

A FORGED-IN-THE-DARK GAME

BELOW THE WIRE

a colombo score

GHOST PROTOCOL (PVT) LTD · TABLETOP DIVISION

First edition · Colombo

Powered by the Forged-in-the-Dark engine

BELOW THE WIRE

First edition, v0.5 · Colombo

Free preview. Share it as it is.

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This is a work of fiction set in a real city. Names, characters, businesses, institutions and events are either invented or used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

PREVIEW

THE FIRST PAGES

The city, the changes from Blades in the Dark, one playbook and the opening of the first score.

FILE: BTW / CH.00 · HANDLING: read in order

00

INTRODUCTION

ACTIVE

1 1:14 on a Tuesday night. Slave Island. The basement off Justice Akbar Mawatha, the one with the air-con they've meant to fix since November, the one where the kettle's gone through three bases and the same chipped enamel pot since 2019.

A laptop on the workbench. A floor plan on the laptop. A floor plan that should not be on that laptop.

Three of the four people in the room are pretending not to look. The fourth says: *give me the part you don't want to say.*

WHAT YOU DO

You play the Ghost Protocol. Five operators, give or take. You take contracts the corps need run but can't be seen running. Sometimes the contract is data. Sometimes it's a person. Sometimes the corp didn't hire you and you found out anyway and now you're deciding whether to do something about it.

You're good at this. You've been doing it long enough to know what it costs.

Most evenings are one job. Midway through, your Wraith is walking out of Fort with a GLASS guard twenty metres behind her, and you tell the GM she's going to lose him in Pettah. The two of you agree that's SKULK, one of twelve actions on her sheet. The GM calls it risky, standard effect. She has two dice in SKULK. You mark 2 stress to push yourself for a third and roll 2, 3, 5. The highest die counts, and a 5 is a partial success: she loses him, and the GM picks what it cost her. Harm 2, an ankle turned on a kerb in the crush. You can take it, or resist: roll Prowess, pay 6 minus your highest die in stress, and the harm shrinks or goes away. Then the GM asks the Cracker's player what she's been doing all this time.

WHAT YOU NEED

This book. Two to five friends plus someone willing to GM. A handful of d6s. Paper and pencils. A few hours: three or four for the first session, two for a score once you've learned the engine.

HOW THE BOOK READS

If you're new to Forged in the Dark, the order is:

1. **This chapter.**
2. **Chapter 1**, *The World*: what the fiction is.
3. **Chapter 3**, *Core Mechanics*: how the dice work.
4. **Chapter 2**, *Character Creation*: make a person.
5. **Chapter 4**, *The Crew*: make the unit.
6. **The Argent Vault** in Part Three, the Scores: a starter heist to learn by doing.

If you've played FitD before, skim chapters 2 through 6 for what's different (the end of chapter 3 lists the deltas), then go to chapter 1, the playbooks, and a score.

ON THE TONE

A noir game. Bad things happen, and people who matter get hurt.

The crew is also five people who watch out for each other, and some of the best scenes at the table have no score in them: the kitchen, the morning after a bad one. Leave room for those.

THE CONTRACT

What the book owes your table. Colombo is the real city, and it's treated with care. The gear has mythic names because operators name their gear. Heat builds from score to score, and the campaign gets interesting around session eight, when the crew that was fine in session one is carrying it.

FILE: BTW / CH.01 · HANDLING: read in order

01 THE WORLD

Colombo, present day. Just darker.

ACTIVE

The commercial capital of a country of twenty-two million people on an island the size of West Virginia, sitting in the Indian Ocean astride one of the densest shipping lanes on earth. A port for two thousand years and somebody's colony for four hundred of them: Portuguese, then Dutch, then British. Free since 1948. At war with itself from 1983 to 2009, and trying to remember how to be a country since.

The Easter bombings came in 2019. The economy collapsed in 2022, and the protests that year won and lost in the same breath. The IMF arrangement of 2023 came with conditions, and the conditions came with corps.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT IN THE FICTION

The corps have more than they used to. The post-2022 reforms opened doors that haven't closed since. AURIGA's regional data complex sits on reclaimed land in Battaramulla. MERIDIAN owns an estimated ninety-six percent of bonded warehousing on the island. ATLAS HARBOR, the semi-privatised port authority, runs the container terminals on a ninety-nine-year lease nobody is allowed to read. GLASS Security walks the perimeter with rifles the police don't have.

