

CHAPTER ONE

It was a rainy and overcast April morning as the brown 1976 Mark 4 Ford Cortina sedan parked up on the offside of Aylmer Road, a few meters down from the junction with Leytonstone High Road. The four men in the vehicle sat in silence as the engine slowly ticked over and the windscreen wipers swept away the rain. The men were dressed in blue coveralls, heavy black donkey jackets and leather driving gloves. The heat from their bodies was making the windows mist up and the musty odor of sweat filled the car. The man in the back opened his window a couple of inches and the two men in the front used their jacket sleeves to wipe the condensation off the windscreen, so they could get a better view of Barclays Bank on the far side of the High Road. The bank manager was holding an umbrella as he opened the large wooden front doors for business at 9:30. Smartly dressed in a three-piece gray pinstripe suit, white shirt, and tie, he stood to one side to let two customers in, and looked up the High Road, which was quieter than usual for a Thursday morning due to the bad weather.

As the manager turned and walked back inside, the driver of the Cortina put a cap on and opened the car door. He hadn't seen the elderly lady pulling a canvas shopping trolley along the pavement, and narrowly missed hitting her with the door. The lady swore at him, but the driver ignored her and pulled the peak of his cap down, before walking towards the bank.

As the old lady moved off, one of the men in the back of the Cortina reached under the driver's seat and pulled out a twelve-bore, double-barreled, sawn-off shotgun. He pushed the unlocking lever to one side to "break" the gun, then placed a

cartridge in each chamber. Holding the wooden stock of the gun with one hand, he snapped the barrel closed with a well-practiced upward flick of his wrist, then slid the shotgun into a home-made pocket inside his jacket.

Jane drove up and down Rigg Approach twice, but couldn't see a police station or blue lamp anywhere. She was becoming frustrated and beginning to wonder if she'd got the right place, as she appeared to be in an industrial estate with a variety of different businesses. She parked her yellow Volkswagen Golf opposite a mobile burger van, and got out to speak to the owner. Pulling her coat up over her head, to protect her hair from the rain, she ran across the road.

"Excuse me, is there a police station near here?" she asked.

"There's no nick around here, luv. The nearest are Stoke Newington or Hackney—a couple of miles away, but in opposite directions."

"I know where they are, but I'm looking for the Flying Squad offices, which I was told were in Rigg Approach."

"The Sweeney work out of that place over there, not a nick," he said, pointing to a two-storey, gray-brick office building with a flat roof. "I know most of the lads, as they're regulars at my van. Anyone in particular you're looking for?"

"The DCI. I've got an appointment with him."

"Bill Murphy? That's his office on the top floor—far right. I don't think he's in yet, as he hasn't been down for his usual bacon and egg roll."

"Thanks for your help."

Jane crossed the road and on closer inspection thought the building looked run-down. Although there were large windows on both floors, the ground floor ones all had faded white metal Venetian blinds, which were closed. The metal front door had

a numbered push-button entry pad above the handle, and an intercom on the wall beside it. As Jane pressed the button on the intercom, she wondered what the building would be like on the inside.

“How can I help you?” a female voice asked over the intercom.

“I’m WDS Tennison. I’m here to see DCI Murphy.”

“Is he expecting you?” the woman asked, in a haughty manner.

“Yes, he is. I start on the Flying Squad today and was told to report to his office for ten a.m.”

“It’s only 9:30, and he didn’t mention you to me—new officers generally start on Mondays.”

“I’ve been in court all week and . . . Look, I’m getting soaked out here. Can you please open the door or tell me the number for the entry pad?”

The woman sighed. “I suppose so . . . The squad office is on the first floor.”

Jane thought the woman was rude and wondered if she was a detective on the squad or clerical staff. As she waited for the electronic lock to be released, she flapped her coat to remove some of the rain. As it was her first day on the Flying Squad, Jane wanted to look good and had worn a blue two-piece skirt suit, white blouse, stockings and black high-heeled shoes. She heard the electronic lock on the door buzz, and leaned forward to open it. Her hand was on the round knob when the door was pulled open with force from the inside, causing Jane to stumble forward. She felt a hand grab her arm tightly, stopping her from falling over.

“You all right, luv?” a deep male voice asked, as the man helped her straighten up.

