

Home Drug-Maker

Josh was in the garden when he heard a jangling alarm from somewhere nearby. What was it, a car alarm? It seemed to be coming from inside the house. Putting down his secateurs, he started to move towards back door. As he neared the house, there was a whumping noise followed by the sound of breaking glass. He threw himself to the ground: a terrorist bomb, he thought. Bloody extremists even in peaceful Fallowfield. He lay on the path waiting for the sound of gunfire and screaming sirens. Ten minutes later, he was still lying there and getting bored. The concrete under him was hard and unyielding and wasn't exactly comfortable. He got up and crept around the corner towards the kitchen, glass crunching under his gardening boots. There was nothing left of the kitchen window including the frame. The pieces were spread on the path far and wide and shards were imbedded in the adjacent fence. He craned his neck around the remnants of the once sturdy kitchen door and peeped inside. The ceiling had come down and water poured from split pipes. His insurance company wasn't going to like this. The seat of the explosion was obvious: his home drug maker had blown up. He'd only used it three times and this was going to be the real thing, a mind-blowing custom psychotropic with enhanced half life. Now the machine was a lump of scrap and his house a shambles. He scrabbled on his hands and knees to find the stopcock and turned the water off. The landlord would go berserk.

An hour later, the forces of law and order had materialised unbidden and the tramping of heavy boots reverberated throughout the house. Josh decided to call Cyrus Barclay and tell him that his machine had gone belly up. He went out into the garden to make the call.

'What do mean, it blew up?' Cyrus shouted into his phone. 'I told you about explosive intermediates. It's got warning messages with instructions that tell you what to do. You didn't leave it on its own did you?'

'Look man, I ain't the one with a chemistry degree like you and I was only in the garden anyway,' replied Josh's image on the small screen.

'Did the alarm sound?'

'Yeah, but the bloody thing blew up before I could get there. Now tell me this: why didn't it have connectivity? Every other bit of gear in my kitchen connects with my phone and flags up problems even if I'm away from home. Your thing was just plain dumb.'

'You're the one that's dumb, Josh. It's not that kind of machine. They're all one-offs; no mass production, no gizmos; put together by craftsmen, not robots. You have to make allowances for specialised gear like that.'

'The house is in a right state and police are crawling all over it. The bomb squad is here and the anti-terrorist bunch. They want to arrest me as a suspected bomb maker. Couldn't you tell them it was just a minor glitch with the drug-maker?'

Cyrus watched Josh's miniaturised gesticulations, his eyes widening. He put the phone on speaker and set it on its stand on his desk. 'Are you kidding? Those machines aren't legal in the UK, not for normal people anyway. That's why I rent it out to you. If there's trouble, I can just collect it and make it disappear. I suppose forensics have taken it, have they?'

‘They’ve combed the house and taken everything that’s moveable. Cinnamon is going to be livid: they’ve taken all her sexy underwear - perverts.’

‘Well, don’t mention me or you know what I’ll do.’

Cyrus ended the call.

Josh was shaking as he put his phone in his pocket. That little white git, Cyrus Barclay, was the nastiest piece of work he’d ever come across. Josh might be the bigger of the two but he was a pussycat compared with Barclay. Sitting on the lawn, knees drawn up under his chin, he contemplated the forces lined up against him: Barclay, the police, anti-terrorist goons, landlord, and the insurance company.
