

BLUNT FORCE



Lynda La Plante was born in Liverpool. She trained for the stage at RADA and worked with the National Theatre and RDC before becoming a television actress. She then turned to writing and made her breakthrough with the phenomenally successful TV series *Widows*. She has written over thirty international novels, all of which have been bestsellers, and is the creator of the Anna Travis, Lorraine Page and the *Trial and Retribution* series. Her original script for the much-acclaimed *Prime Suspect* won awards from BAFTA, Emmy, British Broadcasting and Royal Television Society, as well as the 1993 Edgar Allan Poe Award.

Lynda is one of only three screenwriters to have been made an honorary fellow of the British Film Institute and was awarded the BAFTA Dennis Potter Best Writer Award in 2000. In 2008, she was awarded a CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for services to Literature, Drama and Charity.

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*To all my readers who follow me on Twitter and Facebook, and
visit my website, your support and messages
mean so much to me. Thank you.*



CHAPTER ONE

Wearing a worn tracksuit over her tights and leotard, Jane Tennison was hurrying out of Holmes Place Health Club on Fulham Road after a strenuous aerobics class, worried that the time on her parking meter would have expired.

She ran the last few yards to her car as she spotted a traffic warden checking the meter.

‘I’m here!’ she yelled.

The warden gave her a cursory glance before moving off to check the next meter. Jane was throwing her kit bag and towel into the car when she heard someone call out her name. She turned, not recognizing the voice for a moment.

‘Hi, it’s Dave Morgan.’

She was still flustered, but then remembered exactly who he was.

‘Dabs!’ she cried out fondly.

Dabs was the diminutive SOCO she had worked with on the first day she had been with the Flying Squad. He gave her a hug and she quickly pulled away.

‘Oh God, Dabs, I must stink! I’ve just been doing a workout at my club and didn’t have time for a shower as my meter was about to expire.’

Dabs nodded in the direction of Holmes Place. ‘That’s a posh place, isn’t it? What are you doing there? Self-defense?’

Jane laughed. ‘No, I had enough of that when I was training. I’m doing aerobics.’

‘Oh, the Green Goddess? I’ve seen her on breakfast TV. Fine for most people, but working alongside those macho blokes in the Sweeney, I’d probably take up boxing.’



Jane gave a pensive smile, not wanting to discuss her time with the ‘blokes’ Dabs had so aptly described.

‘So, what have you been up to?’ she asked, changing the subject.

He leaned forward. ‘Been on a big case . . . Still on it. Checking out a bad situation, a triple murder with a lot of weapons. Seeing the damage some crazy idiot could do with a rifle, I decided I needed some hands-on experience, so I’m doing this course at a gun club. I’ll give you my phone number if you’re interested . . . I might be able to fast-track you at the club.’

Jane sat sideways on the driving seat of her car as Dabs jotted down his home number and passed it to her. She thanked him, swung her legs in and shut the car door. As she took out her car keys she felt the emotion welling up inside her. She was sure Dabs knew about her situation at the Sweeney, and that was why he had given her the card. The more she thought about it, the more she wondered if this opportunity was just what she needed.

She called him later that day to take up his offer and they arranged to meet near Norbiton train station, in Kingston. Dabs told her to park her car there and he would pick her up and drive her to the shooting club.

‘Can’t you just give me the address and I’ll meet you there?’

‘I could, but it’s like a rabbit warren of small roads off a big council estate and it’s quite hard to find. Plus, there’s a secure entrance gate, which you have to have a code for, so it’s just easier if I take you there.’

* * *

At 6:30 p.m. the following Thursday Jane followed Dabs’s instructions, parked near the station and then stood outside a fish and chip shop waiting to be collected. He turned up a few minutes later driving a rather beat-up green Mini Clubman.



‘Sorry for all the junk in the back,’ he said, opening the passenger door for her. ‘I’ve been working more or less twenty-four/seven.’

‘Well, thank you for giving me your time, Dabs, I really appreciate it.’

He went quiet for a moment as he concentrated on driving through the narrow back streets with large council estates on either side.

‘Are you married?’ Jane asked.

‘I am. Fifteen years. She’s a professional carer. We lost our only boy when he was seven. He had myeloid leukemia, and for Joan caring for others has helped her get over it. Same for me, really.’

‘I’m so sorry about your son,’ Jane said. It was strange how little you really knew the people you worked with. All she had remembered about Dabs was his sheer professionalism and knowledge of ballistics. Now she realized he was also a very decent man.

Dabs put on the headlights as they continued along a narrow, dimly lit road.

‘I’ve been here so many times but I still drive past it. Here it is!’

Jane frowned. ‘You sure?’

They were in a narrow dead-end road.

Dabs laughed. ‘Well, it’s a pretty exclusive place, this. Not many people know about it, unless you’re into shooting, even though it’s been here for over fifty years. It used to be part of a leisure club attached to the post office in Surbiton back in 1966.’

They stopped by two large wooden gates with a sign on the wall saying ‘Surbiton Postal Rifle Club’. Dabs got out of the car and used a set of keys to unlock one side of the gates, sliding it open, then returned to the car. They entered a large car park and Dabs parked, returned to slide the main gate closed, and



relocked it. Jane climbed out as Dabs opened the rear double doors of the Mini and took out a black leather duffle bag. He placed it down on the ground beside him as he locked the car.

‘I’ve still got a lot of my equipment in here, but I know this is very secure. Right, follow me.’

They walked to the rear of the car park where there was an iron door with a keypad. Dabs entered a code and waited, then pushed the heavy door open. Jane heard it click behind them as she followed him down a stone corridor lit by an overhead strip light.

She was taken aback when they entered a large room. One corner near the entrance had a coffee bar and a vending machine. There was also a small cooker and kitchen sink. Standing at the sink washing up mugs was an attractive middle-aged woman who Dabs introduced as Vera.

As she and Dabs chatted, Jane was able to have a good look around the large common room filled with sofas and easy chairs, and a long table with sixteen chairs placed around it. Dominating the walls were rows of awards and cups, but it appeared that the three of them were the only people there that evening.

Dabs asked Jane for her ID and took some documents over to the large table for her to complete the membership application. Jane studied the application form, which requested details of her work, medical profile and previous experience with firearms, plus the name of three references.

Dabs tapped the paper. ‘Put in here that you had experience with the Flying Squad, you had training at the academy, but you feel this would be useful further experience as there are not that many opportunities.’ He gave a chuckle. ‘For women and particularly female police officers.’

Jane finished filling in the forms as Dabs joined Vera for a cup of coffee. A tall, broad-shouldered man joined them at the coffee bar.



Dabs shook the man's hand, then turned to Jane. 'This is your instructor, Elliott Norman. He is also the secretary, so he can go through your documents now, while I show you the rest of the club.'

'You're a policewoman,' Elliott said, turning towards her.

'Yes, a detective sergeant.'

He raised an eyebrow and gave a slight smile. His age was uncertain because he was completely bald, but had a youthful face. He was also an impressive size, at least six foot three, and dwarfed the diminutive Dabs.

Jane was led along the length of the common room to a bolted door at the back, which went into a large locker room area. Dabs pointed out that all the members have a locker, and their own keys, as it was imperative it was a secure area. From the moment they had entered the room they had not seen one window. He took out his own keys and opened a locker, showing Jane his rifle. She was impressed and watched as he carefully put it back into the locker and repocketed his keys.

'My wife bought it for our wedding anniversary,' he told her. 'OK, follow me. We're going to go into the long-range shooting area. This is where you learn the military technique of firing when lying down.'

Yet again Jane was stunned at the size of the area, which must have once been a massive underground car park.

They returned to the coffee-bar area, where Elliott was waiting.

'Dabs has told me you want to have some instruction in small-arms shooting. A .22, is that right?'

Jane nodded.

