

CHAPTER ONE

Jane Tennison, recently promoted to sergeant, looked out of the passenger window of the CID car at the snow, which was falling too lightly to settle. It was 4.30 on a freezing Saturday morning in mid-February 1979 and recently the overnight temperatures had been sub-zero. The weather reports were calling it one of the coldest winters of the century.

Apart from a couple of minor incidents, Jane's CID night shift at Peckham had been remarkably uneventful, due to the bad weather. She looked at her watch: only another hour and a half to go before she finished her week of night duty and could get home to a warm bath, good sleep and some time off. She'd be back at Peckham on Monday for the day shift.

Detective Constable Brian Edwards, an old colleague from her Hackney days, had been her night duty partner throughout the week. He was so tall he had the driving seat pressed as far back as it could possibly go, but his knees were still almost touching the steering wheel.

'Can you turn the heating up?' she asked, as they drove along East Dulwich Road.

'It's already on full.' Edwards moved the slider to be sure, then glanced at Jane. 'I meant to say earlier: I like your new hairstyle. Sort of makes you look more mature.'

'Is that a polite way of saying I look older, Brian?' Jane asked.

'I was being complimentary! It goes with your smart clothes, makes you look more business like . . . Especially now you've been promoted.'

Jane was about to reply when Edwards suddenly slammed his foot on the car brake, bringing it to an abrupt halt. They both lunged forward, Edwards banging his chest against the steering wheel and Jane narrowly avoiding hitting her head on the windscreen.

‘What? What’s up?’ Jane asked, startled, staring at Edwards.

‘A rat . . . A bloody rat!’ He pointed at the middle of the road in front of them.

Illuminated by the car headlights was a massive rat, a piece of rotting meat between its sharp teeth. The rat suddenly darted off across the road and out of sight.

Edwards shook his head. ‘I hate rats. They give me the creeps.’

‘Well, that’s obvious! And yes, thank you, Brian, I’m OK – apart from nearly going through the windscreen.’

‘I’m sorry, Sarge. I didn’t mean to hit the brakes so suddenly.’

‘I’m just touched that you didn’t want to run the rat over, Brian,’ Jane said.

Edwards pointed over towards Peckham Rye to a pile of rubbish-filled plastic black bin and shopping bags. They were piled up five foot high and stretched over twenty feet along the side of the park. The stench of rotting rubbish slowly permeated its way into the stationary car.

‘It’s thanks to Prime Minister Callaghan and his waste-of-space labour government that the bin men and other public-sector workers are on strike,’ grumbled Edwards. ‘Everyone’s dumping their rotting rubbish in the parks and it’s attracting the rats. No wonder they’re calling it the “Winter of Disconnect”.’

‘It’s “Discontent”,’ Jane corrected him.

‘You’re quite right – there’s not much to be happy about! Mind you, if Maggie Thatcher wins the next election we might get a pay rise. She likes the Old Bill.’

Jane was trying hard not to laugh. ‘It’s the “Winter of Discontent”! It comes from Shakespeare’s *Richard III*: “Now is the winter of our discontent, made glorious summer by this sun of York . . .”’

Edwards looked sceptical. ‘Really?’

‘I studied *Richard III* for A level English.’

‘All that Shakespeare lingo is mumbo-jumbo to me. I left school at sixteen and joined the Metropolitan Police Cadets,’ Edwards said proudly.

‘I didn’t know you’d been a “Gadget”,’ said Jane, somewhat surprised. A ‘Gadget’ was affectionate force jargon for a cadet.

‘It was all blokes when I first joined the Gadgets,’ Edwards went on. ‘We lived in a big dormitory and got work experience on division alongside the regulars. It gave me a better understanding of police work than your average ex-civvy probationer who went to Hendon. No offence intended,’ he added hastily.

