despite the fact that it would cause personal pain to himself and to Dan. He hoped Fletcher would have the sense to curtail his usual aggressive stance when someone challenged his integrity. He wondered how his friend would react when he failed to support him—would he think he betrayed him and their years of friendship?

Hadden entered Grant Mullins’s office and said, “Excuse me, Superintendent. I have here the felony charge against Inspector Fletcher.”

“Come in, Mark. It has been a long time since our last confrontation, and I must say I never expected to see you at my station or to witness the arrest of Inspector Fletcher. Needless to say I am shocked and disturbed by the arrest.”

“Sir, first let me say our past differences were caused because I was doing my job. With regard to Fletcher, all I can say is life is full of surprises. However, I know you are a good judge of people, so I am curious. Why do you hold Fletcher in such high esteem?”

“My issue with you, Commander, is you lack sensitivity. However, I will tell you that Fletcher and I go back a long time, and he is an excellent and reliable officer. He is also a close friend. I am concerned for Dan because he has come through a very difficult personal struggle and I fear this charge could undo the progress he has made to recover from his family tragedy. I find it incomprehensible that Dan is guilty of a felony.”

“I understand your concern. However, my job is to present you with the facts, and not to pass judgement on Fletcher.”

“Good. I am glad to hear it. Now let’s see if we can handle this situation without any further embarrassment to Inspector Fletcher.”

A short but anxious time for Dan passed when the door opened and Hadden beckoned to him to step into Grant Mullins’s office. As Dan entered his boss’s office, he saw Grant’s weariness as he rose from his desk and his brow furrow when he saw the restraints on his wrists. Mullins turned and snapped at Hadden, “Commander, the wrist restraints are not necessary. Remove them.” Dan felt a glimmer of hope that Grant was about to support him; he saw Hadden scowl as he stepped forward and released the restraints. The furrowed brow remained as the superintendent looked down at the statement given to him by Hadden. He cleared his throat.

“D.I. Fletcher, I have read the statement prepared by Special Branch and find I have no choice but to suspend you until the deputy commissioner reviews the felony charge.”

“Sir, it’s a crock of shit. It’s a set-up by Dawson. They knew I was suspicious of their imports. They tried to warn me off, and when I ignored their suggestions, someone put the 20,000 pounds in my mailbox. It must have been someone in this station who alerted Special Branch, because they knew about the money and knew that I deposited the money in the bank.”

Mullins jerked his head up at Fletcher. “Whoa, there, you said 20,000 pounds, but here in the charge sheet it states ten thousand—which is right?” Mullins looked at Hadden and then back to Dan.

“Oh, damn,” said Dan, “I didn’t notice the change in the amount on the charge sheet. I was so frustrated that I signed the charge sheet without checking the amount. However, I know the package contained 20,000 pounds in banknotes—it was in two bundles inside the package, and I put the package in the plastic bag and handed the bag to Sergeant Goddard.”

“So you actually counted the money in the package?”

“Well, not quite. I checked one bundle and it was ten grand, and the other bundle was the same size.”

Grant turned to Hadden and said, “How many bundles were booked into the evidence room, Commander?”

“I didn’t check. I just handed over the bag, and Sergeant Brown and Sergeant Rawlings verified the amount as 10,000 pounds. Rawlings recorded the same amount in the log.”

“This is serious. I have noted the discrepancy on the charge sheet and will pass the information on to Ace Dennison’s office for his investigation. However, Inspector Fletcher, the felony charge still stands.”

Dan was not sure Mullins understood his rationale, so he pressed on. “Sir, it stands to reason it was a set-up because of the time of my arrest outside the bank.”

Grant Mullins ran his fingers through his sparse gray hair as he lowered himself into his office chair. He adjusted his eyeglasses and rested his elbows on the desk, and then he clasped his hands together, as if in prayer, and placed his fingertips beneath his chin.

“The problem with your explanation, Inspector Fletcher, is that it is at odds with the complaint received by the Internal Complaints Commission.” Grant Mullin saw that Fletcher was about to speak, so he immediately held up a hand to stop him. He continued. “An unidentified source informed both the ICC and Special Branch that an Inspector Fletcher received 20,000 pounds to turn a blind eye so that the Dawson Transport Company could bring their goods into the country without hindrance from Customs and Excise.”

“That’s a damned lie,” he exploded. “What troubles me is that after all my years of service, you, my friend, are ready to believe the words of an informant, and in doing so, you have subjected me to this unwarranted attack on my integrity.” Dan saw the pain in his boss’s eyes and added, “Come on, sir, it does not make sense. Why would I set up a sting operation at Dover if Dawson paid me to look the other way?” Mullins avoided making eye contact with Dan, and

continued to focus on the charge sheet on his desk. The superintendent bit his lip as he heard Dan say, "Sir, surely you have known me long enough to realize that I would not be on someone else's payroll. Anyway, I think you should find out why there is a discrepancy with the money and who has the missing 10,000 pounds."