The state has less. The anti-corruption courts have teeth and no time. The CID is competent, underfunded, slow. Customs is gutted from inside. The municipal police are honest enough, and bored. Real accountability runs through journalists, NGOs, lawyers, and the occasional prosecutor a corp can't relocate.

And the operators exist. In the fiction, Colombo has a class of professional the real city doesn't officially recognise: small, technically literate crews who take contracts at the edge of corp and state law. A dozen working crews in the city at any given time, give or take. The Ghost Protocol is one.

Everything else is as it is. The traffic, the monsoon, the kade on the corner with the kottu.

NEIGHBOURHOODS THE CREW WILL WORK IN

The book uses these neighbourhoods because the contracts are here. Reskin them, or invent your own.

FORT (COLOMBO 1)

The old colonial heart. Government ministries, the World Trade Center, the president's house behind concrete bollards. CCTV everywhere. Police on every block. **AURIGA's** regional office is in the WTC East Tower; **MERIDIAN's** glass headquarters faces the harbour. Crews work Fort by daylight, in suits, with paperwork, or not at all.

PETTAH (COLOMBO 11)

The bazaar. Wholesale electronics, textiles, hardware, gold. Streets so dense that a vehicle is a liability and a foot pursuit is a coin-flip. The crew buys gear here through the back of the **Wolf Street Electronics Centre** (see The Off-Grid, below). Half the off-grid hardware in the city moves through Pettah.

SLAVE ISLAND (COLOMBO 2 / KOMPANNA VEEDIYA)

Mixed residential and commercial, central, walkable, and historically under-policed. Mosques next to office towers next to colonial townhouses broken into flats. The Ghost Protocol's basement is here. So are the Cobalt Kings, and a few of the crews this book doesn't name. The unspoken rule: nobody runs an operation in Slave Island. Slave Island is for sleeping.

MARADANA (COLOMBO 10)

The rail hub. Repair garages, machinist shops, signal yards. **The Cold Room**, the data-theft crew, works out of the basement of a printing press here, and keeps a spare server cabinet in a garage off Panchikawatte Road. The Wyrms is the Ghost Protocol's own data store, encrypted and on no network but its own. Its secondary node lives in that same basement: the Ghost Protocol part-owns the press, and the two crews share the node.

WELLAWATTE (COLOMBO 6)

Tamil-majority, dense residential, on the southern coast road. Beach access. **The Birds**, the all-women social-engineering crew, work out of a flat on Manning Place. The Ghost Protocol has two safe-houses here, both rented under names that don't exist.

KOLLUPITIYA / BAMBALAPITIYA (COLOMBO 3 / 4)

Upscale residential and commercial. Galleria malls, embassies, the prime minister's house, the schools the corp officers' children attend. A lot of the crew's marks live here. So do most of their lawyers, when they need lawyers.

CINNAMON GARDENS (COLOMBO 7)

Old wealth. Embassies, the cricket club, Ladies' College. The corps' senior executives live here, next door to the families the corps can't touch. **The Northern Houses**, the old banking syndicates, meet on alternating Sundays at a club on Reid Avenue that's been turning down membership applications since 1924.

MOUNT LAVINIA (COLOMBO SOUTH)

Beach suburb, ten kilometres south. **The Children of the Lighthouse**, an urban-survivalist commune of ex-priests and ex-soldiers, run a compound around an abandoned lighthouse in the old hotel quarter. They're neither friends nor enemies, and they're useful exactly twice a year.

THE PORT

The biggest single target the crew has. ATLAS HARBOR runs the four container terminals (Jaya, East, Unity, South Asia Gateway). GLASS provides perimeter security. The Sri Lanka Navy provides everything else. **The Last Horizon**, the smuggling crew, has people inside three of the four terminals. The Ghost Protocol has people inside one.

THE CORPS

Seven corps the crew will deal with regularly. The full write-ups are in chapter 7, *The Factions*; these are the silhouettes.