‘None taken. If I’d known what I wanted to do at sixteen I’d probably have joined the cadets – though my mother would likely have had a heart attack.’ Jane liked Edwards, but he wasn’t the brightest spark. He’d been transferred to various stations and hadn’t lasted long on the Flying Squad. In her estimation, he’d probably remain a DC for the rest of his career.

‘Tell you what: head back to the station so we can warm up with a hot drink and I’ll type up the night duty CID report,’ she said.

Edwards snorted. ‘That shouldn’t take long – we haven’t attended a crime scene or nicked anyone all night.’

Their banter was interrupted by a call over the radio. ‘Night duty CID receiving . . . over?’

Jane picked up the radio handset. ‘Yes, Detective Sergeant Tennison receiving. Go ahead . . . over.’

‘A fruit and veg man on his way to set up his market stall has found an unconscious woman in Bussey Alley. Couldn’t rouse her so he called 999. There’s an ambulance en route,’ the comms officer said.

‘That’s just off Rye Lane.’ Edwards made a sharp U-turn.

‘Yes, we’re free to attend and en route,’ Jane confirmed over the radio, switching on the car’s two-tone siren.

‘If she’s been out drinking she’s probably collapsed from hypothermia in this bloody weather. Or maybe she’s been mugged?’ suggested Edwards.

‘Let’s just hope she’s OK,’ Jane said.

Rye Lane ran between the High Street and Peckham Rye. In its heyday it had rivalled Oxford Street as a major shopping destination and was known as the ‘Golden Mile’. It was still a busy area,

with a large department store, Co-op and various small shops and market traders selling home-produced and ethnic goods from their stalls. During the 1970s, Peckham had gradually become one of the most deprived areas in Europe, with a notorious reputation for serious and violent crime, especially muggings, which were a daily occurrence.

Jane and Edwards arrived at the scene within two minutes. A man who looked to be in his mid-fifties was standing under the railway bridge at the entrance to Bussey Alley, frantically waving his hands. He was dressed in a dark-coloured thigh-length sheepskin coat, blue and white Millwall Football Club scarf and a peaked cap. Edwards pulled up beside him and opened the driver's window.

'I thought you might be the ambulance when I heard the siren.' The man crouched down to speak to them. 'Poor thing's just up there. She's lyin' face down and ain't moved. I put one of me stall tarpaulins over her to keep off the sleet and cold. I was hopin' she might warm up and come round . . .'

Jane put on her leather gloves, got the high-powered torch out of the glove box and picked up the portable Storno police radio.

'There's quite a lot of rubbish been dumped on one side of the alley, just up from where she is – be careful of the rats,' the market trader said as they got out of the car.

Jane grinned at Edwards. He hadn't looked too happy at the word 'rat'. 'You get the details,' she said. 'I'll check on the woman.'

She turned on the torch, lighting up the dingy alley. The narrow path ran alongside the railway line. In the arches underneath were small lockups where the market traders stored their stalls and goods. Jane walked at a brisk pace, until about forty feet along she could see the green and white striped tarpaulin. Crouching down, she lifted it back and shone the torch. The woman beneath was wearing a thigh-length blue PVC mac, with the collar up, covering the back of her neck.

Removing her right glove, Jane put her index and middle fingers together, and placed them on the side of the woman's neck, in the soft hollow area just beside the windpipe. There was no pulse and the woman's neck felt cold and clammy. Jane felt uneasy. She stood up and slowly shone her torch along the body, revealing dried blood smears on the back of the blue mac. The woman's knee-length pleated skirt was hitched up to her thighs, revealing suspenders and black stockings. Near the body the torch beam caught three small shirt buttons. Peering closely at one of them, Jane could see some white sewing thread and a tiny piece of torn shirt still attached. It looked as if the button had been ripped off, possibly in a struggle.

A little further up the alleyway Jane noticed a cheap and worn small handbag. Wearing her leather gloves, she picked it up and opened it carefully, looking for any ID. All she found was a lipstick, handkerchief, a small hairbrush and a plastic purse. Inside the purse were a few coins and one folded five-pound note. There were no house or car keys to be found. Jane placed a ten pence coin down on the spot where she'd found it; it would go in a property bag later to preserve it for fingerprints.

