

Chapter 1 *A front-page story*

‘We’re on the front page,’ said Annie Shepherd. She smiled at Harley Kirkpatrick, and gave him a coffee and that day’s *Daily Post*.

Kirkpatrick looked at the front page of the newspaper. His name and Shepherd’s were there. It was their first front-page story. He felt good. Four and a half million people bought the *Daily Post* every day. He drank a little coffee and read the story quickly.

Blood diamonds

by *H. Kirkpatrick and A. Shepherd*

Diamonds are important from the guns. In Angola for a number of countries in the 1990s blood in Africa. Diamonds buy diamonds made US\$3.7 food and doctors; they billion in five years. That give people work, and help money bought a lot of them get money. But in guns. And in Angola in the some countries people 1990s a lot of people died buy guns with the because of these guns. diamonds. We call these The United Nations is diamonds ‘blood diamonds’ trying to stop blood because many people die diamonds.

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‘A good start to a Wednesday morning,’ said Shepherd. ‘A front-page story.’

Kirkpatrick looked up.

‘Yes,’ he said. ‘Blood diamonds is an important story.’

‘Yes,’ she replied. ‘And I’ve got a new story about them.’

Kirkpatrick and Shepherd worked well together. Kirkpatrick went out and asked people questions. Shepherd worked in the office; she used the computer and the Internet.

‘Tell me about it,’ he said.

Shepherd smiled at him again. She was twenty-seven years old, with short light brown hair and dark brown eyes. She wore blue jeans and a white shirt.

‘Come over to my computer and have a look,’ she said.

Kirkpatrick went over and looked at a photograph of a man on Shepherd’s computer. The man’s hair and eyes were dark. He wore dark trousers, a jacket and a tie and had a black bag in one hand.

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‘This is Erik Van Delft,’ said Shepherd. ‘He’s thirty-six years old. Half Belgian, half African. He’s in Britain now. He came into London yesterday evening from Lagos in Nigeria.’

‘And who is he?’ asked Kirkpatrick. ‘What does he do?’

‘Well, he’s a businessman,’ replied Shepherd. ‘He buys and sells things in many countries. Some people think he also buys and sells guns . . . and blood diamonds.’

Kirkpatrick looked at Shepherd.

‘I had a look on the Internet late yesterday,’ she said. ‘There was a lot about his business, but his name was also in a story from a South African newspaper about blood diamonds.’

‘That’s interesting,’ said Kirkpatrick.

Shepherd gave some papers to Kirkpatrick.

‘This is all from the Internet,’ she said. ‘The first one is the South African story. I’m going to look again today.’

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‘OK,’ said Kirkpatrick. ‘And we need to know where Van Delft is now.’

‘He’s at the Charterhouse Hotel, on Charterhouse Street,’ said Shepherd.

Kirkpatrick laughed. ‘Good work!’ he said.

‘This morning, I spoke to one of the people who work there,’ said Shepherd. ‘She’s going to watch Van Delft for me. For a little money, of course.’

‘*Very* good work!’ said Kirkpatrick, laughing again. Then he looked at his watch. It was a quarter to ten. He stood up.

‘Maybe Van Delft is still at the hotel,’ he said.

‘What are you going to do?’ asked Shepherd. ‘You can’t just ask, “Do you buy and sell guns or blood diamonds?”’

Kirkpatrick took the papers.

‘I’m going to read these first,’ said Kirkpatrick. ‘Then I’m going to watch and see where Van Delft goes.’

‘Well, don’t do anything stupid!’ Shepherd did not look happy. Sometimes Kirkpatrick wanted a story *too* much.

Kirkpatrick put a hand on her arm.

‘Of course not, Annie,’ he said. ‘Of course not!’

Out on the street Kirkpatrick stopped and put on his jacket. The *Daily Post* was on Fleet Street in London. At one time all the important British newspapers were on Fleet Street. But now only the *Daily Post* had an office there. The other newspapers were all in the east of London.

Fleet Street was not far from Charterhouse Street and it was a warm October day. Kirkpatrick started walking. He needed some time to think about Van Delft. And he needed to read the papers from Shepherd.