

Worse Than Dead

An Inspector Drake Mystery

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Chapter One

Frank Rosen hesitated outside his cabin door and ran a finger along the aluminium name plate that said 'Chief Engineer'.

After closing the door he stood looking at the bed, the wardrobe and the cupboard space; twice the size of his previous cabin. He allowed himself a brief smile. Only the captain had more accommodation. Rosen had a desk where the laptop had pride of place and the luxury of a comfortable chair at the foot of the bed. The room was bare of personal possessions, no family photographs, no personal mementos.

Rosen stripped off the one-piece white suit and hung it on a metal hanger in the wardrobe. He had a couple of hours to kill before the ferry turned around and headed back across the Irish Sea. The crossing to Dublin had been uneventful. Nothing had gone wrong but things rarely did. The ferry was almost full when it left Holyhead which meant targets had been met, money in the bank for the ferry company and a contented port manager.

He sat on the edge of the bed and dragged his feet onto the duvet. A Louis L'Amour novel sat on a ledge by the side of the bed. There was a dull hum in the room that disturbed Rosen's sleep on the first night of his seven day watch. It was the same pattern for a week. The ferry would plough back and forth across the Irish Sea. Before each crossing a manifest would be delivered telling the engine room staff how many articulated lorries were expected. There were always more before the weekend when fresh produce headed to the markets in Dublin and then paperwork to be completed for each crossing. He would get his meals in the crew galley, sitting with the captain mostly. Since the promotion he'd stopped sitting with the junior officers at meal times – wanted to make his mark. He'd call his wife, without much enthusiasm, every day, at a convenient time. He'd fill out his reports and answer emails to the port manager. Occasionally, a junior officer might want some help with a technical problem.

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And there was Mary.

His mobile rang and he pressed the answer button before the ring tone had barely started – an annoying slurping sound he'd promised himself to change.

'When can I see you?' the voice was quiet.

Rosen could feel oil under his finger nails, and knew he'd have to shower before she came. He glanced at his watch.

'Give me ten minutes.'

The rest of the crew had cabins two decks below the officers that were smaller, the beds narrower and the furniture functional. The noise from adjacent cabins permeated through the bulkheads and down the corridors. Dirty linen was piled on the corridor waiting for housekeeping – everyone had tasks, after all.

He lay on the bed listening to his iPod, headshaking while he drew on a roll-your-own-cigarette that needed to be relit frequently. The air in the cabin was filled with the damp smell of sweat, unwashed clothes, stale cigarettes and cheap food. A carton from the galley that'd carried fish and chips had been stuffed into a metal bin and cans of cider and special strength lager were piled into one corner.

He knew he needed to clean. But why should he bother? Nobody every came into the cabin. And he could give it a quick wipe with a duster when his watch ended. He reached down beside the bed and picked up the can of cider on the floor and took a deep slug. The ship was alongside and he guessed that he had another half-an-hour.

It would be messy, but if he was careful everything would be just fine.

He drew a hand over his stubble. It had been three days since he last drew a razor over his chin. That morning the Load Master had given him a sullen glare when he walked over the car deck and he guessed that a reprimand would follow. But he never saw

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passengers. Never saw the drivers of the articulated lorries. He barely mixed with the crew, come to that.

A text bleeped his mobile into life – his only contact with the real world.

He flicked through the menu to the message section and read the text. He pressed the reply button and punched the words into the handset before throwing it to the bottom of the bed.

They were worried. They needn't be. He'd told them that.

He would see to it. It would be clean.

Late one evening the previous week they'd arrived at his home. He'd left the rear gate off the latch and was waiting in the kitchen when they pushed the door open. He motioned to the chairs by the table but they stood.

'Not going to be long,' one of them said.

He nodded.

'We've got a problem.'

It sounded like they couldn't answer a crossword puzzle.

They were right – they weren't long. The instructions were clear and then they left.

That night he sat alone in the darkness, sipping on a litre bottle of cider.

He was sitting alone again now drinking more cider. He picked up the can by the side of his bed, shook it around before realizing it was almost empty, then jumped off the bed and cracked another open. He had time enough. There were voices in the corridor as some of the crew came off watch and wandered down towards the showers.

He turned up the volume on his iPod and let the music crash around his ears.

Once he'd finished the can he stood up and belched loudly. He looked at himself in the mirror and drew his hand over his face and rubbed his head. There was a small basin which he filled with hot water before dowsing his face – a shower could wait until tomorrow.