'The .22 is one of the oldest firearm calibers in existence. It survived the jump from black powder to smokeless. As a handgun round, it's pretty much worthless except for training or target shooting. Although you may hear of people carrying these guns for self-defense, this is a horrible idea. Not only is



the caliber insufficient, the guns normally designed for this cartridge are not up to standard. On the other hand, the nine millimeter is the most prolific handgun caliber in the world. More cartridges of a nine-millimeter ammunition are produced, sold and fired than almost every other caliber in existence. They are extremely popular because of how cheap the cartridges are and it's normally considered to be the bare minimum for self-defense. It is carried by most militaries and law enforcement agencies in the United States.'

Jane gave a light cough. 'I need to practice with a .22, and at some time in the future, go on to a nine millimeter and then maybe a rifle. But right now, I think I need training that would just basically give me confidence in handling a gun.'

'I'm surprised that the Met don't give weapons training to their recruits.'

Jane flushed. 'I doubt that will ever happen. Some specialist squads and police stations have a small number of officers who are trained as "authorized shots", but even then, firearms can only be issued by a sergeant with good reason. I don't know of any women officers who are authorized. Personally, I'd just like to learn more about guns and handling them. Then if ever I get the opportunity to apply for a firearms course, I can say that I have previous experience.'

Elliott nodded and pushed his chair back. 'I should process your application first, but as you're a police officer I'll take you through to the range where you can get the feel of a handgun. We'll do a few basic exercises and see how it goes.'

Jane looked around for Dabs. Vera gave her a warm smile.

'He's gone to the long range,' she said.

Elliott took off his overcoat and checked the roster. 'Right, Vera, I'm only going to be ten minutes. We've got all stalls available.' He turned to Jane. 'Club starts filling up at around eight p.m. with people coming in after work.'





Jane followed him through a door opposite the coffee bar and down a narrow corridor to another door with a light above it.

‘When the light is on red,’ Elliott explained, ‘you don’t enter as there’s a practice or often a competition going on. So you have to wait for clearance.’

Elliott gestured for Jane to go ahead of him and closed the door behind them. She wondered when she was going to get hold of a gun and actually start shooting. He walked her right to the end of the twenty-five-yard range where there were six targets with bullseyes in the center.

‘Right, Jane, we never have the handgun and the rifle sessions at the same time. Right now, the range is set up for rifle shooting. Take a look at the marksman’s astonishing shots from stall two.’ He pointed at the bullseye where she could see six small bullet holes.

‘The club and all members are very security-conscious. You fire a cartridge, you pick it up, and you never leave a gun loaded in the stall. Now, I want you to stand on the cross in the center of the range.’

Jane went and took up the position as instructed. Elliott stood beside her.

‘Now, what I want you to do is put your feet slightly apart so your balance is good. OK?’

‘Yes, I feel balanced.’

‘Good. Now, you are actually facing target three.’

Jane nodded.

‘Are you left- or right-handed?’

‘Right.’

‘OK. Lift your right hand, stretch out your arm and point to the bullseye on target three.’

Jane did as instructed. Feet apart, pointing directly at the bullseye. Elliott stared at her as she still held out her arm, her finger pointing.





‘Good. Now, that is exactly how you fire towards your target. Follow your arm, your hand, then finger pointing to it, then fire. So what we have just learned is balance, eye, target. Now, what I am going to do is show you how you hold your gun.’

Elliott opened his vest and removed a Smith & Wesson .38 revolver from his holster. He released the cylinder catch, opened the cylinder and showed Jane the gun was empty.

‘We only load up when standing in the range-firing cubicle. It’s the same first principle as for shotgun users. So listen carefully to me.’ He looked her in the eye as he spoke.

‘I will, I mean, I am,’ she replied nervously.

‘Never, never let your gun be pointed at anyone. That it may be unloaded matters not the least to me,’ he continued, looking serious.

‘I’ll remember that,’ Jane replied, reciting it in her mind.

‘Now, you’ll be holding the gun in your right hand, but this doesn’t mean the support hand is not important. Quite the contrary. The support hand stabilizes the handgun and makes the shooter two to three times more accurate than if the shooter used just one hand. Why? The shooter must perform two tasks with the shooting hand when firing a gun: hold the gun and press the trigger. I deliberately use the word “press” not “pull” because just like pressing a doorbell button, you press the button until the bell rings, and then stop. You don’t continue pressing until the button breaks. To me, the word “pulling” is the whole hand and arm, and “squeezing” is something performed by all the fingers.’

He loaded the revolver, handed it to Jane, and told her to aim at the target. He stood behind her and, using his hands on her shoulders, got her to stand in a semi-crouched position, then put his arms on hers to help hold her steady.

‘OK, slowly press the trigger and fire one shot only.’





Jane could feel his hot breath on her ear as he spoke. Making sure her fingers and thumb were in the correct position, she aimed at the target and pressed the trigger. The loud bang made her jump and the recoil made her hands jerk upwards, but Elliott held them steady.

‘Not bad. You at least hit the target.’

‘Only thanks to you helping me.’

‘OK, on your own now.’ He stepped away from her.

She got into position, took a deep breath, then fired, but missed the target.

‘Do you know what you did wrong?’ Elliott asked.

‘Was I not holding it correctly?’

‘No, you were, but you flinched just before you pressed the trigger. It’s known as recoil anticipation, and one of the most common reasons shooters miss the target. That said, it’s not difficult to fix with some “dry fire” practice.’

‘What’s dry fire?’ she asked.

‘Practicing with an empty gun. When dry firing, there’s no recoil to worry about, so the anticipation and flinching goes away quickly. The key is to dry fire like it is live fire by maintaining a firm grip, so when there is recoil, the firm grip is there to reduce it. Not up, not down, not sideways, just firm and steady.’

‘Practice makes perfect.’ She smiled.

He didn’t smile back. ‘Practice does not make perfect. Perfect practice makes perfect,’ he said firmly.

* * *

Dabs had come off the long range and was quite eager to get home, so he came to see how Jane was doing. Jane was now in one of the stalls, wearing ear protection, and a new human silhouette target had been brought to ten yards from the firing





line. She fired her three shots in quick succession and removed the ear protection as Elliott pressed clearance on the door and Dabs came in.

‘How’s it going?’

‘Fantastic,’ she said with a frown.

Elliott told her to open the gun barrel and make sure the revolver was empty, put the gun on the table and to come and have a look at the target.

‘Bit of a calamity, Jane. You only got one shot in the inner ring,’ Elliott said.

Jane glanced at Dabs and felt herself flush. ‘I’m not sure what I’m doing wrong,’ she said nervously.

‘Your stance is fine, as is your grip,’ Elliott reassured her. ‘But you’re still anticipating the recoil and flinching before you fire. Like I said, it happens with first-time shooters, so don’t let it get you down. You just need to do more dry practice, and there’s some other drills I can teach you that will help.’

‘On that note, Jane, I really need to get myself home,’ Dabs said, looking at his watch.

By the time Jane got back to her car she felt totally drained. For some reason, she had thought that by the end of the evening her old confidence would have returned, but quite the opposite had happened.

* * *

After a long, tedious day at work, Jane felt the evening on the range hadn’t been such a bad experience after all, despite her disappointing performance, and while things didn’t improve dramatically on the next session, by the fourth lesson she knew she had made great strides forward and her membership was accepted. One of the most important problems she had overcome was the panicked feeling whenever she pressed the trigger.



Elliott had given her one of his lengthy monologues about controlling her breathing to keep her mind calm, and it seemed to have worked. She no longer felt he talked down to her quite so much, and couldn't help respecting his expertise.

After seeing how much she'd improved, Elliott invited her to visit an 'impressive' gun club with him.

'You'll find it similar to a lot of the training in America where they use moving targets representing police officers, innocent bystanders, an armed bank robber and a guy holding a knife. Hopefully Calamity Jane won't let me down like my previous trainee, who not only shot the unarmed pedestrian, but also the police dog,' he joked.

Jane was flattered he had that much confidence in her, but wanted to keep her gun training quiet for the time being.

'Thanks for the offer,' she said with a smile, 'but I think I'd better wait until I'm a bit more proficient.'