Next, Jane shone the torch around the body. It was strange: she couldn't see any blood on the pavement around or near the victim, or on the back of her head. She crouched down and slowly lifted the collar on the PVC mac back, revealing a knotted white cord around the victim's neck and hair.

Shocked, Jane got to her feet and pulled out the portable radio.

'WDS Tension to Peckham Control Room. Are you receiving? Over.' She spoke with confidence and authority, despite the fact she'd only been promoted and posted to Peckham a few weeks ago.

'Yes, go ahead, Sarge,' the comms officer replied.

'Cancel the ambulance. The woman in Bussey Alley appears to have been strangled. I've looked in a handbag for possible ID, but can't find any. I need uniform assistance to cordon off and man the

scene at Rye Lane, and the far end of Bussey Alley, which leads onto Copeland Road.'

'All received, Sarge. A mobile unit is en route to assist.'

Jane continued, 'Can you call DCI Moran at home and ask him to attend the scene? I'll also need the laboratory scene of crime DS here. Oh, and the divisional surgeon to officially pronounce life extinct . . . Over.'

The duty sergeant came on the radio. 'Looks like a quiet week just got busy, Jane. I'll call Moran and tell him you're on scene and dealing . . . Over.'

Jane ended the transmission and replaced the tarpaulin over the body to preserve it from the sleet that was still falling, although not as heavily. Then she walked back to Rye Lane.

Edwards was still speaking to the market trader and making notes in his pocketbook. As she approached him, she gave a little shake of her head to indicate this was more than a collapse in the street or hypothermia, then went to the rear of the CID car. Taking out a plastic police property bag, she placed the handbag inside it.

'Is she all right?' the trader asked.

Jane shook her head. 'I'm afraid she's dead, sir. Did you see anyone hanging about or acting suspiciously before you found her?'

The man looked shocked. 'No, no one . . . Oh, my – the poor thing. What's happened to her?'

'I don't know, sir, I'm afraid. Further investigation is needed.' Jane did not want to reveal more.

'Can I get me gear out the lockup and set up for business?'

'Sorry, not at the moment, but maybe in an hour or two,' she said. 'We'll need to take a more detailed statement off you later.'

Jane took Edwards to one side. By now their hair was soaking and their coats sodden.

'I take it you're thinking murder?' he whispered.

Jane nodded. 'Looks like she's been strangled with a cord. I've spoken with the duty sergeant who's informing DCI Moran. The

market man's up a bit early – does his account of how he found her sound above board to you?

'Yeah. His name's Charlie Dunn, he's sixty-two and he's been working the markets since he was twelve. He's always been an early bird. He said he's just been over to Spitalfields fruit and veg market to get fresh stock for the day. That's his white van under the railway bridge. He was unloading it to his archway lockup in the alley when he saw the woman on the pavement. I checked his van: it's full of fresh goods. He also showed me the purchase receipt for the fruit and veg and his market trader's licence. He sounded and acted legit to me.'

'Well, she's stone cold, so it looks like she's been dead a while, anyway.'

'Any ID on her?'

'Nothing in the handbag, not even keys. I haven't had a chance to check her coat pockets yet. I want to get both ends of the alleyway sealed off and manned by uniform first – all the market traders will be turning up soon and wanting access to their archway lockups.'

Edwards nodded and blew into his freezing hands. He didn't question her authoritative tone; on the contrary, he liked the fact WDS Tennison was taking responsibility for the crime scene.

The market trader went to his van and returned with a Thermos flask.

'Hot coffee? You can have it, if you want. I'm going to go home and come back later.'

'Thank you!' Edwards took the flask and poured some coffee into the removable cup and handed it to Jane. She took a mouthful, swallowed it, then let out a deep cough and held her chest.