Jane was dwarfed by the man. She noticed he had a pickaxe handle in his left hand. He was about six foot seven, with wide

shoulders and a muscular frame. He had blond hair, blue eyes and boyish looks. He was dressed in a white England rugby shirt with the red rose emblem on the left breast.

“Come on, Bax, I need to get the motor fired up,” the man behind him said in a broad Scottish accent, as he used a pickaxe handle to usher Jane and Bax to one side. He looked to be in his late thirties, and although slightly smaller, at about six foot two, he had a large beer belly.

Bax frowned. “All right, Cam, less haste more speed.”

Jane heard footsteps running down the metal stairs.

A male voice called out, “Right, I’m tooled up, so we’re good to go, Bax. The Guv and the Colonel are booking out their guns and will go in Cam’s car. Teflon is on his way round the front with Dabs in the Triumph for us.”

Jane instantly recognized the voice of Detective Sergeant Stanley, who she had worked with on the “Dip Squad” a few years ago. They had also been involved in the hunt for an active IRA unit that had bombed Covent Garden Tube Station. Stanley had helped to disarm a car bomb and been awarded the Queen’s Police Medal for his bravery.

Jane looked up and saw the short, slim frame of Stanley tucking a police issue .38 revolver into a shoulder holster under his brown leather jacket. He still had his long, dark, straggly hair, but had grown a thick moustache, which on first sight didn’t suit him.

“Hi, Stanley.” Jane waved. She still didn’t know what his Christian name was, as everyone just called him “Stanley.”

“Tennison, what are you doing here?”

“I’ve been transferred to the Flying Squad.”

“Have you? That’s news to me.”

“And me,” Bax said.

Jane thought it strange that no one seemed to know about her transfer, and began to wonder if she’d got the right starting day.

“Are you off on a shout?” she asked.

“Yeah, we just got a call from Information Room. There might be a robbery about to go down in Leytonstone. Gotta go, so I’ll catch up with you later.”

Stanley hurried out of the building with Bax.

Jane started to walk up the stairs when two more men appeared, armed with .38 revolvers carried in belt holsters around their waists. The man in front was wearing a blue baseball cap and tight white T-shirt, which accentuated his muscular frame and large biceps. As he hurried down the stairs two at a time, Jane moved quickly to one side to let him pass.

The man behind wasn’t rushing and stopped in front of Jane. He had a chiseled jawline, defined cheekbones and a slightly misshapen nose, which looked like it had been broken in a fight. He wasn’t dressed casually like the others, and wore a tailored slim-fit gray suit and white open-neck shirt. He sniffed and stared at Jane with narrow eyes.

“You Tennison?”

“Yes, sir,” she replied, sensing his air of authority.

“I’m DI Kingston. We’re short on the ground today as some of the team are out with the surveillance squad on another job, so you may as well come with us.”

“What, to Leytonstone?”

“No, to a tea party,” he replied, drily.

“DCI Murphy was expecting—”

“He’s not back from Scotland Yard yet, so come on, shift your backside.”

Kingston had the swagger of a confident man and Jane followed him out to the street, where she saw Stanley sitting in the front of a dark green four-door Triumph 2500S, which had a blue magnetic flashing light on top of it. A black man was driving and Bax was in the back, with a diminutive-looking man wearing dark glasses next to him. Behind the Triumph,

Cam was in the driver's seat of a four-door black BMW 525i, again with a flashing light on the roof and its engine running.

"We're in the Beamer," Kingston told her.

"Come on, Guv!" the man in the white T-shirt shouted from the back seat of the BMW.

Kingston got in the front passenger seat as Jane ran around the back of the car and got in behind Cam, but there was little room for her legs as the driver's seat was almost as far back as it would go. No sooner was she in the car than Cam pulled the automatic gearstick to drive, and pushed the accelerator pedal to the floor. The car took off at high speed, causing Jane to jolt backwards, and it felt like someone had pushed her hard in the chest as her back slammed against the seat. As Cam braked at the T-junction, she felt her body lurch forward, but just managed to get her hands on the back of his seat to brace herself before her head hit it. The Colonel had his feet firmly propped up against the front passenger seat and a large London A-Z open on his lap.

"Fastest route is left onto Lea Bridge Road, then right—"

"I've worked this manor for years, so I know how to get there, Colonel," Cam said calmly, and turned the siren on.