NAME	WHAT THEY OWN	WHAT THEY WANT	WHAT THEY FEAR
AURIGA	Cloud, data, telecoms, surveillance	Total visibility on the island	A leak with a face
MERIDIAN GROUP	Logistics, shipping, bonded warehousing	Margin, monopoly, market share	Customs reform with teeth
ATLAS HARBOR AUTHORITY	The port, the terminals, the cranes	The ninety-nine-year lease, undisturbed	Renationalisation
GLASS SECURITY	Private security, PMC services, executive protection	The next contract	A scandal involving a journalist
THE NORTHERN HOUSES	Banking, lending, FX	To remain invisible	Direct exposure to anything
LANTERN MEDIA	TV, print, two dominant news sites, the influencer ecosystem	Narrative	Independent journalism
ARC SOLUTIONS	Power, water, infrastructure concessions	The next concession	Blackout

THE OTHER CREWS

Of the dozen or so working crews in Colombo, five matter for play and recur in the campaign. Their write-ups are in chapter 7 too.

NAME	WHAT THEY DO	WHERE THEY SLEEP	POSTURE
The Cobalt Kings	Wet work, contract assassinations	A bungalow in Slave Island	Old guard. Professional. Not friendly.
The Last Horizon	Maritime smuggling, port jobs	A converted trawler at Mutwal	Friendly enough, expensive
Midnight Provost	Ex-cop muscle, extraction, debt collection	A garage in Wattala	Hostile. They lost a man to the Ghost Protocol in 2023.
The Birds	Social engineering, identity, blackmail	A flat in Wellawatte	Cordial. Will trade favours.
The Cold Room	Data theft, network intrusion	A basement in Maradana	Allies. The Ghost Protocol's cracker trained two of them.

THE STATE

The state is competent in places, absent in others. For the crew:

- **The CID:** small, sharp, slow to act. Won't chase the crew without reason. Given reason, the single most dangerous thing in the city.
- **The municipal police:** honest enough, under-equipped, bored. Obstacles. Alibis. Occasionally contacts.
- **Customs:** gutted. The director is honest. Below the director is mud.
- **The Bribery Commission:** toothy, understaffed. Useful as a weapon if the crew can put a case in their hands without fingerprints.
- **The Sri Lanka Navy:** at the port, at sea, along the coast. Not for hire, not for talking to. Avoid.
- **The Judiciary:** independent, careful, slow. Renuka tells the crew what they can and can't do in front of a judge. The crew usually believes her.

THE OFF-GRID

The fixers, fences, doctors, lawyers and drivers the crew runs with.

Chapter 7 has the write-ups. A few load-bearing ones:

- **Anula at Wolf Street Electronics:** the gear fence in Pettah. Polite, exacting, won't extend credit.

- **Dr Mendis at the Wellawatte clinic:** the doctor. No questions, cash, back entrance after 10 p.m.
 - **Renuka Fernando, attorney-at-law:** the lawyer. Brilliant, expensive, won't lie for the crew but will lie *with* them if the case warrants.
 - **Tharindu the driver:** the wheel. Knows every shortcut in Colombo and has been arrested twice for things that weren't his fault.
 - **The Marriage:** a matchmaker / blackmail ring in Cinnamon Gardens. Knows everyone's secrets. Will sell some of them. Will sell some of the crew's, too, if pushed.
-

THE WEATHER

The southwest monsoon (May–September) and the second monsoon (October– January). Most of the year is hot. Two weeks in December are pleasant. A hard rain at the wrong moment can collapse a roof job, drown a tail, ground a drone, or turn the Galle Road into a six-kilometre car park. The book uses weather as a clock; the GM should too.

THE PACE

A typical week. Score finishes Monday night. Downtime Tuesday. Wednesday a meeting for the next job. Reconnaissance Thursday and Friday. Sleep on it Saturday. Hit the score Sunday night.

A score a week when the work is steady. Heat carries from one to the next, and the vices get their turn in between. The crew either advances or it doesn't.

WORDS THE BOOK USES

For a reader who hasn't been to Colombo.

- **arrack:** spirit distilled from the sap of the coconut flower.
- **Burgher:** a Sri Lankan of Dutch, Portuguese or British descent.
- **CEB:** the Ceylon Electricity Board, the state power company.
- **CGR:** the railway, from its old name, Ceylon Government Railway.
- **CID:** the Criminal Investigation Department, the police's detective branch.
- **Colombo 1, Colombo 7:** postal districts, used as the names of neighbourhoods.