'There's more brandy in that than coffee!'

Edwards promptly held the flask to his lips and took a large gulp. 'So there is,' he said with a grin.

'Put it in the car, Brian. We don't want Moran smelling booze on us – you know what he's like about drinking on duty.'

Edwards took another gulp, then put the flask in the back of the car and got a packet of lozenges out of his pocket.

“Be prepared”, as we used to say in the scouts. You see, I remember some famous quotes as well.’ Edwards took one for himself, then offered the packet to Jane.

‘What are they?’ Jane asked.

‘Fisherman’s Friend. They’ll hide the smell of the brandy and warm you up at the same time. I take them fishing with me when it’s cold like this.’

Jane reached into the pack, took out one of the small, light brown, oval-shaped lozenges, popped it in her mouth and immediately began taking deep breaths. The menthol flavour was so strong her eyes began watering, her nose started running and her throat tingled.

‘They taste awful!’ she exclaimed, spitting out the lozenge and placing it in a tissue to throw away later.

Just then, two police constables arrived in an Austin Allegro panda car. They got out and approached Jane.

‘What do you need us to do, Sarge?’

‘I need the Rye Lane and Copeland Road entrances to the alley sealed off with tape and one of you to stand guard at each end.’

‘Will do, Sarge.’ They both set off and then one of them turned back. ‘Oh, the duty sergeant said to tell you DCI Moran’s been informed and is on his way with DI Gibbs.’

Edwards looked at Jane. ‘I thought DI Gibbs wasn’t due to start at Peckham until Monday?’

Jane shrugged. ‘That’s what I thought as well.’

‘Maybe Moran wants him to run the investigation.’

‘Why? Moran’s the senior officer – he’s in charge of the CID at Peckham,’ Jane pointed out.

‘Don’t tell anyone I told you this,’ said Edwards, ‘but I was in the bog cubicle when I overheard Moran talking to the chief super. Moran said his wife was suffering from the “baby blues”. Apparently

the baby was crying a lot and he didn't know what to do for the best. The chief suggested he take some time off when DI Gibbs arrived – so maybe Moran's called Gibbs in early to familiarise himself with everything before he steps back to spend time at home.'

'I didn't know his wife had had a baby.'

'Yeah, about a month before you started at Peckham.' Edwards paused. 'I've not seen Spencer Gibbs since our Hackney days, but I heard he went off the rails a bit after Bradfield was killed in the explosion during that bank robbery by the Bentley family.'

Jane immediately became tight-lipped. 'I worked with Gibbs in the West End at Bow Street when I was a WDC and he was fine,' she lied.

At the time, Gibbs was drinking heavily to drown his sorrows, but managing to hide it from his other colleagues. She had always had a soft spot for Gibbs and didn't like to hear his name or reputation being tarnished. She suspected he must have overcome his demons, especially if he'd been posted to a busy station like Peckham. She also knew DCI Moran would have had to agree to Gibbs's transfer.

Jane and Edwards returned to the alley. Edwards went over to look at the body, whilst Jane picked up the coin she'd used as a marker and replaced it with the handbag, now inside the property bag. Lifting back the tarpaulin, they both checked to see if there was anything in the victim's pockets to help identify her, but there was nothing.

Edwards pulled up the left sleeve of the victim's PVC mac.

'She's wearing a watch,' he said. 'Looks like a cheap catalogue one; glass is scratched and the strap's worn. There's no engagement or wedding ring – they might have been stolen?'

'Possibly,' said Jane, 'but there's no white patch or indentation on the skin to suggest she was wearing either. Plus the handbag was left behind with money in it.' She got the radio out of her coat pocket and handed it to Edwards.

‘Call the station and ask them to check Missing Persons for anyone matching our victim’s description. I’ll do a search further up the alley towards Copeland Road to see if there’s anything else that may be of significance to the investigation.’

Edwards hesitated. ‘What should I tell Comms?’