He glanced at his watch. Almost time.

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Frank Rosen leant over and kissed her on the forehead. Then on her cheek and then he curled his tongue round her ear. She murmured and drew her hand over the hairs on his chest until she found the puckered fold of skin under his shoulder. Her fragrance was soft and sweet and he moved his face down away from hers and kissed the fall of her breast. He took her nipple between his lips and she let out a faint whisper before pushing him away.

‘We need to be careful,’ she said moving away from him.

‘I know,’ he said moving towards her.

‘No, Frank. I’m serious.’

He tried kissing her neck but she threw back the duvet and left the bed.

‘One of the girls gave me a funny look this morning and stopped talking when I walked into the room. It’s never happened before and I’m sure I heard them mention her name.’

‘You’re imagining things,’ he said.

‘No. Frank,’ she sounded hurt.

Rosen watched as she dressed and gave her a smile as she swung her hips at him when she saw his face. Once out of bed he dressed quickly and then inched open the door before peering out, checking the empty corridor.

She kissed him on the cheek and slipped out of the cabin. He caught a glimpse of her thigh under her tight fighting skirt as she walked down the corridor.

Rosen slipped into his overall before gathering his paperwork and leaving the cabin. The last of the cleaning crew were finished buffing the floor as he crossed the deserted passenger concourse. There were ten flights of stairs to the engine room and once at the bottom he entered the main control area and cast his eye round the clear white surfaces and gleaming dials.

‘Chief,’ the second engineer said.

Rosen nodded, the title sounded good. They exchanged mundane small talk. Rosen glanced at his watch. He was early. It was important for him to set an example.

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He watched the activity in the engine room below him. There was order and neatness and two of the young crew walked in, voices raised, until they saw Rosen and they stopped.

‘Chief,’ they both said in unison.

Behind them came an Able Seaman, his blue overall smeared with grime and an attitude to match. Rosen had little time for the AB’s – they were all Scousers who lived for the football teams of their native Liverpool and their week off.

‘Chief,’ he began. ‘The Load Master wants to see you. Urgent, like.’

The *like* came out as *lich* and Rosen nodded. He drew his sleeve back and saw the time. The Load Master better have a good reason for this. He had to be back in the engine room at least twenty minutes before they sailed. The car deck was up five flights of stairs and Rosen felt his chest tightening and his breathing getting heavy as he finished the last flight. In front of him was a pneumatic door and behind it he could hear shouting and the roar of engines. The hinge let out a hiss and then it thudded backwards as two lorry drivers, stepped through. They walked past Rosen continuing their conversation in Lithuanian or Polish – Rosen couldn’t tell them apart.

He stepped over the high threshold and smelled the exhaust fumes and diesel oil that filled the car deck. An articulated lorry with Irish plates negotiated the ramp down into the car deck, a couple of the ABs and the Load Master shouting instructions. The brakes hissed and the lorry jerked to a standstill.

‘Rosen.’

He heard his name and looked around for the Load Master.

He took two more steps into the car deck. There was a carrier with a dozen high-end BMWs stacked at crazy angles and nearby a refrigeration unit hummed. He looked around but saw nobody. He turned to his left and saw two trucks parked up against the side of the vessel.

The sound of a spanner crashing on the deck echoed to his left.

‘Rosen.’

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Another faceless shout.

He walked down the side of the first lorry, certain he knew where the voice came from. The lorry had the name of a haulage contractor on the tarpaulin stretched over one side. He passed the rear of the first lorry and walked down alongside a second truck, a smaller, lighter version.

By the rear axle he saw a spanner on the metal deck in front of him. He could feel the warmth of the engine unit and smelled the rubber. The sodium lights glistened against the black paint of the cab and as he stepped into the gap he saw him.

'What are you doing here?' Rosen said.

The man stood legs astride and stared. He said nothing.

'Where's the Load Master?'

Rosen noticed the man was right handed as he stepped towards him, light catching on the blade of the knife. Rosen watched as the hand came up and the blade plunged into his chest. He looked down blankly and grabbed the arm attached to the knife until he felt his strength ebbing. In one swift movement the man removed the knife and plunged it deep into Rosen's chest a second time.