- **DIG:** Deputy Inspector General, a senior police rank.
- **DMT:** the Department of Motor Traffic, which licenses vehicles and drivers.
- **dosai:** a thin pancake of fermented rice and lentil batter.
- **Hulftsdorp:** the hill where the courts sit.
- **kade:** a small shop or tea stall, open to the street.
- **kottu:** flatbread chopped on a hot griddle with vegetables, egg or meat.
- **kovil:** a Hindu temple.
- **lakh:** one hundred thousand. Money is counted in lakhs of rupees, and one coin in the rules is one lakh.
- **LKR:** the Sri Lankan rupee.
- **Mawatha:** avenue or road, the last word of many street names.
- **NIC:** the National Identity Card.
- **SSC:** the Sinhalese Sports Club, a cricket ground in Cinnamon Gardens.
- **STF:** the Special Task Force, the police's paramilitary unit.
- **tuk-tuk:** a three-wheeled taxi.

FILE: BTW / CH.03 · HANDLING: read in order

03

CORE MECHANICS

*From the end of the chapter: what changed from
Blades in the Dark.*

ACTIVE



f you've played BitD, here's what's different:

BITD

BELOW THE WIRE

Skirmish (melee fight)	Replaced by WRECK (force, brawl, suppress)
Hunt (pistol shooting)	HUNT is rifles + observation; pistols are FINESSE
Attune (sense the ghost field)	ATTUNE is sense systems, networks, rooms, gut feel; no occult
Survey (perceive)	SURVEY is overwatch + tells + immediate-threat perception
Tinker (mechanical work)	TINKER also covers tooled-up hacking
No "skulk"	SKULK is urban-blend / melt-into-crowd, distinct from PROWL
Coin	Kept. One coin is one lakh of rupees (100,000 LKR), counted on the crew sheet (chapter 4)
Crew types: Cult, Hawkers, Smugglers, Assassins, Bravos, Shadows	One crew type: the Ghost Protocol . No type choice; the campaign is the crew.
Coin gives advancement	Crew XP gives advancement: scores, heat and the campaign arc (chapter 4)
Seven action dots at creation, three of them from the playbook	Ten action ticks: the playbook's three plus seven you place (chapter 2)
Heat is set by how the score went	Heat is rolled at the end of the score: a d6 plus modifiers (chapter 6)
Load: you declare items as you need them	Load: your playbook's loadout lists what each level carries (chapter 6)
Resistance: stress cost is 6 minus the highest die	Same
Trauma list	Same eight, re-flavoured
Trauma costs nothing until the fourth	Acting clearly against a trauma costs the crew +1 heat
Vice	Vice kept, list adapted to Colombo (see chapter 2)

Anything not in the table works here the way it does in Blades in the Dark.

PLAYBOOK: BTW / PB.10 · ROLE: one of the crew

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THE VOICE

ACTIVE

You taught negotiation at the law college. You don't teach any more.

The Voice walks in through the front door wearing the obstacle's lanyard. The Wraith would have gone round it and the Hand would have broken the lock. You stop at the desk and ask the guard how his daughter's exams went, and he tells you, and then he buzzes you in.

You read rooms, you write the cover stories the crew works under, and you remember who owes whom. Talking is the smaller part of it.

STARTING ACTION RATINGS (PRE-ALLOCATED)

— SWAY: 2

— CONSORT: 1

Place seven more ticks across the twelve actions. Cap is 2.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Pick one to start. Take more by advancing.

LIKE THIS (SIGNATURE)

When you tell a lie that the listener already half-believes, you may **state the outcome of the lie** before rolling SWAY. If you succeed, the outcome holds in the fiction: they bought it the way you wanted them to. If you fail, the GM picks how badly.

NETWORK

You have **+1 quality on every contact roll**. This includes CONSORT to gather information, calls in to a friendly contact, working a known purveyor. You know more people than you should.

BYSTANDER

You can be in the room and not be noticed. It isn't stealth; you're in plain view as the busboy, the courier, the woman waiting for a flight that doesn't exist. Once per score, you may declare you're present in a scene the GM didn't include you in. You're not in the spotlight; you observed.

THE LONG PAUSE (SIGNATURE)

Once per score, you may extend a single conversation across **minutes, hours, or days** without rolling. The GM and you decide what the

conversation produces: the meeting that becomes a friendship that becomes a contact.

MIRROR

You can match anyone you've heard speak for thirty consecutive seconds: accent, idiom, rhythm. Useful for phone calls, written correspondence, short-form impressions. What you get is a believable approximation, short of a perfect deepfake.

THE LAWYER'S FRIEND

You may invoke a real lawyer's name (Renuka, or another) once per score without their knowledge. The named lawyer is plausibly involved enough that authorities pause. Consequences (their displeasure, their fee, their future cooperation) land in downtime.