CHAPTER TWO

Jane was having dinner with her parents at a small Italian restaurant to celebrate her birthday. It was just the three of them as Pam, her sister, had cancelled due to one of her sons having mumps. Jane was trying to be relaxed but really didn't feel it. She was unhappy about being thirty years old, as well as the fact that she was now working out of Gerald Road police station. She made no mention that her position with the Flying Squad had been short-lived or that she was disappointed to have been sidelined. She was having a problem winding her spaghetti into the spoon as she had a nasty bruise on her thumb from a session at the shooting range, but like everything else in her life, she kept it to herself.

'I don't know where that station is,' her father said, as he expertly wound his spaghetti around his fork.

'It's in the heart of Belgravia. It's a really nice location.'

'Oh yes, close to all those posh shops,' her mother said, not attempting to spin the spaghetti but slicing it up with her knife and fork. Jane's parents were both relieved about her transfer. They'd been concerned for her safety when she had worked with the notorious Sweeney.

As a birthday gift to herself, Jane had traded in her VW and had bought a second-hand Mini Cooper, and she had at last been able to repay her father the money he had loaned her for the deposit on her flat. She was now keen to sell and was looking for something larger – not that she had anyone to share it with, she thought wistfully.

She tried to be as good-humored as she could throughout dinner – even when her mother insisted on asking if she was seeing anybody. She just changed the subject and told them that



she had been reunited with an old colleague, Spencer Gibbs, from her early days at Hackney Station and then at Bow Street.

‘He feels he’s being sidelined as well,’ she said.

‘What do you mean?’ her dad asked.

‘I don’t want to talk about it, it’s just he did something he shouldn’t have done and . . .’

‘But you said he was sidelined “as well”. So have you done something that you shouldn’t have done?’

‘For goodness’ sake, Dad. It’s not a question of something I did.’

‘But why did you say you were being sidelined as well as Spencer Gibbs if you haven’t done something wrong?’ her mother said nervously.

‘For Christ’s sake, it’s not something I have done wrong or Spencer has done wrong, just leave it alone.’

‘It’s only because we are concerned about you,’ her father said, obviously shocked by her tone of voice.

Jane tried to control herself. ‘There is absolutely nothing to be concerned about. As I told you, I am working at a station in Belgravia that mostly investigates petty crimes. That’s all there is to it.’ She got up. ‘Please excuse me, I need to go to the ladies.’

As soon as Jane was out of sight, Mrs. Tennison lowered her voice. ‘Well, something has to be wrong. I have never seen her like this. And she’s lost weight.’

Mr. Tennison kept his eyes on the ladies and leaned closer to his wife, almost whispering: ‘If something’s bothering her, she’ll tell us when she’s ready.’

‘She never has in the past,’ Mrs. Tennison replied, not bothering to keep her voice down. ‘Oh dear God, what do you think she’s keeping from us now? I knew something had happened. Has she been demoted as well, just like her friend Spencer?’

Mr. Tennison quickly signaled for his wife to be quiet as Jane returned to the table. At the same time a waiter appeared with





a cupcake on a plate decorated with icing sugar. To make it even worse, stuck into the cupcake was a candle with a silver 30 on it. Jane squirmed in embarrassment as her parents began to sing 'Happy Birthday' and some of the other diners and a couple of waiters joined in. Jane blew out the offending candle and forced herself to keep smiling as the cupcake was sliced into tiny pieces.

When her father took her hand and squeezed it, looking as if he wanted some kind of assurance that she was all right, she nodded.

'Female officers still aren't totally accepted in the force. I suppose I might have rattled a few cages.'

'But you are dealing with it?' he said quietly.

'Yes, Dad, I am dealing with it,' she said with more confidence than she felt.



* * *



The following morning Jane parked her Mini in the street behind the station. She went into the yard and saw Spencer Gibbs' motorbike chained up in the bike shelter.

He's in earlier than usual, she thought.

After a quick breakfast in the canteen, she went to the CID office. A cleaner was just finishing emptying Chinese food cartons from the bin beside his desk, but there was no sign of Spencer.

Jane nodded to the other members of the team already at their desks.

'Is Gibbs in?' she asked a young DC, Gary Dors.

'No, he was at some gig with his band last night over in Camden Town.'

Dors was pale-faced, with a short haircut that made his ears seem to stick out.



Jane hung up her coat and sat down at her desk to look over the night's reports. Two burglaries, a hit and run, a stolen E-Type Jaguar, and a drunk and disorderly charge against a man who was still being held in the police cells. She checked the CID crime reports, which were recorded in a large notebook by the late turn and night duty officers and then had to be allocated to a detective by the early turn DS, which was herself.

'Harrods really need to sharpen up their security,' Dors said.

He flicked over two pages of the report that described how goods were being stolen. The company believed goods for delivery were being reboxed and sent off to a different address by some storeroom workers, and the losses had so far been estimated at over £2,000.

'It's beyond belief. This is the second report this month.'

Tony Johnson, another DC with the desk next to hers, who was equally wet behind the ears, looked over at Jane. The other three desks on the opposite side were empty as the DCs were having breakfast in the canteen.

'Did you see that report on the seventy-five-year-old shoplifter? Eight previous convictions. Wears a mink coat lined with pockets. She was picked up yesterday morning.'

Jane continued reading her reports, only half listening.

'Rich pickings at Harrods,' Dors said, beginning to type.

Johnson nodded. 'Yeah, then there's Burberry and House of Fraser, and you're right by Beauchamp Place with all the posh shops along there, not to mention the high-end jewelry stores next door.'

Jane didn't say anything. Being inundated with shoplifters meant a lot of tedious paperwork, even though the uniforms actually dealt with them. Sometimes Jane had to teach the young probationers how to make these arrests, taking them through the interviews and showing them how to process the prisoner.

There was another report on her desk from the previous week from Harrods' security. They had discovered that boxes of items delivered to their soft furnishings department had been removed using forged Harrods delivery forms redirecting them to a warehouse address. When the legitimate Harrods delivery vans arrived there, the goods were then put on board another van previously stolen by thieves, which was dumped later that day.

The monotonous sound of Dors's heavy-handed, two-finger typing made everything seem even more mundane. Jane had been used to experiencing real excitement in her previous roles.

The incident room door banged open as DCI Leonard 'Lenny' Tyler marched in, carrying a large box of groceries.

'Morning, everybody.'

The team murmured their replies as he maneuvered between the desks towards his private office.

'It's Hannah's tenth birthday party this weekend and I've had to get balloons, party hats and games. The bloody magician won't be pulling any rabbits out of his top hat as he fell off a bus in Edgware Road. That means we're going to have fifteen kids and no entertainment, unless . . .'

He looked towards Dors. 'Unless Big Ears over there can find me a substitute.'

He stood in the doorway to his office and looked around.

'Is Spencer in yet? I've had a complaint from the uniformed chief superintendent that he's taking up two spaces with his motorbike and stopping the chief from getting into his bay. He's got more chains wrapped around that bloody bike than Houdini.'

'He might be in the canteen,' Jane suggested.

Tyler glanced towards one of the empty desks in a coveted corner position by a window, which had a chair with a back-press cushion pushed underneath it.

She couldn't tell whether he'd heard what she'd said as he closed his office door. He was a very easy-going man to work for, but at times it was clear that his own life wasn't always easy. He often left the station in the early afternoon in order to do the school run while his wife was busy studying for a mature student university degree in economics.

But during the short time that Jane had been stationed at Belgravia, she had never heard Tyler raise his voice. He had piercing blue eyes that sometimes appeared to look straight through you. At over six feet tall, he was one of the major players in the Mets rugby team and was clearly very fit. At the rate things were going, however, Jane doubted if she would ever get the opportunity to see if Tyler did have more to him than met the eye.

'How much does he want to pay for this magician?' Dors asked. 'Some of them I've looked into are quite expensive. Does he want someone from the magic circle?'

Jane sighed. 'Just look up children's entertainers, not magicians.'