Kingston opened the glove box and picked up the radio mike.

"MP from Central 888, receiving, over?"

"Yes, go ahead, Central 888, MP, over," a male voice replied.

"We are en route with Central 887 to Aylmer Road and the men acting suspiciously near Barclays Bank. Any updates?"

"The vehicle is still in situ. It's a brown Mark 4 Ford Cortina, 1.6 liter saloon, index plate Sierra Lima Mike 273 Romeo. The vehicle is not reported stolen and may have false plates as the PNC shows a blue Mark 4, 1.6 GL saloon with a registered keeper in Sussex."

“Can you give me the informant’s details, please?” Kingston got out his pocket notebook and pen.

“Fiona Simpson. She’s the landlady of the Crown public house on the High Road and corner of Aylmer. She lives on the premises and noticed the suspect vehicle parked up with its engine running and wipers on. The driver has left the vehicle and turned right into the High Road, out of sight of the informant. He’s wearing a gray cap, black donkey jacket and blue overalls.”

“Number of other occupants in the Cortina?” Kingston asked.

“The informant can only see the nearside of the vehicle. One male in the front passenger seat and another male behind him, both wearing dark clothing.”

Kingston ran his hand through his hair.

“There could be a robbery about to take place, MP. We and Central 887 are armed gunships. Our ETA is about four minutes, so tell uniform to hold back until we get there.”

“Received and understood . . . we will advise you of any developments . . . MP, over.”

Jane felt uneasy. As it was her first day on the infamous “Sweeney,” she wasn’t sure what was expected of her, especially if DI Kingston was right in thinking an armed robbery was about to take place.

The driver of the Cortina returned to the car.

“She’s coming,” he said, as he got in the car and put on a full-face balaclava, which had a mouth and eye holes cut out.

The two men in the back also put on balaclavas, but the man in the front passenger seat pulled a light brown stocking over his head, which distorted the features of his face. Having adjusted the stocking so it was comfortable, he reached into his

jacket pocket and took out a Second World War 9mm German Luger, then pulled back the toggle, which loaded a bullet from the magazine into the chamber.

The four men sat and watched as the blue Ford Transit Securicor van pulled up outside the bank. The driver remained in the van while his colleague went to the rear and looked up and down the High Road, before knocking three times, pausing and then knocking twice.

The passenger from the front of the Cortina and the two men from the back got out of the car and strode with purpose toward the bank. The men knew exactly what they had to do, as everything had been well planned thanks to the information they had received about the cash-in-transit delivery. They knew from experience that robbing the Securicor van should take no more than a minute. As the cash box appeared in the chute at the rear of the van, the three men pounced with military precision.

Jane was beginning to feel nauseous due to the speed Cam was driving and the way he was skidding the car around corners and roundabouts in the rain. She'd been in police pursuits before, but never encountered high-speed driving as dangerous as this.

"This is our new WDS, Jane Tennison," Kingston told the others, as he lit a cigarette and handed one to the Colonel.

The rim of the Colonel's cap cast a shadow over his steely eyes and accentuated his high cheekbones and dimpled chin.

"Hello," Jane said.

"You really been posted to the squad?" the Colonel asked as he lit his cigarette.

"Yes, sir." She put her hand out to shake his.

He didn't reciprocate. "Well, you've got a bit more essence than most plonks."

Jane didn't have a clue what he meant by "essence" and wasn't sure she should ask.

Kingston laughed. "Gorman's not an officer—he's an ex-corporal and just a lowly DC, who thinks you're better looking than most female officers."

Jane blushed, embarrassed that the Colonel thought she had "essence."

"My father was a soldier and served in the Second World War."

He glared at her as he pulled up the sleeve of his T-shirt, revealing a globe with a laurel wreath on either side and an anchor at the bottom, with the Latin words *Per Mare, Per Terram* underneath.

"I'm a Bootneck not a Pongo! I was a Marine Commando in the Royal Navy before I joined the Met. My name's Ken, but this bunch of knobheads decided to call me the Colonel. The tattoo is the Marines' insignia and the Latin means 'By Sea, By Land.'"

"Ironic really as he can't swim," Cam laughed.

"Shut up, OFD," the Colonel said, and looked at Jane. "In case you're wondering, OFD means 'only the fucking driver,' and he's only a temporary DC."

