

Sample Page from *Virgin/Sergeant: BAD COP/BAD COP* by Chris Barber 2002

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ANOTHER BRICK IN THE LAW**MET. DETECTIVE SERGEANT CHALLENGOR, BUILDING-UP EVIDENCE****Chris Barber**

TRUSCOTT: You're fucking nicked me old beauty. You've found to your cost that the standards of the British police force are as high as ever.

LOOT by Joe Orton

CHALLENGOR: *'You're fucking nicked, me old beauty. ... Don't say please to me, my old darling.'*

11th July 1963

Detective Sergeant (Second-Class) Harold 'Tanky' Challenor, of West End Central (Savile Row) constabulary, was something of a local hero around his home-turf – London's Soho, in the early 1960s. The press frequently applauded his vigilant crusade against crime, in lurid headlines; his superiors and colleagues in the Met admired his record-breaking number of arrests and convictions. The Judiciary praised his courtroom banter, homespun rapport, and ability to cajole juries. None forgot his distinguished war record, tactically gained behind enemy lines, with the SAS. No one questioned the methods he employed, to achieve his extraordinary success. When circumstances finally conspired, forcing the Government to examine Challenor's unique policing methods, a dozen, innocent people, were pardoned and released from prison. Parliament demanded public inquiries, policemen were jailed, and the Establishment closed ranks; while Challenor, ended-up in the madhouse – at the Queen's pleasure.

The Challenor case represents either a landmark or watershed, in the annals of British justice. Yet the scandal that brought about Challenor's demise was only the tip of the iceberg. Playwright, Joe Orton, in his West End stage-hit LOOT, based his nasty cop character, Truscott, on Challenor. Challenor's wartime exploits, earned him the nickname, Tanky (of tank corps). Unfortunately for Tanky, his real name inspired the pejorative colloquialism 'Doing a Challenor' - Metropolitan Police slang for taking bribes or acting mad to avoid prison. Whether Tanky 'did a Challenor' among his many misdemeanours remains contentious. Allegations were made, but dismissed by official enquiry... Or cover-up? Basically, Challenor earned his reputation as a super crime-stopper, by planting weapons on suspects to secure convictions, where real evidence was lacking; he also routinely beat-up and intimidated suspects. But he finally blundered, when he planted a weapon on Donald Rooum, a member of the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL, now Liberty). Another Tanky eccentricity was his persecution complex, inspiring him to compare himself to Oscar Wilde!

CASE ONE – GANG WARFARE (Pedrini, Oliva, Ford, Fraser, Cheesman)

On the evening of 21st September 1962, 22-year-old Riccardo Pedrini, left his parents' house in Bloomsbury, to meet his mates for a drink in the West End. Riccardo had grown-up locally and worked in the family owned restaurant.

He met Alan Cheesman, in the Lorraine club/bar, and danced with another friend, Josephine Jennings (Cheesman was another homeboy, aged 20). Other pals arrived later; at 11pm, Riccardo and Alan left, with four acquaintances, heading their way. They strolled along Great Compton Street, seeking fast food and cabs home. As they passed the Phoenix Club (strip-joint) Riccardo and Alan lagged behind.

Suddenly two cops burst out from the shadows, grabbing Pedrini and Cheesman. The other lads were nowhere to be seen, as the bewildered friends were piled into a police van, which sped off to West End Central police station. Duty P.C.s Legge and Wells, were accompanied by Phoenix club proprietor, Wilfred Gardiner (who had pointed them out to police).

Upon arriving at the station, they were dragged into the charge room and ordered to empty their pockets onto the desk. 'Why did you bring us here?' Cheesman asked.

'You'll find out soon enough,' replied Legge, grinning... A well-built, clean-cut, plain-clothed man with dark-hair, appeared from the corridor, arrogantly smirking with over-bearing authority; his name - Detective Sergeant Challenor, 'Do you know Oliva?' he demanded menacingly.

'No.' Says Cheesman...

POW! Challenor whacks him in the face, ranting frantically about protection rackets, 'you know what I'm talking about. ... Don't go to sleep my darling, I'm coming back!' He marches off, leaving Cheesman speechless with shock...