'I'm only doing what he told me to do, Sarge!' Dors snapped.

'Go and knock on his door and ask how much he wants to pay for the children's entertainer.' Jane returned to work, while the office CID clerk and a typist arrived and took up their desks, carrying in their personalized mugs from the canteen.

Johnson had departed to take a statement from a woman whose handbag had been stolen on the Brompton Road. It had contained a staggering £2,000.

Tyler remained in his office and it was after eleven when a very disheveled Spencer Gibbs walked in, carrying a mug of black coffee. He muttered 'good morning' to everyone as he walked over to his desk. There was already a pile of detectives' reports regarding cases awaiting trial at the Crown Court for him to check over. Jane noticed that he needed a shave and, although she had been working with him for over five weeks

now, this was the first time he had looked as if he had slept in his clothes all night.

Back in the days when they had worked together at Hackney, Spencer had often been the butt of jokes regarding his rock and roll attire. Then, when they were together in Peckham, he had changed his style. Spencer had discovered a second-hand gentleman's outfitters and had turned up in an elegant tweed suit, waistcoat and trousers that had the telltale signs of being let down to accommodate his lanky six-foot frame. He took the jokes about him wearing a dead man's outfit in his stride, and boasted that at least the wrinkle-pickers had been his own – until he found an elegant pair of two-tone brogues that he felt better suited his outfit. When he played with his band, however, he would wear flamboyant frilly shirts and cowboy boots.

'I hear you had a gig last night,' Jane said, turning her swivel chair towards him.

'Yeah, but it was a pain in the ass. I'm getting too old for this. There were two punk bands on that were smashing the place up and I wasn't going to let the buggers damage my speakers. I didn't get out till after twelve, and we only got fifty quid each. Bloody disgusting.'

Spencer lit a cigarette. Jane hated the smell of smoke, which always hung in a cloud above his head. He still had thick curly hair that often stood up on end from his habit of running his fingers through it when he was concentrating. It appeared even more unruly now, as for some reason he had decided to cut the sides short. Spencer was still an attractive man, but his sense of humor seemed to have soured and he was often moody and impatient with probationers.

'Well, this is all very exciting, isn't it?' he muttered. 'This old lady in the fur coat has been arrested how many times? And we have to spend how many hours doing paperwork, taking her to fucking court just so some equally ancient judge will release her

because of her age? Someone should tell our guys not to bother arresting her anymore.'

'Have you seen the report about the woman who had her handbag nicked on the Old Brompton Road?' Dors asked. 'She had two thousand quid on her.'

Spencer shrugged his shoulders. 'Really? Isn't that fantastic. Held up at gunpoint, was she?'

'No, a kid on a bicycle nicked it.'

'I was being sarcastic, Gary.'

Jane shared Spencer's frustration. She felt that the dealing with the petty crime that took up all their time was a waste of their experience. Like Spencer, she had years of training behind her. As if reading her mind, he crossed over and sat on the edge of her desk.

'Not sure how much more of this I can take, Jane. I know I've blotted my copybook a few times in the past, but this is really testing my patience. I've applied for a promotion and I've had a couple of interviews but they've led to nothing. No one has had the balls to tell me the reason I've been sidelined. I know you didn't get on with the lads in the Flying Squad, but they're a bunch of wankers anyway. And they turned me down.'

Jane nodded. She knew it was unwise to join in with Spencer's disgruntled rant, and she'd learned to keep her mouth shut. Spencer remained perched on the edge of her desk, kicking the side with the heel of his scruffy shoe.

'I mean, it's bordering on bloody ridiculous. I haven't had a single criminal worth wasting my time on, and the paperwork just gets more and more every day.'

He nodded over to the empty desk that belonged to Detective Inspector Timothy Arnold, lowering his voice. 'I see he's still not back yet. He should have a visitor's book instead of a duty status if you ask me. It's unbelievable. He's a bloody hypochondriac. He doesn't get a simple headache, it has to be a full-blown

migraine. He can't just get a cold, it has to be flu. And if he gets flu it's bloody pneumonia!

Jane felt uncomfortable about the banter, because it showed a complete lack of respect. At the same time, since she had been there, DI Arnold had taken frequent sick days and he had now been absent for almost a week.

Spencer leaned closer. 'You tell me, what kind of man has an effing battery-operated Mickey Mouse pencil sharpener? And he doesn't even have any kids. Mind you, if you saw his wife Bronwyn, it's no wonder.'

Jane turned away, not wanting to listen to any more. Spencer wasn't finished, though he did have the forethought to keep his voice low.

'You know what he's got in his drawer? Antacid tablets, Epsom salts and hemorrhoid cream. And he keeps a St Valentine's Day mug in the canteen.'

'That's enough, Spence,' Jane snapped. 'Apparently he's down with gastroenteritis.' Her desk phone rang. Jane held up her hand as she answered. 'Yes, sir, I'll ask him now.'

She replaced the receiver and looked over at Dors. 'The guv wants to know if you've found a kids' entertainer for the party on Saturday.'

Spencer slid off her desk and raised his arms. 'You see what I mean! What's he bloody going on about a kids' entertainer for? I'm fed up to the back bloody teeth with this. I'm seriously about to throw in the towel.'

Dors pushed back his chair. 'I've got a bloke who can blow up balloons and make them into animals, you know, poodles and things like that.'

Spencer looked at him as if he had two heads. 'What in Christ's name does this have to do with anything? Blowing up ruddy balloons for a profession?'

'He charges fifteen quid an hour, plus transport.'



Spencer shook his head in frustration. ‘Maybe I should think about blowing up fucking balloons. Certainly pays better than working here. I’m going for breakfast.’

Jane felt sorry for Spencer. He rarely, if ever, discussed his private life, but she knew he had married a young, aristocratic girl called Serena. It was clear that it wasn’t a good match. All he’d ever said about it was that after Serena had told Spencer she was pregnant, her father had threatened him and he was persuaded to marry her. Serena’s parents had bought them a flat in Shepherd’s Bush. There had been a miscarriage, and Spencer had inferred that he had been unashamedly relieved.

* * *

The remainder of the week was as mundane as usual. She and Spencer each spent a day in court, but apart from that there had only been a domestic assault inquiry and the search for a missing pupil from the prestigious Hill House. Thanks to the school’s odd-looking uniform of burgundy knickerbockers, a beige V-neck sweater and beige socks, the search was soon called off after the pupil was spotted playing with the puppies in Harrods’ pet department.

Jane was having lunch in the canteen when Spencer, his tray loaded with shepherd’s pie and green fruit jello, came and stood at her table.

‘OK if I sit with you?’

Before she could reply he pulled out a chair with his foot and sat opposite her.

‘There’s been a development. Apparently DI Arnold is now in hospital with a suspected kidney stone. I was thinking of applying for a transfer but if Fatty Arbuckle isn’t returning any time soon, then maybe I could get promoted.’ He shrugged. ‘If not, then I’ll just have to sit it out until my bloody pension.’



Jane smiled. 'You'll have a long wait for your pension. You're only thirty-eight. Besides which, if DI Arnold has been diagnosed correctly, he'll be back at work in a few weeks.'

Spencer banged the last of an HP Sauce bottle onto his shepherd's pie. 'How old are you, then?'

Jane hesitated, finding it a rather uncomfortable question, but then replied, 'I'm thirty, Spence.'

Spencer shoveled the food into his mouth, mashing the potatoes into the gravy and the HP Sauce with his fork.

'Did I detect a hint of reservation there, about me being eligible for promotion?'

'I didn't mean it to sound like that, but you shouldn't go on about DI Arnold. He's a very good detective.'

'Do me a fucking favor! I hadn't seen you since we were transferred to this piddlin' station, so I think you might have got the wrong information regarding my being demoted.'

Jane pushed her half-eaten ham salad to one side. 'There's always gossip, Spence; you just have to ignore it.'