Chapter Two

Ian Drake bowed his head and stifled a yawn. Then he tried to focus again on the inspector from Southern Division who had the unenviable task of making data protection sound interesting. He was a tall, thin man who wore a cheap suit and a battered white shirt with a tie that had an enormous stain – tea or tandoori, Drake couldn't tell. He glanced over at Caren Waits who was alternating between keen, intense stares at the speaker and scribbling notes.

Drake had often found himself sent on courses to Cardiff or Swansea after the police forces of Wales had been unified into one service. Today it had been the turn of officers from Southern Division to make the journey up north and over lunch Drake had become more and more annoyed as he'd listened to jokes about *sheepshaggers* from voices trying to mimic the North Wales accent.

Drake drank some water – maybe he was dehydrated and that was the reason for his lapse of concentration. He could ill afford to waste a day on this course. He had the appraisal of a junior officer to undertake, a pile of reports to read and a missing persons file to review. He felt the irritation building in his mind.

A piece of pastry from the lunchtime sausage rolls dislodged itself from between two teeth and roll around in his mouth. His father liked sausage rolls; he remembered that from his childhood – perhaps that's why he had scooped one onto his plate with the sandwiches and crisps at lunchtime.

'Data protection is central to our policing policy,' the inspector droned on.

Drake swallowed the pastry and could feel another yawn starting. He pulled the edge of the newspaper out from underneath the course materials and cast an eye over one of the difficult squares in the morning's sudoku.

'There are organised gangs in Nigeria, eastern Europe and China – all targeting our economy.'

Caren was still scribbling.

Drake watched another slide of the presentation that was full of text and bullet points. The inspector had a sing-song voice that made it difficult to concentrate. Nobody laughed at his jokes. He looked again at the sudoku and when he filled in one of the squares he felt pleased with himself.

Drake heard a noise from the rear of the room and a uniformed officer strode down towards the front and handed the inspector a slip of paper.

'I'm sorry for the interruption,' the inspector said before scanning the room. 'Urgent request for D.I. Drake to call headquarters.'

Drake got up and gave the inspector a look of feigned regret. Caren began sorting her papers, stuffing them into a black folder. Drake inched his way along the row of seats, mouthing the occasional apology to the others present.

The uniformed officer stood at the end of the row, he had a wide stance and broad shoulders, the sort of officer assigned to a late shift in Rhyl on a summers' night when temperatures ran high and tempers frayed.

'What's up?' Drake asked.

'Super Price wants to talk to you, sir.'

He led Drake and Caren out of the conference room and down a corridor to reception. He pointed into a small ante room and Drake found the telephone lying on the table.

'Drake.'

'I tried your mobile,' Superintendent Wyndham Price's voice sounded edgy.

'I ...ah. Must be in my coat.'

'Inspector. I know you're in an important seminar but there's an emergency.'

'Sir?' Drake could feel his body relaxing at the prospect of leaving the presentation and the statistics about data protection crime. It wasn't the same as proper criminals. There were victims of course, every crime had a victim, but these gangs seemed to operate in the ether, in cyber space.

'I wouldn't have called you out of the seminar but you're the nearest senior officer.'

Drake gave Caren a knowing informed look.

The super continued. 'On the one day when we've got all of the DI's committed, a body turns up.'

'Sir?'

'D.I. Rogers is in court before that idiot of a judge in Mold and Geoff Parry is on a train to London for a conference in Scotland Yard,' Price continued. 'You'll have to take the case.'

Drake hesitated. 'Nobody else, sir?'

'You've got an hour,'

His mind focused, the scene needed to be preserved and evidence secured. The Crime Scene Investigators would have to be in place.

'There's a ferry arriving in Holyhead in an hour. One the super ferries – full of lorries. They found a body.'

'Isn't it the jurisdiction of the Transport Police?'

'Who? The BTP. You must be joking. Beyond their pay grade. They don't do murder, Ian.'

'They're not going to be too pleased.'

'I'll sort it.'

Drake barely concealed the smile on his face as he left the room and then made for the exit without a second thought to the intricacies of data protection. Outside in the car park, Drake strode over to the Alfa Romeo GT and pointed the remote. The car beeped and the lights flashed. Overhead, dark clouds scudded across the sky and over the mountains to the east he saw dark columns of rain.

Within minutes they'd turned onto the dual carriageway and Drake fired the car westwards over Anglesey towards a darkening sky. Soon it was raining heavily and water hammered against the windscreen. He feathered the brake and the cruise disconnected. The car slowed and he peered through the blades as they swept back and forth.