THE RIGHT QUESTION

When you have a target alone and unhurried, you may ask **one question** they will answer truthfully. They may answer briefly, evasively, or poorly, but they will not knowingly lie. The question burns the relationship.

REPUTATION MANAGER

You may **spend 1 stress and 1 coin** to retroactively alter how a witness to a score remembers the crew's faces. The witness's memory blurs by the time they speak to police; their description does not match.

FRIENDS

Pick one as a friend, one as a rival. The table fills the rest in.

- **Renuka Fernando** (already a crew contact), the lawyer. She trained you. She doesn't approve of your career choice.
- **Inspector Wijesekara** of the CID. Honest, careful, and aware that you exist.
- **Kumudini "Kumu" Ratnayake**, a corp officer at LANTERN Media who bought you arrack at a wedding eight years ago and remembers it.
- **The Padre**, Father Anton (if he's not taken by the Wraith). You share contacts.
- **Jayaweera, the doorman** at the Mount Lavinia Hotel, who knows every face that's been through the lobby in twenty-six years.
- **Your sister-in-law, Thilini**, who works at the Inland Revenue Department. Hates what you do. Won't betray you. Won't help you

either.

XP TRIGGERS

At end of session, mark XP if any:

- You expressed your beliefs, drives, heritage, or background
- You struggled with your vice or trauma
- You closed a score by talking rather than acting
- You built or strengthened a contact during play

One per trigger, four per session max. Eight XP to advance an action or take a new playbook ability.

VICE SUGGESTION

Voices hold **ARRACK** (it lubricates), **HEAT** (the wrong person, again, badly), **FAITH** (the law school chapel, perhaps), or **FAMILY**.

LOADOUT

Voices carry less than other playbooks.

LIGHT · 2 LOAD

- A good suit (or sari, or sarong; whatever the job requires)
- A burner phone + a real phone + a phone the crew shares
- One pen that looks expensive and is

NORMAL · 4 LOAD

Above, plus:

- A second outfit (the cover the suit doesn't fit)
- A briefcase that locks
- A small concealed pistol (FINESSE; one mag)

HEAVY · 6 LOAD (ONLY WHEN THE WORK IS BAD)

Above, plus:

- Light body armour under the suit
- Documents (real or forged) for a specific cover
- A small dose of something that will affect a single target subtly (mild sedative, truth-loosener, sleep aid)

NOTES FOR PLAY

You should be carrying the conversation in half the scenes of any score. If you aren't talking, the GM is missing a beat. Push for the meeting. Push for the conversation in the kitchen. The crew survives the score because of what you did in the days *before* it.

Voices go cold. The job metabolises empathy. Watch for it in roleplay, and when the trauma arrives, play it.

Pair with: the Cracker, on intel-heavy scores (you get the access; the Cracker does what she came to do).

SCORE: BTW / SC.01 · HANDLING: for the GM

01

THE ARGENT VAULT

ACTIVE

S starter score. One session, 2-3 hours. Pays well. Teaches the engagement roll, flashbacks, and the moral lever of a named NPC.

THE PITCH (FOR THE GM)

A wealth-management firm in Cinnamon Gardens holds a sealed box for a client ten days dead. Two sides of the family are fighting over the estate. One side wants the box opened first, by people who aren't them, before the other side can file an asset preservation order. The crew gets paid to get the contents out. They get paid more if nobody notices it left.

It works as a starter because:

- The target is concrete (a box, in a vault, with a number).
 - The clock is concrete (the preservation order lands Friday at noon).
 - Four approach types are all viable, and they play very differently.
 - A rival crew, the Birds, is on the same job for the opposing client.
 - A GM falls in love with the night manager, Mr Ranasinghe, three minutes into describing him.
-

THE PITCH (FOR THE CREW)

Renuka Fernando, the crew's lawyer, calls. She wants to meet at the kade off Bauddhaloka Mawatha. Coffee. Half an hour.

She brings a job.

*"Old family, north of Kandy. The patriarch was Vidana. You'd know the name if you read the paper. Died ten days ago. Cardiac. Eighty-one. He kept things at Argent. Documents, mostly. The estate is in dispute and the family's split in two. One side is my client. They need a document out of box 447 before the other side hears it exists. Cash on completion. **Five lakhs for the document.** The other side will file an asset preservation order on Friday at noon and the box freezes until the court decides who's allowed near it. After that, you'd be stealing from a judge. **Five lakhs more** if the box looks like nobody touched it. The other side cannot know it's gone."*

It's Tuesday. The crew has until 11 a.m. on Friday, when the estate's solicitor collects the contents of box 447 for the court. The order lands at noon.