He waved his knife in the air. 'Let me give you the real facts. I admit I was well over the limit, but how many times have you or I been on an investigation when never mind the DI but the DCI has been fed peppermints because their breath stank of booze? So, I admit I had a few jars, but I had done a good gig with the guys in a well-known pub in Islington. I was in Serena's dinky little pale blue sports car that her dad had given to her for her twenty-first and, as a big guy, I'm crunched up in the driving seat. Maybe I did jump the lights, but I get this traffic prick pulling me over. So I stop the car and he beckons me with his finger, telling me to get out of the car. Like I said, I'm a big guy and getting out took a while, and the next minute I've got this second bastard on me, who turns out to be a Black Rat,' he added, referring to the common slang used by detectives for traffic police, because rats are known to eat their young.

Spencer threw his hands wide as he swung his legs around the canteen chair.

‘I was accused of taking a swing, and of avoiding arrest. The reality is they didn’t really give a shit about me being over the limit. It was all down to my abusive tone of voice and the fact that I had thrown a punch.’

Spencer straightened his chair and gesticulated again with both hands.

‘That’s the truth . . . and I get demoted for it.’

He began to eat his awful-looking green jello as Jane stirred her coffee. There was not a lot she could say. From the gossip she had heard it was not just one accidental swing, he had actually thrown a couple of punches.

‘What are you looking at me like that for?’

‘I’m not looking at you in any way, Spence. I just think the whole incident was unfortunate and you’ve paid a high price.’ Jane glanced at her wristwatch. ‘I should be getting back to work.’

She picked up her plate and took it over to the trolley left out for dirty crockery.

Five minutes later, as Jane was coming out of the ladies’ toilets, Spencer was heading down the stairs.

‘I suppose you know the gossip about you being transferred here from the Sweeney?’

‘I’m really not that interested in any gossip about me,’ she replied firmly.

‘Well, you should be. I wouldn’t like anyone saying I screwed up and as a result of that another officer was wounded.’

Jane stopped dead in her tracks. ‘What did you just say?’

Spencer grinned. ‘Just repeating the gossip I heard, about the Big Boys being on some armed robbery of a security van, and that it started to look like the gunfight at the O.K. Corral. Word has it that you were unarmed and came face-to-face with one of the raiders, who took a shot at you with a revolver.’

Spencer was enjoying himself, despite the fact that Jane was seething.

‘I heard you froze, and another officer had to push you out of the way and he got shot in the shoulder.’

Jane had to take a deep breath and lean against the wall. She felt like bursting into tears, but instead she gritted her teeth and snapped at him, ‘Yes, I did freeze, and I admit I was unable to defend myself or anyone near me. But I was *not* to blame for what happened, even if DCI Murphy said that I was a contributory factor to one of his expert officers being shot.’ She felt herself sagging. ‘He gave me a warning and said that I would be disciplined and might even be demoted.’

Spencer suddenly looked guilty. He tapped a cigarette out from his soft pack and lit it. Even though Jane loathed the smell of tobacco she occasionally smoked when stressed. Her hand was shaking when she took the cigarette and inhaled deeply.

‘Murphy wanted to get rid of me from the very first day I joined the Sweeney. Well, he got what he wanted. I’ll never forget his sarcasm when he said that after my near-death experience, he felt the Flying Squad was not for me. He told me that if I agreed to a transfer, then his report wouldn’t be so harsh.’

Jane dragged on the cigarette again. She was feeling a little bit calmer but was still very emotional.

‘I had asked to have weapons training, not once but three times. Murphy ignored me. So then when I did come face-to-face . . . ’ Jane dropped the cigarette butt on the ground and stubbed it out with her shoe. ‘Well, there you have it. I did freeze, because I was terrified.’

Jane was taken aback when Spencer drew her into his arms and held her tightly, but it felt comforting.

‘Listen, Jane, don’t blame yourself. If I hear one more prat spreading any gossip about you, they’ll regret it.’ Spencer stepped back and gave her one of his trademark smiles. ‘You’d

better pick up that butt and put it in the ashtray on the wall, or I'll report you.'

Jane did as she was instructed while Spence headed into the office. She had never told anyone before and she was surprised to find how relieved she felt to have let it all out.

CHAPTER THREE

Spencer gave Jane a fresh croissant when he came into the office. It had been a week since their confrontation, and they had both made no further mention of what had occurred, but this seemed like some sort of peace offering. Spencer stood next to his desk and looked over to the still-empty one belonging to DI Arnold. Arnold had been released from hospital and they were expecting him to return shortly. Spence gave one of his long sighs as he shrugged his shoulders and sauntered over to Jane's desk where she was finishing her croissant.

'I just want something I can get my teeth into, a decent violent crime. When I think of some of the cases I've worked on in the past, and the adrenaline buzz they gave me, it just feels like I've now got a bloody tedious nine to five job.'

'Be careful what you wish for, Spence.'

'You can't tell me you enjoy working day in and day out on these petty crimes.'

The reality was that Jane had also contemplated requesting a transfer. In the last week she had only been involved in one case, when she had been on nights, involving a club in Cromwell Road.

The club had been reported numerous times for breaching their alcohol licensing regulations by staying open long past their closing time and well into the early hours of the morning. They maintained that they were entitled to do this due to the fact that they were a private members-only club. The complaints had been made by a young woman who rented the flat above the club. When Jane had interviewed her in her flat, the smell of stale alcohol and cigarette smoke was overwhelming. The young woman said she could deal with the smell, but it was

the deafening thud of the loud music from the live bands that she couldn't cope with. Jane had taken a statement and promised that she would contact the council. It turned out that the complainant had been offered alternative accommodation by the club, and Jane suspected that she might be sitting tight in the hope of being offered financial compensation. The case had been transferred to the station's licensing officer.

The switchboard put a call through to Spencer. He went back to his desk to take the call, introducing himself as Detective Sergeant Spencer Gibbs.

'Could I just take your name?' Spencer asked abruptly.

It was a Mrs. Nora Compton, whose address was in the exclusive Onslow Square.

'If you could just explain the reason for your call.' He listened as the anxious Mrs. Compton told him about her neighbor downstairs, in the basement flat.

'Has something happened to your neighbor?' Spencer asked curtly.

He rolled his eyes as he continued to listen.

'I see . . . it's your neighbor's dog that you're calling about? And it's a long-haired dachshund?'

Mrs. Compton continued, saying that she had become worried because the dog had been barking all night and was still whining this morning. She said that she had gone down to the basement and knocked on the door, but her neighbor, Mr. Charles Foxley, had not answered. The dog had repeatedly scratched at the front door, clearly distressed.

Spencer rolled his eyes again at the tediousness of the call. He suggested to Mrs. Compton that perhaps Mr. Foxley had gone out the previous night and had just not returned home.

Mrs. Compton became very agitated as she explained that Mr. Foxley would always contact her if he intended to leave the

dog all night. She said that he had two other dogs that were not at home, but they often slept in his car. He had a very strict regime and always walked them all at about eleven every night, then again at seven every morning.

‘Do you have a key to Mr. Foxley’s flat?’ Spencer asked.

Mrs. Compton replied that she did not, but he had always given her contact details if he was going to be away from home. Spencer thanked her for the call and said that he would arrange for someone to check on Mr. Foxley’s flat.

Replacing the receiver, he held his hands up in the air. ‘Bloody hell! A long-haired dachshund hasn’t been taken for his morning walk. What the fuck has that got to do with us? I’m telling you, the switchboard need a bollocking! Uniforms should be dealing with that.’

Only having heard Spencer’s side of the conversation, Jane suggested that, as it seemed out of the ordinary and the pet owner had a strict routine, perhaps they should at least send a uniform to check things out.

Spencer shrugged. ‘OK, I’ll go down to the duty sergeant and see if there are any uniforms in the area.’ He paused by the door. ‘Perhaps the dachshund is just pissed off the other two dogs have gone off in the car with the owner.’

As Spencer walked out, Jane went back to checking through the reports. DC Gary Dors, the two-fingered typist, made so many spelling errors in his reports that she was going to have to ask him to redo them. He was on night duty for another week and the other DC, Tony Johnson, was in court.