"I agree there appears to be a discrepancy. However, it is really not your concern, Inspector Fletcher. Be it 10,000 or 20,000 pounds, you are charged with a felony. You can rest assured I will make sure that the investigators on Operation Tea Leaf get to the bottom of the cash issue." Mullins silently cursed Ace Dennison. Fletcher was his most reliable detective, even though he had come through a rough patch.

Over the years, Grant had learned what made his friend Dan tick, and to conspire with the criminal elements of society was not his style. He realized he could not show empathy for Dan in the presence of Commander Hadden, as it would get back to Ace Dennison, so to stay on good terms with Ace, he needed to ignore Dan's claim that his arrest was a set-up. After a few minutes in thought Mullins said, "Let's look at the facts, Inspector." Mullins took a deep breath and then locked eyes with Fletcher. "First, you claim you received the cash through your letterbox by people unknown. The same package of cash you carried when Special Branch arrested you. The package contained 20,000 pounds in well-worn banknotes." Dan stared ahead, avoiding Mullins's gaze. Grant continued. "Second, the Dawson solicitor states his client said you demanded the money to ensure that Dawson Transport would avoid customs scrutiny. Third, you cannot prove that the Dawson family volunteered the money you deposited in the bank."

Sharp vertical ridges above the bridge of Fletcher's nose showed his frustration. "But I just explained that, sir."

"Inspector, let me finish. You say you did not follow procedures because you were too involved with the sting operation at Dover, and you did not have time to bring the money to the station."

“I do have all the events written in my notebook, sir.” Dan heard a partly stifled snort; he looked at Hadden and saw a derisive smirk.

Mullins continued. “You may have, Inspector, but I doubt it will hold water with the internal complaints investigators. They will find it difficult to understand why you did not come to me with the money, as it is standard procedure. Without the station’s awareness of the bribe, and because you deposited the cash in the bank, you have left yourself open to the bribery charge.”

“You were on your day off when I found the package, sir, and I did not have the time to bring it in to the evidence room because I was in a hurry to get to Dover.”

Mark Hadden was satisfied with the superintendent’s decision, so he clicked his heels together in deference as he retired from the room. When the door closed, Mullins stood and spoke in soft and formal words. “Inspector, I have no doubt that the ICC will disregard your claim that you intended to bring the money to the evidence room. Also, even though you have recorded all the events in your notebook, it is not proof of your intention to bring the money in to the station.”

“I guess that as I cannot convince you of my innocence, I will have to convince the commissioner and the tribunal of my veracity.”

“I hope you can. In the meantime, I will let you hold on to your warrant card, as you will need it to meet with Deputy Commissioner Dennison at Thames House. However, you are suspended from duty, so go home and avoid discussion with other officers in this station and other members of the police force. I suggest you go over the events in detail and prepare yourself for the enquiry.”

When Dan left the office, Grant sat back and recalled the anxious period his friend Dan had overcome. He smiled as he remembered his star detective’s quick response to therapy; after a few sessions, Fletcher looked more relaxed and had restricted his consumption of alcohol. For this reason,

Grant felt terrible about the indifference Ace required of him as he dealt with the charge against Dan. He wished he could tell Dan he knew his arrest was a sham. However, he felt better because Ace promised the charge against his friend would eventually be withdrawn.

Grant thought about his relationship with Dan Fletcher and why he forgave Dan the small, annoying issues that arose. It was because of the difficulties his friend experienced when Clive, his six-year-old son, died in a car accident. He was aware of the distress Dan and his wife Dorothy had gone through in the aftermath. His first-rate detective resorted to excessive use of alcohol to ease his pain. Then, six months after their son's burial, Dorothy decided she needed some personal space and some time away from Dan until he pulled himself together. Dan told him in confidence that Dorothy had left him to stay at her mother's home at Torpoint in Cornwall. Grant knew how much Dorothy's departure had shaken his friend; the shock jolted Dan out of his repeated denial of Dorothy's claim of his abusive attitude and insobriety. Grant put these flaws aside and admired Fletcher because he never let his personal problems affect his work. However, he saw etched in Dan's face the results of his unhappy relationship. As a friend, Grant suggested, and Dan agreed, to meet with his psychiatrist friend, and he was amazed at Dan's resilience and progress with the therapeutic sessions. What surprised Grant was how quickly Dan was back in control of his alcohol intake. Recently, Dan told him things were more positive between him and Dorothy, and he looked forward to her return. Grant hoped the false arrest would not set Dan back to the desperate situation he had worked so hard to overcome.

Buy the B&N e-Pub version at:-

<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/pimlico-p-confrey-webb/1119717167>

Buy the Kindle version at:-

<http://www.amazon.com/PIMLICO-P-Confrey-Webb-ebook/dp/B00LOSVD6/>