After half an hour they crossed the embankment to Holy Island and the cooling tower of the closed smelter loomed out of the shadows. Drake followed the signs down to the port area. Two men were standing at the entrance, their heads lowered against the rain, wearing high visibility jackets, their hands stuck deep into pockets. Drake pulled up beside them and flashed his warrant card. There was a flurry of arms and then one of the men spoke into a radio. Soon a small van with flashing lights and the livery of the ferry company, painted over the side, parked in front of Drake.

'Follow that van, please, sir,' he pointed. Drake closed the window and drove off.

The van threaded its way over the concourse. The rain was still sheeting down and Drake caught a glimpse of the surface of the harbour teeming from the rain and tide mixing with a film of commercial diesel fuel. He saw the town to his left with its dilapidated buildings, the driving rain made it look depressing. It was a town at the end of the line and the long wall along the boundary of the port seemed to shut it out from the activity in the harbour.

The van passed a large grey building on the harbour side and then turned towards a long flat section of concourse lined with articulated lorries. The flashing lights came on again and the van slowed as it neared a modern building. At the far end of the concourse a ferry was unloading. Another ferry was reversing slowly into a berth.

Drake parked alongside a police van from the port police and then left the car. Drake dragged on the Barbour lying on the back seat. He pulled the collar close up to his cheeks, ran over to the building, the rain soaking his face. Inside three phones were ringing and there were shouts from an office for somebody to answer the calls. Two uniformed officers acknowledged Drake. Moments later the door opened, Gareth Winder, and Rhys Jones entered, rain dripped off their jackets.

‘Got here as soon as we could,’ Winder said.

Drake nodded. ‘We’ve only just arrived.’

A man with a large chest and a swarthy beard, his whole upper body covered in an oversized high-visibility jacket emerged from the rear of the building – the phones continued to ring. Drake held out a hand, ‘DI Drake,’ he said before turning to Caren and introducing her. He began to take off the Barbour.

‘There’s no time for that now. She almost alongside,’ the man said.

‘What ...?’ Drake asked.

'Need to get you down near the ramp and on first.'

They were outside again and Drake was certain the rain had intensified. It seemed to blot out the town and squinting into the distance he saw the shape of the ferry company's offices towering over the harbour.

'Into the van,' the man said.

The man barely squeezed into the driver's seat, the jacket rustling against the chair. He struggled with the belt, before firing the engine into life. He drove in first gear down to the ramp. The ferry was finishing her manoeuvre, a siren sounded, more lights flashed, and the ramp descended into the stern of the vessel. They left the car and walked over to the top of the ramp.

Three members of the crew stood on the car deck as Drake strode down into the vessel. Despite the rain he could see their dark, intense stares.

A man with a wide jaw and a shaved head stepped forward

'Captain Marshall,' he said thrusting out his hand towards Drake.

'DI Drake. Where's the body?'

'Follow me,' Marshall said stepping towards the lorries parked on the deck.

'How many passengers are there? Drake said.

'Not many. We were light this morning. All of the passengers are in the lounges on the top deck. What do we do with them?'

Drake turned to Caren. 'Sergeant Waits will take care of that.'

Marshall raised his hand and waved at another man in a high visibility jacket.

'Dave. Take Sergeant Waits up top.'

Drake heard the gears crunching on the Scientific Support Vehicle as it thudded into the ramp and began a slow descent into the bowels of the vessel. There was a deep

grinding noise as the bow doors opened. It was the standard operating procedure, clearing the vessel of fumes, the captain explained.

They twisted past articulated lorries and trucks parked closely together and stepped over cables fastened round tyres. There was a heavy smell of diesel oil and petrol fumes hanging in the air and the sound of the engines throbbed under the metal deck.

Drake thought of his father, probably because he loved visiting Ireland. Drake was still coming to terms with his father's cancer. It was only a matter of time before it would take him from them.

Marshall stopped below the cabin of a large articulated lorry.

'He's over there,' he said, nodding.

'What's the dead man's name?'

'Rosen. Frank Rosen. He was the chief engineer.'

'Who found the body?'

'One of the AB's – Able Seaman.'

Drake nodded. He walked over and knelt down, his shoes almost touching Rosen's feet. His head was tucked into his chin and lay on his chest. There was a large red stain on the one piece suit and the handle of a knife protruding from his chest had dark blotches along its length.

