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Vat 1

Big Foot

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Edward Dantès, a product of his times. The first book; VAT 1, in the tale of a life most strange. It had to start somewhere and perhaps were it not for the bursting of bubbles, then it would never have been enough for even a single book. The bubble did burst, and it burst for an entire nation. But perhaps it was felt more in Essex than in other places, for the South of England and in particular Essex had benefited from Margaret Thatcher's dream more than other parts of the Kingdom. Those which rise higher fall further. Edward had risen fast, things were happening and he was all in. The dream was real and he'd bought into it like the rest of his contemporaries. Fast cars, fast women, fast money and recreational drugs underpinned by hard work and opportunity. Work hard, expand, employ, invest, and you get returns, it was legal, it was all good. You paid your taxes to the man; the man was Nigel Lawson, golden boy, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. And yet things weren't golden they were rotten and it all came crashing down. The Government had got it wrong and it was time to give it all back. Not for Ed, he put his hand in the till. Not at first, but with a little twist this way and a little nudge that way it eventually happened. If only they'd called it EAT, Edward's Added Tax. Ed, like much of the generation he grew up embracing the ideals of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government. He is both patriotic and optimistic, with a young family and plans for his future. How could his country have got it so wrong at the end of that period of unparalleled growth and indulgence? The story begins with Ed battling on with his retail business, as it slowly disappears into oblivion during the High Street crash of the early nineties. Ed is pulled around by the banks and creditors, losing his home along the way. His associates are experiencing similar problems. They all try to put a brave face on things and carry on partying where they can; the eighties introduced their kind to a lifestyle that made cocaine and materialism fashionable. As the business slides, Ed looks around in desperation and seeing a small pocket of people seemingly still on top he offers himself up as a willing candidate for work, at anything they are doing. The first job that comes along seems very straight forward and is taken in good faith. It goes horribly wrong and he is landed in deep water. The police, who he expected to assist simply turn on him. The very establishment he respects and trusts serves him out yet another blow. Again, Ed tries something new with optimism. This time when the establishment comes calling Ed makes a life changing decision and takes a stand. He chooses the other side. Ed knows what the gang are doing, he decides he will protect it and nurture it; he will work at it with the same vigour that he had applied to an honest trade. The rights and wrongs he justifies to himself along the way. The new characters he meets along the way shape his outlook on life and he gradually drifts deeper into the world of career criminals and organised crime. Ed starts to travel around Europe. Embracing the new life, taking tips from fiction novels, Ed starts applying trade craft to his actions and movements, staying off the radar of law enforcement agencies. New friendships and associations with criminal gangs in Italy and France are forged, while travelling around with the enigma Bernie. The operation is honed and developed by Ed's sharp mind, he approaches the problems as a rational thinking business man. The getting caught is no longer a concern; it's getting stopped from operating that he is focused on avoiding. Nothing lasts forever and all loopholes eventually get closed; Customs & Excise did just that in April 1993. Ed is right back where he started. Someone always spoils the party, but a new character has emerged and the story will continue.

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