

**F**ortune favours the lucky, Ranal used to say.

A smoldering mattress broke Duncan's fall, did little more than wind him. As he lay there trying to catch his breath another section of the roof collapsed. He scrambled to his feet and stumbled through the rising dust and churning smoke towards the shadow he hoped was a door. Then he was out in the corridor, running for courtyard.

To find Malkin waiting for him there, gun raised.

"Going somewhere?" His suit in tatters, sleeve hanging off, plastered in mud and dust and blood. His hair singed, face blistered, eyebrows gone, lips split. His eyes the deadest Duncan had ever seen. "Over there against the wall." Having to raise his voice against the crackling roar of the fire.

The courtyard looked like a warzone. Rubble from the blast lay everywhere. Twisted pieces of metal spluttered in the drizzle amidst smoking puddles of fire. Beyond the reach of flying sparks the cobbles were slicked with oil. A uniformed guard sat against the wall, holding his bloodied head in his hands.

Malkin said, "I was just telling Dawson here, if you want something done, you have to do it yourself."

Dawson said, "I need a doctor, sir. I think ma heid's broke."

"See what I have to work with? This man had only one duty, and that was to guard your brother, make sure he didn't get away. Ask yourself, how hard could that be? I mean, we're talking about a man in a coma. One would imagine a three-year-old could do it with his eyes closed. But not Dawson. He let a teenage kid and a pensioner get the better of him. Isn't that right, Dawson?"

"They won't get far, sir."

"You're right, they won't. But can you blame me for being irritable?"

"No, sir. I'm very sorry, sir."

"It's just your bad luck you caught me on a bad day." Malkin raised the gun and shot him in the face. Dawson slumped to the side as another chunk of masonry crashed to the cobbles, this time only a matter of feet away. Malkin seemed oblivious to the danger.

"So," he said, "are you ready to take me seriously now?"