DCI Tyler had been closeted in his office since nine a.m. He was trying to contact the head of security at Harrods to organize a visit from a crime prevention officer as it was not his department. It felt ironic that petty crime seemed to be the priority at his station, even though this was the area where one of the most notorious crimes in England had taken place: the murder of Lord



Lucan's nanny and his Lordship's subsequent disappearance. Lucan remained on the run, and there had been no sighting of him since the murder had been committed over ten years ago, well before Tyler had taken over the station.

Next, he put in a call to DI Arnold's home and spoke to his wife, Bronwyn, asking for an update on her husband's health. She thanked him profusely for his inquiry and his get-well card in her strong Welsh accent, and told him that Timothy had come through his kidney-stone surgery exceptionally well but was still in some discomfort. He was hoping to be able to return to work within a few days. Tyler asked her to pass on his best wishes, and was halfway to putting the phone down when Bronwyn asked if he could ensure that someone watered the plants in the window boxes at the station's entrance.

'Yes, of course, it's all in hand,' Tyler assured her, having no idea whose job it was to look after the plants. He would ask one of the typists to water them. He checked his watch, deciding it was too early to take a lunch break.

* * *

PC John Lee, the uniformed officer who'd been sent to investigate Mr. Foxley's flat, had walked along Exhibition Road from the Natural History Museum, where there had been complaints about a rowdy school party waiting to go in. He turned left into Old Brompton Road, and fifteen minutes later arrived at Onslow Square.

The properties were all exclusive, a few remaining as single-family homes but the majority of them having been converted into elegant flats. As PC Lee descended the steps to the basement flat, the front door above him opened. A lady in her mid-fifties, wearing a tweed skirt and twin set and pearls, came out. She had a ruddy complexion and short, greying hair.



'I'm Nora Compton. I called the police over an hour ago. Something is very wrong and even the dog has stopped barking now. The curtains are still closed. I'm certain something's happened.'

PC Lee nodded and continued down to the basement. The front door was painted racing green with a brass lion's head knocker and a brass letterplate. There was a small framed notice above it: *No flyers or junk mail*. Beside the front door was a large terracotta planter containing an array of well-tended plants and the patio was immaculately paved with York stone.

Lee rang the doorbell. Mrs. Compton leaned over the railings above him.

'I've been down there ringing the doorbell since early this morning. I can assure you no one is there.'

Lee waited and rang the bell again. He could hear a scuffling sound and a whine, then a hoarse, pitiful bark.

'That's his dog,' Mrs. Compton said. 'He does have two others, but they're not always in his flat. One's a Jack Russell cross and the other is some kind of whippet. It's quite vicious.'

Lee lifted the lion's head knocker and banged it repeatedly. Inside the dog attempted to bark feebly.

Lee bent down, lifted the brass letterplate and peered in. He could see a rolled-up newspaper lying on the doormat, which had probably been delivered that morning. A little dog was staring at him and whining pitifully, and he noticed that the newspaper had been shredded at one end. More disturbingly the dog and the newspaper both seemed to be splattered with what looked like blood.

Lee stood and looked up at Mrs. Compton.

'Do you have access to this flat?'

'No, I do not – I made that clear to the detective I spoke to on the phone earlier.'

Lee climbed the stairs back to street level.



‘Is there a back entrance, or a garden area?’

‘Yes, Mr. Foxley has his own garden, but no other tenant can gain access to it.’

‘So, there’s no back door from the main property?’

‘I thought I just made that quite clear to you. Mr. Foxley is the only person who has access to the back garden, through his French doors.’

‘Have you noticed anything suspicious recently?’

‘No, I have not. The only reason I’ve been concerned is that the dog has been barking all night and morning, and Mr. Foxley is nowhere to be seen.’

Lee thanked her and walked down the road, hoping that Mrs. Compton would go back inside. He called in to the station and the switchboard transferred him to Jane.

* * *



Jane listened to his update and made notes, instructing Lee to remain at the property. She then went up to the canteen to find Spencer, who was sitting eating a sandwich.

‘You may just have got what you wished for, Spence. I just took a call from the PC who went over to the long-haired dachshund’s property.’

‘Don’t tell me – he was viciously attacked by the dog?’ Spencer said through a mouthful of sandwich.

‘No, he couldn’t get into the flat, but when he looked through the letterbox the dog appeared to be covered in blood.’

Spencer’s jaw dropped. ‘You’re fucking kidding me.’

She shook her head. ‘I think you need to get over there, Spence.’

He stood up and walked briskly out of the canteen. Ten minutes later he was on his way to the flat in one of CID’s unmarked red Hillman Hunters, accompanied by DC Gary Dors.



Jane returned to her desk and continued checking through reports and statements until she got a call-out from a uniformed officer about a disturbance at the exclusive Mulberry handbag shop off the Brompton Road. A customer had attempted to run from the shop with a handbag and had inadvertently caused a taxi to swerve into an on-coming vehicle. Although no one was hurt, the taxi driver was furious, and the other vehicle had severe damage down the passenger side.

By the time Jane arrived at the scene, traffic police were already taking particulars and two members of staff had taken the woman back into the shop. She was extremely abusive and had tried to punch and kick her way out of the shop again. Jane tried to calm her down enough to take a statement. In the end she was more shocked by the price of the handbag than the fact that this middle-aged woman had risked getting herself seriously injured by running in front of the taxi. She took all the necessary particulars but the woman was not taken into custody because she agreed to pay for the handbag.

Well, at least I got a break from sitting at my desk looking through tedious reports, Jane reflected.

* * *

Gary Dors hurried up to her as she walked into the station.

‘Holy shit! You’ve missed the panic going on here. Just before you left, Spence walked into the most horrific murder scene over at Onslow Square.’

‘What? You’re joking.’

‘I’m bloody not. He called in for forensics, pathologists and a doctor.’

‘Is he still over there?’ Jane asked.

‘No, he’s up in the incident room, and more uniforms have been ordered to cordon off the murder site.’

Jane went into the incident room. Spencer was on the phone, his hair looking even untidier than usual.

‘Detective Chief Inspector Tyler is at the scene, but he wants a pathologist present as soon as possible. The two we’ve tried to contact are not available. Yes, it is a fucking emergency! Sorry . . . sorry for swearing, but it’s just been a nightmare. Thank you very much.’

Spencer slammed down the phone and turned to Jane. ‘You will not fucking believe it. We’ve had to cordon off half the street. There’s blood everywhere and the forensic team, AKA Paul Lawrence, is trying to keep everyone from tramping all over it.’

‘Is it a murder?’ Jane asked, taking her coat off.

‘Murder? I’ve never seen anything like it. He’s been disemboweled, his head is almost severed, there’s pools of blood in the hall, the bedroom and the bathroom. I’ve never seen so much blood. The poor dog was covered in it. Lawrence had a hard time cutting off some of the dog fur for the laboratory as the little bastard has got teeth like a piranha. He’s had a go at everybody. The neighbor said she’d look after it and give it a bath, but she can’t keep it for long as she’s got two cats.’

‘Should I get over there?’ Jane asked.

‘Right now Tyler’s not letting anyone in until a pathologist has had a look at the victim. And you won’t believe what happened to me. I was told to get back here, get more uniforms, get the bloody pathologist there, and this woman gets out of a Mercedes 280SL, leaves it parked in the middle of the road, and starts screaming at me that she wants to know what’s going on. I mean, right now, Jane, I don’t *know* what the hell’s going on. It looks like the killer used a cricket bat, left a razor in the bathroom, victim’s got blunt-force trauma to the back, front and side of his head, so we can’t identify him. The woman upstairs wouldn’t come down and take a look at him. She said he’s an agent.’

‘What, an estate agent?’