"I like to think of myself as a shit-hot taxi driver without whom they'd get nowhere," Cam replied, as he went the wrong way around a roundabout to turn right.

Kingston smiled. "As much as we all hate to admit it, Constable Cameron Murray is the best Class 1 driver in the Met. He even souped up this car's engine himself so it outperforms every other Flying Squad vehicle."

Jane could sense the mutual bond of respect and camaraderie among the officers and felt a bit of an outsider. She instinctively knew that she would have to prove herself a capable detective if she wanted to become part of the team.

“What should I do when we get there?” she asked, wanting to show her enthusiasm.

“Stay in the car with Cam,” Kingston and the Colonel said in unison.

“Central 888 from MP, receiving, over?” the same male voice from the Met’s control room asked over the radio.

“888 receiving,” Kingston replied.

“A Securicor van has pulled up at the bank and three men dressed in blue coveralls, donkey jackets and masks have just left the vehicle.”

“They’re going to rob the van, not the bank,” Kingston said calmly. “We’re about two minutes away and approaching silent,” he replied.

Cam switched off the car’s siren.

The man with the sawn-off shotgun tapped the Securicor driver’s window with the barrel and rotated his finger, indicating to him to wind it down, which the driver quickly did. The man leaned into the van and pulled the key from the ignition, then spoke in a deep tone to disguise his natural voice.

“Keep your hands on the steering wheel. You so much as twitch towards the horn or alarm and I’ll blow your fucking head off.”

The Securicor driver shook with fear as he nodded, and gripped the steering wheel so hard his knuckles turned white.

The man with the Luger was at the back of the van, pushing the barrel of the gun into the neck of the other Securicor guard, who was frozen to the spot. The unarmed robber grabbed the metal case with the money in it from the guard’s hand and pushed him down onto his knees. He leaned forward and whispered, so as not to alert the security guard in the back of the van.

“Tell him to put the other case in the chute.”

The guard's voice trembled as he said, "There's only the one."

The robber shook his head. "Don't lie, son. I don't want to hurt you, but I will if you don't do exactly what I tell you."

"Frank, George . . . What's happening out there? Is everything all right?" the third guard shouted from inside the van.

The man with the Luger moved around and put the gun to the forehead of the kneeling guard.

"Last chance, son. Tell him to put the fucking case in the chute."

The guard was unable to stop shaking and the fear in his voice was evident.

"Everything's fine. You can send out the other case."

Suddenly the van's alarm went off, closely followed by the sound of a shotgun being fired once. The two robbers at the back of the van ran to the front and saw their colleague standing over a young man lying on the ground, clutching his stomach and crying out in pain. The robber with the shotgun was breathing heavily, causing a white foam of spittle to build up around the mouth hole of his balaclava.

"The fucking idiot tried to get the shotgun off me."

The unarmed man raised his hand to shut his colleague up. The man with the Luger turned and headed back to the rear of the van, intent on getting the second cash box. The unarmed robber grabbed him by the arm, shook his head and pulled him toward the Cortina, which skidded to a halt beside the Securicor van.

"Central 888 from MP, receiving, over?"

"Go ahead 888, over," Kingston replied.

"Sounds of gunshots heard outside the bank. Local uniform units requesting permission to move in."

"ETA, Cam?" a concerned-looking Kingston asked.

Cam hit the accelerator. "A minute, tops, Guv."

"MP from 888, local units can move in. Is India 99 in the air?" Kingston asked, referring to the police helicopter's call sign.

"No, at present 99 is refueling, but should be airborne shortly."

Kingston threw the radio mike against the dashboard.

"Fuck it. They'll be well on their way before we get there!"

"Central 888, update from MP. Call received for an ambulance to Barclays Bank, Leytonstone . . . One man shot in stomach by an armed suspect."

The Colonel punched the roof of the car.

"Bastards. If I get my hands on 'em I'll fuckin' kill 'em!"

As the two armed robbers jumped into the Cortina, the unarmed man put the Securicor cash box in a travel bag in the back of the vehicle and got in. The driver knew from experience the "Old Bill" would use the main streets, so he decided to take the back roads and drive within the speed limit. As he indicated right, to turn into Grove Road from the High Road, two uniformed officers in a marked Rover 3500 V8 police car came flying past in the opposite direction, sirens blaring and blue lights flashing. The unarmed man looked over his shoulder, out of the rear window, and saw the brake lights of the police car come on as it skidded to a sudden halt and started to do a U-turn.