Behind him Drake heard the familiar sound of Mike Foulds's voice, turned his head, and saw the crime scene manager looking down at him.

'Mick,' Drake said.

'Has anyone interfered with the scene since the body was found?'

Foulds sounded edgy.

'No. We stopped anyone getting onto the deck once we knew.'

Foulds nodded and moved away, looking around, assessing the task in hand. Drake had been on cases with him before and knew Foulds always made sure everyone knew that he was in charge of the crime scene.

'All yours, Mike,' Drake said as he stepped back.

Drake could hear the bustle of the crime scene investigators behind the tyres of the trucks.

'This could take hours,' Foulds said.

Drake followed Marshall past the trucks back onto the car deck. It struck Drake that it was the first case ever when he knew who the killer was. Or at least where he was. The killer was on the vessel. They had all the suspects in one place. It was a matter of establishing the motive and opportunity. He could keep everyone on board until he had a confession. Simple.

Marshall was saying something that interrupted Drake's thinking.

'Inspector Drake. The Port Manager is on his way.'

'What?'

'The manager.'

Another tall man with a high-visibility strode down the ramp.

'Who's in charge?'

The accent was estuary English and a decibel too loud.

Drake held out his hand. 'DI Drake.'

The man looked at Drake's hand for a moment and then shook it.

'How long will you be?'

'As long as it takes.'

'That's no good.'

Drake stared at the man before replying. 'Sorry?'

'I've got a schedule to keep. Look at all these lorries. Perishable goods mostly. Massive claim against us if we can't offload the ship.'

His tone suggested that arguing wasn't an option.

Drake straightened a little. 'What was your name?'

'Mortlake.'

Drake raised his voice above the humming of the engine noise. 'Mr Mortlake. This is a crime scene. I've got team of crime scene investigators beginning their work. There's a murderer on this boat.'

'It's a ship,' Mortlake said through gritted teeth.

'What?' Drake said.

The mobile rang in Drake's pocket; he reached in feeling the damp seams. He noticed the rain getting into his shoes and he worried that the bottom of his trousers would be sodden by the time they finished. He wasn't dressed for this – he should have been in a seminar this afternoon, not on the deck of a ship lined with engine oil having to debate who was in charge. It was a good suit and oil and grease would ruin the material.

'Can you come up here, sir?' It was Caren's voice.

Drake turned to the two uniformed officers standing on the ramp.

'Nobody goes off this ship, without my authority. Understood.'

They nodded and Drake gave Mortlake a defiant stare.

The stairwell to the top deck was wide and clean. Caren was waiting for him in front of two wooden framed doors, a sign above said *Irish Bar*.

'There's a couple of smart-arse passengers in there,' she tipped her head.

'Really?'

'Demanding they have to leave.'

Drake was in no mood for any further dissent and pushed the door open, clenching his jaw. Two hundred eyes turned towards him and he stood in front of the bar and cleared his throat before raising his voice.

'I'm Detective Inspector Drake. There's been a murder on this vessel earlier and until we've completed our investigation then nobody is leaving.'

He was about to continue when the door burst open and Winder crashed in.

'Something you need to see, sir. Now.'

Chapter Three

Clothes were lying in piles on the floor, the bed linen torn, pillows ripped to shreds.

Winder stood by the door as Drake stepped into the cabin. He walked to the bottom of the bed. He noticed the empty jewel cases and an Elton John Greatest Hits CD thrown into a corner. He snapped on a pair of latex gloves and picked through some polo shirts and boxer shorts. He fingered the front cover of a cowboy novel detached from the rest of the pages. Somebody wanted to find something badly enough to tear a paperback novel to shreds – desperate or angry or both.

Drake said to Winder standing by the door. 'Better get Mike Foulds up here.'

Winder nodded and left.

Drake knelt by the bed and flicked over more of the clothes with a pencil he'd found in his jacket. There was nothing to identify the occupant of the cabin, no photograph of a wife or girlfriend or children. Not even a newspaper. He stepped over to the small bathroom behind him. There was a heavy smell, the narrow shower door wet from recent use. He noticed the basin, mirror and fittings for an electric razor but no wash bag or bar of soap or shower gel. The bathroom had been stripped of personal belongings. They were probably under the clothes on the bed waiting for the CSIs.