‘No, no, like a theatrical agent. There are photos of these people all over the flat, and this Mercedes woman starts screaming at me that she wants to know what’s happened. I told her that there had been a terrible incident in the flat. She starts pushing and shoving me, demanding that she goes down the steps. The guv comes out because she’s screaming the place down, and then she says, “Has something happened to Charles?” She almost pushes me off my feet and starts to go down to the basement, screaming that she was his wife. The guv tries to stop her, meanwhile, we’ve got blokes putting the corrugated cardboard down to avoid contamination and footprints in all the blood, and she keeps yelling that she is Justine Harris, Charles Foxley’s wife, and she has every right to know what is going on. That’s when I am told to fuck off and do what I’m told to do.’

The phone rang to interrupt him. Spencer grabbed the receiver and listened before snapping angrily, ‘Everybody’s waiting. I’ll get there as quick as I can.’

He slammed the receiver down again.

‘Pathologist is on his way. It’s that bad-tempered guy who works over at Hammersmith – nasty little sod.’

Spencer’s radio bleeped. ‘I’m at the station, guv . . . What?’

Jane could hear Tyler saying that it looked possible that the body was Charles Foxley and that Justine Harris had been removed from the premises by uniformed officers as her car was holding up the traffic. They would, however, still need to get a formal identification, as the woman was so hysterical, he couldn’t let her near the body.

‘Listen, if I hadn’t dragged her out, it looked as if she wanted to give him a kicking.’

‘Tennison is here, guv. Do you want her over there?’

‘Not yet. As soon as we are able to move the body, I want you both here. There’s enough traffic here at the moment. In



the meantime, you and Jane see what you can find out about the victim. I want uniform assistance to start house-to-house inquiries ASAP.’

Spencer switched off his radio.

‘Did you hear that? Charles Foxley, theatrical agent. Let’s get started.’

It was another two hours before the pathologist gave permission for the body bags to be brought in and the SOCOs could start assisting Paul Lawrence. He had a specialist in blood pattern analysis and two back-up scientists to focus on the bathroom, the hallway and the bedroom where the body had been found. It appeared that the victim had been attacked first in the hallway. The weapon, a cricket bat, was already bagged and tagged to go to the laboratory. Judging from the blood spattering on both sides of the hallway, it was possible the victim had then been dragged into the bathroom. There were blood-soaked clothes, torn into shreds, and an open cut-throat razor left in the bath, with deep blood pooling around it.

The trail of bloodstains suggested that the body had then been taken into the bedroom, where a silk bedspread, carpet and pillows were also soaked in blood. The victim was wearing only pants and socks, and attached to his right wrist was a closed handcuff, the other cuff lying loose.

* * *

Jane and Spencer, alongside the rest of the team, began to gather as many details as possible, bringing in civilian staff and a couple of probationary officers to assist them. They were now working on the assumption that the victim was the successful theatrical agent Charles Foxley, even though no formal identification had been done yet, since the body had been found in his residence.

Justine Harris, it turned out, was his ex-wife. DS Lawrence had asked the team to check with BT urgently to discover what last numbers Foxley had called from his home phone.

Tyler came out of his office to enquire how much progress they had made. Jane glanced at Spencer as he turned over page after page of his notebook.

‘Well, sir, we were informed that he had offices in Wardour Street and a substantial list of television actors. The company name is Foxley & Myers.’

He glanced towards Jane and she tapped her notebook. ‘When we discovered how well-known Mr. Foxley was, we contacted the press office and we got a lot more background information.’

Spencer nodded. ‘Guv, Foxley was forty-two years old and divorced from Justine Harris. They have one daughter, aged ten, called Clara.’

Jane lifted her hand. ‘She’s apparently at boarding school, guv. We got a fax detailing a lot of press releases saying his ex-wife was living in the marital home in Barnes, valued at 1.5 million pounds.’

Tyler whistled.

Spencer added that the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency had confirmed that Foxley owned a Jaguar XK120 sports car and an eight-year-old Volvo estate. Usually the cars were kept in the garage in Barnes. He had a parking permit for Onslow Square.

Jane interrupted. ‘According to Companies House, guv, Foxley & Myers had a turnover of 2.3 million pounds last year.’

Tyler puffed out his cheeks. ‘Oh shit, this is getting nastier by the minute. It’s going to be a right handful to deal with.’

‘We also know that Foxley & Myers employed four subsidiary agents, two receptionists and three secretaries,’ Jane added.

All three turned as DC Dors called out that he had something of interest. They watched the fax machine slowly coughing out numerous black and white photographs of Justine Harris.

Dors carried the pictures over. 'She's a famous actress,' he said. 'She was in *Upstairs, Downstairs*.'

Tyler just stood there, looking wrecked. He turned to Jane, loosening his tie.

'Right, Justine Harris needs to be contacted ASAP to give us a formal fucking identification.'

Jane raised her hand. 'Sir, I have been calling her home and the number for her in Barnes, but I'm getting no reply.'

'Well, keep trying. And in the meantime I could do with a coffee and a sandwich from the canteen.'

Tyler went into his office and gestured for Spencer to join him and closed the door.

'I'm not pissing around when I say we need a press blanket on this. If the victim is who we think he is and knows all these famous people, the journalists will be crawling all over us like bed bugs.'

'Didn't his wife ID him for you, guv?'

'For Christ's sake, I told you the woman was hysterical. Anyway, she couldn't see his face properly. There was so much blood you couldn't even tell what color his hair was. I don't know if you also took on board that he had a handcuff on his right wrist. It's gone with him to the mortuary. Poor old Lawrence reckons it is going to take a couple more hours at the very least. If we can't get hold of Justine Harris we need to find someone else to ID him. Or we'll have to get his fucking dentist to do it.'

'I'd say the best bet would be to get in touch with his business partner, James Myers. They own the company together.'

'OK, so quietly does it. I want you and Jane to go over to . . . where are the offices?'

'Paramount House, Wardour Street. It's full of film companies and agents.'

Tyler nodded. 'OK, but no warning phone call. I want you both over there. Have a quiet chat with this so-called business partner Marsh—'



‘It’s Myers, guv.’

‘Myers, then. Take him to the mortuary. I’ll tell them to clean up Foxley’s face as best they can. As soon as he identifies him, I’ll see you back at the crime scene.’

There was a knock on his door as Jane entered with a ham sandwich and a cup of coffee. Tyler smiled.

‘Thanks, Jane. I hope you don’t mind me asking you to get this for me. You and Spencer have done a great job so far but we have to keep a lid on this horror show as best we can. I want you and Spencer to go and see this . . .’ He rubbed his head. ‘What’s his business partner’s name again?’

Spencer sighed. ‘James Jarvis Myers, sir.’

‘OK, off you go.’ Tyler bit into his sandwich as Spencer closed the door behind them. He nudged Jane to look at DI Arnold’s empty chair.

‘This could be just the opportunity I’m looking for.’

* * *

Jane and Spencer drove to Wardour Street. It was a busy one-way street and difficult to find a parking space directly outside the building, so Spencer left the police car log book on the dashboard so that any traffic wardens would recognize it as a police car and not give them a ticket.

Jane had combed her hair and put some fresh lipstick on but she wished she was wearing something smarter. She lent Spencer her comb as his hair was still standing on end.

They went through the glass doors to the reception where there was a small desk pushed to one side. On a plaque on the wall there was a list of the various companies who occupied the building and it appeared that Foxley & Myers Theatrical Agents had the entire first floor. There was an ‘out of order’ notice taped to the lift so they walked up the wide staircase to the first floor.



On the landing there were two doors with 'Foxley & Myers Agents' printed on one, and 'Foxley & Myers Reception' printed on the other. They headed towards the reception.

Spencer looked at Jane. 'Doesn't look very theatrical to me.'

They pushed open the door and Jane smiled at what it revealed. Ahead of them was a corridor with a name plaque on each door. The walls were covered in framed film posters and actors' awards. On the right was a half-moon desk with four leather and chrome chairs beside it. Two girls sat behind the desk, one weighing and stamping large envelopes and one typing. Behind them were rows of files and volumes of *Spotlight*, the bible for all theatrical and film contacts.