"They've seen us—put your foot down and get us out of here," he said calmly.

The driver pressed the accelerator hard and turned right across the path of an oncoming car, which swerved across the road and hit another vehicle head-on in the inside lane.

"This car's not as powerful as theirs. Maybe we should take a side street down here and bail out while they can't see us," the man with the shotgun suggested.

As the driver approached the junction with Mornington Road, he looked in his rear-view mirror and saw the police car in the distance.

“That ain’t an option, they’re closing on us.”

He drove straight across the junction into Woodville Road without stopping. An oncoming car clipped the rear of the Cortina, knocking the bumper off and causing the car to judder and swerve erratically. The driver gripped the steering wheel hard to maintain control, but the Cortina sideswiped a parked car and careered across the road. Left with no alternative, the driver hit the brakes hard and skidded across the road, toward another parked car. The four men lurched forward as the car came to an abrupt halt inches from another vehicle. The man with the Luger smashed his head on the front windscreen, causing a deep cut to his forehead, which began to bleed heavily through his stocking mask.

“Fuck dis for a game of soldiers,” he said in a broad Irish accent, and got out of the car.

“Get back in or I’ll go without you!” the driver shouted.

He was ignored, so he leaned over and pulled the front passenger door closed, then reversed to straighten the car up and drive off.

“Stop!” the unarmed man snarled.

He grabbed the shotgun from his colleague’s lap and opened the car door.

“Central 888 from MP, receiving, over?”

Kingston picked up the radio mike. “We’re a mile away at the Langthorne Park end of the High Road and nearly on scene, MP.”

“Received . . . I’m linking you up with Juliet 1, who are in pursuit of suspect vehicle Sierra Lima Mike 273 Romeo,” the radio operator replied.

“Listen up for their location, Colonel, and find it in the A–Z,” said Cam.

The calm voice of the PC in Juliet 1 came over the radio. “Suspect vehicle has turned right into Grove Road . . . heading towards junction with Mornington Road.”

“Got it. Cam,” the Colonel said, “Grove Road is the next right after Aylmer Road. Your best bet to catch up is a right into Lister Road, which leads into Mornington Road. I’ll tell you when Lister is coming up. Thanks, mate.”

Cam was now swerving in and out of the inside lane to the offside lane to overtake other vehicles. Jane was clutching the back of the driver’s seat with one hand and the door pull with the other, to stop herself from being flung about the back seat. Although the speed and manner of Cam’s driving scared her, the adrenaline rush to her body was strangely stimulating. She felt excited to be involved in the apprehension of four armed robbers on her first day with the Flying Squad.

The radio operator on Juliet 1 came back on the radio, the pitch of his voice becoming slightly higher as the pursuit progressed.

“Suspect vehicle accelerating. Forty . . . forty-five . . . fifty miles per hour. Jesus Christ, he’s gone straight across the junction without stopping.” There was a brief pause before the officer continued, “Suspect vehicle has been hit by another car and now stopped in Woodville Road.”

“We’re gonna get the bastards. Next right, Cam,” the Colonel said, and Cam turned into Lister Road.

“They’re probably about to bail out and do a runner,” Kingston surmised.

“They won’t get far if Teflon’s after them—he’s quicker than Allan Wells,” Cam replied, referring to the British and Commonwealth sprint champion.

“All units from Juliet 1 . . . a suspect is decamping from the front passenger seat toward the rear of the vehicle.”

“Lima 1 under attack: suspect armed and firing at us!”

The distress in his voice was obvious to everyone listening in. The sound of gunfire could be heard over the radio, as well as the impact thud of the bullet.

“I’ve been hit! I’ve been hit!” the radio operator cried out.

Next there was the sound of a loud bang, followed by screeching tires, then a sickening crunch of metal and breaking glass before the radio went dead. It was clear the police vehicle had come to an abrupt halt after a serious crash.

“That sounded like a shotgun going off,” Cam remarked, and the Colonel nodded.

“Let’s hope they’re both alive.” Kingston replied, but he feared the worst.