THE TARGET

THE LOCATION

ARGENT GLOBAL · Wealth Management · Reid Avenue, Colombo 7.

A converted colonial townhouse between the old racecourse and the cricket club. Three storeys. Marble lobby on the ground floor. Partner offices on the second. Vault and back-office in the basement. A doorman in a maroon coat.

The crew can walk past it in fifteen minutes, allowing for traffic and the neighbourhood. They can't loiter. Reid Avenue is patrolled.

THE BOX

Safety deposit box #447. Stainless steel, 30cm × 30cm × 40cm. Inside: one sealed manila envelope, A4 size. Contents unknown to the crew *and unknown to the client*. The client wants the envelope, sealed and intact, by Friday morning.

If the crew opens the envelope before delivering it, that's the GM's call. The contents matter to the campaign (see *Follow-up hooks* below).

THE VAULT

In the basement. Single steel door (quality 4) at the bottom of a single marble staircase. The door requires:

1. **A six-digit code**, rotating daily, known to the three Argent partners on duty that day.
2. **A biometric scan** (fingerprint + retina) of a registered partner.
3. **An access card** keyed to the specific box and held by the box's primary card-holder. Mr Vidana's card went back to Argent when his death was confirmed. The senior partner, Mrs de Silva, holds it now.

Inside the vault: 600 numbered boxes in steel-faced cabinets. Box 447 is in the second cabinet, second row, fifth from the right. The box's own

lock is mechanical, quality 2. The access card opens it cleanly. It can also be picked.

THE OPPOSITION

GLASS SECURITY (QUALITY 3)

- **Daytime:** Two guards in the lobby (9am–5pm weekdays, by-appointment Saturdays). One at the front desk, one at the foot of the vault stairs. Both armed, both polite. Both bored.
- **Evening / overnight:** One guard, the night manager (see Mr Ranasinghe below). Two GLASS patrol vehicles drive the block every 90 minutes between 8 p.m. and 5 a.m.
- **Alarm:** CCTV (12 cameras, off-site monitoring at the GLASS dispatch centre, 90-day retention). Door + window contacts. Motion sensors in the vault chamber. Pressure plates in the vault floor. Glass-break on the front window. All wired direct to GLASS dispatch.

THE ARGENT PARTNERS

- **Mrs Sriyani de Silva**, senior partner. Mid-50s. Sharp, exhausted, decent. Her fingerprint and retina open the vault. She holds the dead client's access card for box 447.
- **Mr Saliya Atapattu**, junior partner, Mrs de Silva's nephew. Late 20s. Reckless. Drinks at the Mount Lavinia Hotel after work. Will gossip to the wrong person.
- **Mrs Nilmini Wijesinghe**, the third partner. Mid-40s. Competent, twenty years at Argent. Hates the Atapattu nephew. Won't break protocol.

MR RANASINGHE, THE NIGHT MANAGER

The NPC the score turns on.

Sixty-two. Retired Police Inspector, twenty-eight years in the CID. Wife died of cancer in 2017. Lives alone now in a single-storey on Borella's Anandarama Mawatha. His daughter Tharini is a junior accountant at AURIGA in Cinnamon Gardens, two years out of university. The corp office, not the data complex. The crew should not touch her.

Bribery is wasted on him. So is charm. He can be reasoned with by someone with an actual reason. He can be misled by someone with a credible cover. He can't be moved by threats, and the score breaks badly the moment anyone tries.

He's alone in the building overnight and at weekends, bar the odd Saturday appointment. Walks the building twice an hour. Makes a cup of tea at 11 (Lipton, two sugars, chipped enamel mug he brought from home). Reads at the front desk between rounds. He's on his second pass through Le Carré's *A Murder of Quality*, has been for six weeks; he reads slow because he's reading carefully.

He carries a licensed pistol. He hasn't drawn it in twenty-eight years of policing. He'd like to keep that record.

What makes him dangerous to the crew is a preference for being right about people. He'll be cordial when he first meets an operator. In the morning he'll report what he noticed to Mrs de Silva, and he'll be right about every detail he flags.

The preview stops here. The book has the rest of this score, four more, eleven more playbooks and the Long Heat.