It was quiet in the cabin as Drake waited for Foulds. They probably didn't have enough investigators to deal with everything. He walked carefully over to the window and peered out into the harbour, watching a small fishing boat churning its way through the

rain into the fish quay. He looked back over the discarded possessions just as Foulds stood by the door and groaned.

'Somebody's been busy,' Foulds said.

'How are you getting on?'

Foulds took a step into the room and reached for a pair of gloves.

'Slowly. It could take hours.'

Drake nodded. Time is what they did not have. But he'd never had a case where he was so close to the murderer. He could easily touch him, speak to him, look him in the eye. Or maybe it was a woman. All he had to do was get all the passengers and crew into one area on the ship and demand a confession. It only happened that way on the television for *Poirot* or *Miss Marple*.

A crime scene investigator appeared at the door of the cabin and Foulds turned to him.

'Andy, get to work here,' he said before turning to Drake.

'We need space on the car deck, Ian. Some of the lorries will have to disembark.'

'I'll come down with you.'

It took them a couple of minutes to descend to the car deck. Drake noticed the small office in the corner of the car deck. Mortlake stood near the cab of an articulated lorry and when he saw Drake he mouthed something to a crew member who immediately picked up a radio unit.

Drake strode over to the crime scene. Foulds looked worried and he pointed under the lorries behind him. 'We need to move these wagons.'

Drake didn't want to let anyone off the ship. He worried how he could manage the investigation with potential suspects leaving. He dreaded to think how many foreign

nationals might be on the ship. Could he confiscate their passports? Keep them in the UK until he was satisfied they had nothing to do with the murder?

'It's important Ian,' Foulds continued.

'Yes, of course. Get it done,' Drake replied thinking about the murderer sitting somewhere in the vessel.

Caren appeared on the car deck and started explaining to Drake what she, Winder, and DC Rhys Jones had been doing. They'd gathered names and addresses of all the passengers cross-referencing them with car registration plates and passports. Some of the passengers were getting restless and an old man with a cut-glass accent and halitosis complained that he had to get to catch a train to London for an urgent meeting. Drake could barely hear Caren once the first tractor unit had fired its engine into life.

Drake fished the mobile out of his pocket as he felt it vibrate.

'Drake,' he said.

He heard the voice of Wyndham Price. 'I've had the Port Manager on the phone.'

Drake glanced over at the office. Mortlake was standing in the doorway now, feet wide apart, a smirk on his face. Price continued as Drake muffled a hand over one ear hoping he'd hear everything Price was saying.

'He's complaining about the cargo on the ferry. I know this guy from a local business forum. He can make a lot of noise and his head is so far up his arse ... well you know the sort.'

Drake glanced over at Mortlake again – arms folded now. 'I know the sort, sir.'

'Go through the motions and leave him to me. Make certain you get the names of everybody on that ship.'

'Of course, sir.'

Drake didn't need the Superintendent to tell him how to do his job. He would get things done and done properly. Drake stood for a moment after switching off the BlackBerry. He knew that keeping everyone on the vessel was impractical and that he would have to let the passengers and lorries disembark. At least he would have the name, address and personal details of the killer. It would only then be a matter of time.

The noise from the engines was deafening and the car deck filled with the exhaust fumes. Drake and Caren stood by the office as the first of the tractor units lurched forwards pulling a container. It crawled over the deck towards the ramp and then upwards onto the harbour concourse. A second followed and soon the car deck was emptying of lorries. Each driver's identification and home addresses was checked and double-checked – there were five Hungarians, four French men and ten Polish drivers amongst the fifty long distance lorry drivers. The smile on Mortlake's face grew wider. Drake wanted to check and recheck everything until they had meticulous records were made of every human being that left the ship – Drake even insisted on photographs being taken of every face.

Drake left Caren with the officers on the ramp and walked back over to Foulds and the crime scene investigators working near the body. The car deck near the body was clear and the CSI team had been able to establish a proper inner perimeter for the scene. Foulds appeared more contented when Drake approached him.

'Anything?' Drake asked.

'Oil and grease and diesel. But sod all else.'

'Doc been?'

'No. Been delayed.'

'When you going to move the body?'

Before Foulds could answer his mobile hummed into life and he read the text.

'Andy's finished in the cabin.'

Drake said nothing but nodded at Caren and they left the car deck heading back up to Rosen's cabin.

