



CHAPTER 1

SHOPPING LIST

I could feel the security guard's eyes burning into the back of my neck. He'd been following me around the supermarket for the past ten minutes or so, convinced I was up to no good.

He didn't know the half of it.

I stopped in the cheese aisle and picked up two blocks of cheddar from the shelf, holding one behind the other. Studying the label on the front block, I shook my head slightly to demonstrate that wasn't what I was looking for – then I placed the block back on the shelf, while sliding the front block up the fraying sleeve of my jumper.

I continued down the aisle, casually lowered my arm down to my side and caught the hidden block of cheddar with my fingers. Then I reached into my bag for my shopping list and swiftly dropped the cheese inside.

Cheese on toast for tea tonight, then.

I was proud of this bag. The best one I'd built in ages. It was made of a stiff material that didn't shake too much when I dropped things into it, and it was completely lined with tin foil to stop security tags from setting off the supermarket's alarms when I was ready to leave. That was just as well, as I already had two mobile phones, a handful of DVDs, a jar of pasta sauce and a loaf of bread in there.

Now all I had to do was get rid of the idiot in the guard's uniform. Honestly, what kind of a man works in security at a supermarket? Couldn't he get a job with the real police?

I lifted my left hand up and scratched my nose, taking a quick look into the mirror I had taped to my palm. This was another brilliant invention of mine. It meant that I could keep watch behind me without having to turn around. Yep – there he was. Peering at me from around a shelf piled high with eggs.

I'd seen this bloke a few times before. He was older than the other guards employed by this branch – maybe in his forties. He was overweight, too – which meant I could outrun him if it came to a chase. That didn't mean I fancied running out of here, though. I'd much prefer a casual walk home with my 'purchases'.

I had to lose him.

I waited until a family passed behind me, their trolley piled high with shopping. For a moment, it took me back to the old days. Back to when my...

No, I didn't have time to reminisce. I had to lose the goon in the uniform.

I dropped to my knee and pretended to tie my shoelace – then walked in a stoop at the same speed as the family’s shopping trolley. One of their kids watched me with a confused expression on his face.

“I’ve got a bad back,” I said to him with a grin.

A second later, I was able to slip around the side of the vegetable aisle and I was free. I paused to extend my hand mirror past the potatoes and saw the guard looking around in a panic, realising he’d lost sight of me.

Poor sod. I hoped they wouldn’t take the cost of what I’d nicked out of his wages.

Acting as calmly as I could, I strolled towards the exit.

As I approached the security scanners by the door, I felt myself tense up a little. Despite the tin foil lining in my bag, there was always the possibility that I’d torn the lining a little when I’d