The two receptionists were perched on high stools. One had bleached blonde hair with heavy make-up, glossy lips and false eyelashes. The other girl had bright red dyed hair, with matching lipstick. Both appeared to be in their mid-twenties and, rather incongruously, Jane couldn't help noticing behind them a large wall poster for *Night of the Living Dead*.

The blonde girl was talking into one of the handsets of the four phones on the desk in front of them.

'I have the details and I will pass them on to Mr. Foxley as soon as he comes in. I do know he has a very full diary for the next few days, but I am sure he will call you back when he gets this message.' She replaced the receiver, muttering, 'What an arsehole.'

The redhead appeared to be reading a contract. Both girls totally ignored the fact Spencer and Jane were standing in front of them. Eventually Spencer tapped the desk.

'I'm Detective Sergeant Spencer Gibbs, and this is Detective Sergeant Jane Tennison. We have an urgent matter to discuss with Mr. Myers.'

'Do you have an appointment?' the blonde girl asked.

'No, but as I just said, it is an urgent police matter.'

‘If it’s about the parking, we’ve already had someone here from Scotland Yard.’

Spencer glared at her. ‘Show me to his office, will you? Do you think you’d have two detective sergeants here in person to discuss a parking problem?’

‘No need to be rude,’ said the redhead huffily.

Perhaps detecting something in Spencer’s manner, the blonde girl got off her stool, leaned over the desk and pointed to the end of the corridor. ‘That’s his office at the end. Do you mind if I just call and tell him you’re coming to see him?’

Spencer waved his hand and gestured for Jane to follow him. As they walked away they could hear a high-pitched voice saying, ‘There are two high-ranking police people coming to see you. They didn’t explain what it was about.’

Before they had a chance to knock on the rather impressive door to the office at the end of the corridor, it swung open.

‘Yes?’

‘Are you Mr. James Myers?’ Spencer asked quietly.

‘I am.’

Spencer introduced himself and Jane as he walked into the office, forcing Myers to take a step back.

‘I’d like to discuss our reason for being here in private, so would you mind shutting the door?’ Spencer asked.

Myers closed the door and gestured for them both to sit on an expensive-looking, thickly cushioned sofa in front of his desk.

As with the outside corridor, his office was lined wall to wall with photographs of clients, or posters of the films they’d been in.

At first sight, Jane found Myers a difficult man to read. He was very slight, about five foot nine, wearing exceedingly tight fawn trousers and brown leather boots with Cuban heels. He had a pale blue corduroy shirt tucked in tightly at his waist.

You couldn’t really describe him as handsome or good-looking, she thought, but he had very neat features with expressive eyes.



‘This all looks very serious,’ Myers said with a smile.

Spencer took the lead. ‘I’m afraid it is, sir. We are here on a very unfortunate matter. I understand that you and Charles Foxley are partners. Is that true?’

‘Well, only in a business sense,’ Myers said, flippantly waving his hand.

‘Well, this is a very personal matter.’

Myers leaned back. ‘Oh God, what’s he done now?’

‘It’s not what he’s done, sir, it’s what’s been done to him. His body was found early this morning. I am afraid we will need you to formally identify him as we’ve been unable to contact his wife.’

Myers sat up in his chair. ‘I don’t quite understand . . . Are you telling me he’s dead?’

‘I’m afraid that is why we are here, sir.’

‘Jesus Christ!’ Myers muttered, clutching the arms of his chair. ‘What happened? Was it a heart attack?’

‘No, I’m afraid he was brutally murdered.’

Myers gasped. ‘Where?’

‘He was found in his flat this morning. I’m afraid I can’t go into any more detail, Mr. Myers, but we would appreciate you accompanying us to identify Mr. Foxley, unless you know of any relatives.’

Myers shook his head. ‘Both his parents are deceased, and I have no idea about anyone else.’

Five minutes later Myers had put on a grey cashmere coat and picked up his soft leather satchel. He had been asked not to make the reason for his departure public, so simply waved his hand towards the reception desk. Then he paused.

‘Rita, will you make sure my dogs are collected from the groomers?’ He turned to Spencer. ‘How long is this going to take?’

‘Not long, sir, and we’ll return you to your office when we’ve finished.’



‘So about half an hour? An hour?’

‘I’d say around forty-five minutes.’

As they headed down the stairs, Jane studied Myers. She was finding it difficult to understand his lack of reaction on being told that his business partner had been found dead.

Myers didn’t speak during the journey to the mortuary at Lambeth, and as soon as they arrived, asked if he could check whether his dogs had been taken to his office.

Spencer raised his eyebrows. ‘I’m sure there’s a phone that you can use, sir.’

Jane and Spencer watched Myers make the call from a pay-phone in the reception area.

‘Can you believe this guy?’ Spencer said.

‘No, I can’t,’ Jane said, shaking her head. ‘He seems more worried about his dogs than his dead business partner.’

They were given permission to go into the mortuary area, where the body would usually have been laid out in the small chapel of rest for identification purposes. But their victim was still waiting for an autopsy, so his body was on the slab covered by a green sheet, with only his head visible. They had cleaned his face up as best as they could, but a number of teeth had been smashed, his nose broken, and one eye had been driven into his skull. They had managed to wash most of the blood from his hair, which was now its original strawberry blond color.

‘Are you ready, Mr. Myers?’ Jane asked quietly.

He nodded, and a mortician led them to the table.

Spencer looked directly ahead with Myers standing to his right and Jane just a little behind, in case Myers felt faint and keeled over backwards.

‘Could you please look at the man on the table and tell me if you recognize him?’

Myers remained completely still, slowly lowering his head to look closer. He frowned, took a deep breath and sighed.



‘Yes, this is him. This is Charles Foxley.’ He turned towards Jane. ‘Can you get me out of here, please?’

* * *

‘Maybe this is not the time, sir, but I will need to talk to you, and we will obviously have numerous questions to ask,’ Spencer told him on their way out of the mortuary. ‘Can I request that you do not make any contact with the press regarding Mr. Foxley’s death? It is imperative we are able to investigate the crime without being hampered by overzealous reporters and journalists. I would also be grateful if you would accompany us to the station where we could take a formal statement from you.’

‘What? Do you mean right now? No, no, it’s impossible. I have an incredibly important meeting with a client; in fact, I have back-to-back meetings all day – and, of course, I need time to recover from this appalling news.’

‘Would it be convenient to speak to you at nine tomorrow morning?’ Spencer asked.

Myers pursed his lips. ‘I’ll have to move a couple of appointments, but yes, I suppose I could be available.’ He paused. ‘Charles did have an awful lot of enemies.’

Jane glanced at Spencer as they walked behind Myers, who was now intent on hailing a taxi.

‘One moment please, sir,’ Jane said sharply. ‘You just said Mr. Foxley had a lot of enemies. Is there anyone in particular you were referring to?’

‘Dear God! I was being flippant. It’s the shock. I’m in a state of shock.’

A taxi pulled up, and before they could stop him, Myers had hurriedly climbed in, slamming the door shut behind him.

Jane and Spencer watched the taxi drive off.





‘Incredible. He didn’t appear to give a shit that his partner had been murdered,’ Jane muttered.

Spencer shrugged. ‘Yeah, well, we’ll see him again tomorrow. Come on, we should go and catch up with the boss at the crime scene.’

* * *

At Paramount House Myers ran up the stairs two at a time, bursting into the reception area. ‘How are my babies?’ he demanded.

‘Oh, they’re back and all lovely – nails cut and coats shampooed. They smell divine,’ said the blonde girl.

Myers hurried down the corridor and opened his office door. Two Pekingese dogs raised their heads in unison from their hand-woven Harrods dog basket. He closed the door quietly behind him, took off his coat and sat behind his desk. Plucking a handful of tissues from the box, he twisted them in his hands, then burst into tears.

‘You stupid bastard, you stupid bastard . . .’ he repeated over and over again as he tried to stifle his sobs.