Captain Marshall was standing outside Rosen's cabin when they arrived. There was pale colour to his skin and an apprehensive look in his eyes. The CSI was packing his equipment away and Drake peered into the cabin, seeing a resemblance of order.

'What was Rosen like?' Drake said to Marshall.

Marshall hesitated.

'Kept himself to himself.'

'Did you know him well?'

'Not really.'

The CSI hauled a box of equipment into the corridor.

'Did you get on with him?'

'Yes. I suppose so.'

'Don't the senior officers all work together?'

'Of course.'

'Why was he on the car deck?'

'Don't know.'

'Is that his normal place of work?'

'No. Of course not.'

'Any ideas then?'

Marshall looked at Drake.

'Look I have no idea why he was on the car deck. He should have been in the engine room. I took a hell of a risk leaving Dublin without the Chief in the engine room. Against all the regulations. It could mean disciplinary action. An inquiry, even.'

'But there wasn't a problem was there?'

'That's not the point.'

'Did he have any friends on the crew?'

Marshall looked puzzled by the question.

'I ... don't know.'

A junior officer walking down the corridor towards them caught Marshall's attention. 'And what do you want, Berkley?'

'I might be able to help.'

Marshall let his mouth fall open.

'How did you know Rosen?' Drake said now turning to look right at Berkely.

'He helped me with my studies.'

'How often?'

'Depends,' the man shrugged a little. He was barely twenty, his face still covered in pimples.

They stepped into Rosen's cabin.

The CSI and Marshall stood outside. Inside, order had been restored. The contents had been tidied and bagged. The chair was against the wall and the bed and mattress reunited.

Drake said to the CSI.

'Any personal possessions?'

The investigator gave him a sullen look. 'Not much to talk about. CDs ,wash bag. Usual stuff – toothbrush shaver etc ,etc.'

'Have you found his iPhone?' Berkley asked.

Drake and Caren looked at the investigator.

'And what about his laptop?'

Drake almost fell headlong at the bottom of the last flight of stairs in his haste to reach the car deck. Eventually he heaved open the door and stepped into the deafening sound of engines, air choked with diesel fumes, crew members gesticulating wildly raising arms with high visibility jackets, pointing and directing drivers towards the exit. He hurried over to the uniformed officers standing at the bottom of the ramp, heads turned away against the driving rain. He shouted instructions and they nodded confirmation, pulling the zips of their jackets tightly under their chins before turning into the wind and rain.

He walked over to the office at the far end of the car deck with Caren and stood for a moment watching the flickering images from the various CCTV cameras, suppressing his anger that he had not been shown the monitors before. Both screens were divided into four segments, each image tagged with the date and time. He stared at the two screens as though they had some hypnotic quality and it struck him that there might be a record of Rosen's last seconds of life. He heard voices behind him.

'Where do these record?' Drake said directly to the white suited crew member standing at the door.

'All over the car deck.'

'Anywhere else? And why the hell weren't we told about them before?'

Before the man could answer Captain Marshall appeared in the office doorway.

'Why have you stopped the disembarkation?'

The captain's jaw was sticking out more prominently and there was a faint dusting of white stubble. Drake raised his head and stared at him.

'I wasn't told about the CCTV images,' Drake said pointing at the screen. 'The record from the cameras could be crucial. We are talking about a man's life.'

'All the images are stored digitally,' Marshall began. 'I want to know about the disembarkation.'

'Where are they stored?'

'What?'

Drake squinted. 'The images from the cameras. I want copies of everything. I don't want anyone to have access to these computers without my authority.'

Captain Marshall gave Drake a tired look and nodded his acquiescence. Outside on the car deck the noise was diminishing, the fumes less intoxicating and the chatter more audible.

'Inspector Drake, I want to know why you've stopped the disembarkation.'

Drake straightened his posture, drew his shoulders back and stared at Marshall.

'This ferry is a crime scene.'

'And it's full of containers, mostly with perishable goods.'

'And whilst it's a crime scene captain, I can stop the disembarkation.'

'But...'

'Rosen's laptop is missing...'

'That could be anywhere...'

'And his mobile. So we'll need to search every lorry and car leaving the ship.'

'You can't be serious.'

Drake was clenching his jaw again.

'I've got special branch officers coming over to assist.'

'This could take hours.'

Drake glanced over at Caren.

'Caren. Close it down. No-one leaves.'