Jane gave a small sigh. ‘Brian, just look at the victim and describe her when you speak to them, OK?’

‘Oh, yeah, OK, I see.’

Jane watched Edwards disappear down the alleyway, leaving her alone with the body. She replaced the tarpaulin on the body, then searched the rest of the alleyway, but found nothing of interest. It was still dark and now that the initial adrenalin rush was wearing off she was even more aware of the cold. She stamped her feet and flapped her arms across her chest to generate some warmth. A sudden noise made her jump, and swinging her torch around revealed a rat scurrying from a pile of rubbish that had been left rotting in front of one of the arches. She thought about the woman lying on the ground in front of her. What had she been doing here? Had she been on her own, like Jane was now, or was her killer someone she knew?

Footsteps approached from the Rye Lane end of the alley. Jane looked up, shone her torch and saw Detective Sergeant Paul Lawrence from the forensics lab approaching. He was accompanied by a younger man in civilian clothes. Even if she hadn’t seen Paul’s face, she’d have guessed it was him. As ever, he was dressed in his trademark thigh-length green Barbour wax jacket and trilby hat. Paul Lawrence was renowned as the best crime scene investigator in the Met. He had an uncanny ability to think laterally and piece things together bit by bit. Always patient and willing to explain what he was doing, Jane had worked with him several times and felt indebted to him for all that he had taught her. Now she felt relief at the sight of his familiar figure.

Paul greeted Jane with a friendly smile. ‘I hear it’s Detective Sergeant Tennison now! Well done and well deserved, Jane. As we’re

the same rank, you can officially call me Paul.' He laughed. She had always called him Paul when not in the company of senior officers.

'You were quick,' Jane said, smiling back at him.

'I'd already been in the lab typing up a report from an earlier incident in Brixton,' he said. 'Victim stabbed during a fight over a drugs deal. Turned out the injury wasn't as serious as first thought and the victim didn't want to assist us anyway, so there wasn't much to do. No doubt there'll be a revenge attack within a few days.'

Jane explained the scene to him, starting with the market trader's account and exactly what she and DC Edwards had done since their arrival at Bussey Alley. She also told him about the handbag and buttons.

'Good work, Jane. Minimal disturbance of the scene and preservation of evidence is what I like to see and hear. Peter here is the scene of crime officer assisting me. He'll photograph everything as is, then we can get the victim onto a body sheet for a closer look underneath.'

The SOCO set to work taking the initial scene photographs of the alleyway and body. He stopped when the divisional surgeon appeared. Although it was obvious, the doctor still checked for a pulse on her neck, before officially pronouncing she was dead. As the doctor was getting to his feet, Detective Chief Inspector Moran arrived, carrying a large red hard-backed A4 notebook, and holding up an enormous black umbrella. Dressed smartly in a grey pin-stripe suit, crisp white shirt, red tie, black brogues and thigh-length beige camel coat, he nonetheless looked bad-tempered and tired.

'So, DS Tennison,' he said. 'What's happened so far?' He sounded tetchy.

Jane had worked with DCI Nick Moran when she was a WPC at Hackney in the early seventies, and he was a detective inspector. She knew to keep her summary brief and to the point, so as not to irritate her superior.

‘The victim was found in here by a market trader. Edwards spoke with him and is satisfied he wasn’t involved. I called DS Lawrence to the scene and the divisional surgeon, who’s pronounced life extinct. From my cursory examination it appears she’s been strangled. I haven’t found anything to help us identify who she is, though a handbag was nearby, which I checked—’

Moran frowned. ‘I had expected you to just contain the scene until I arrived. It’s my job to decide who should be called and what action should be taken. You should have left the handbag in situ as well. It’s not good to disturb a scene.’

Jane felt Moran was being a bit harsh. She, like everyone else, was working in the freezing cold and soaking wet. He should have realised she was trying to obtain the best evidence and identify the victim. She thought about saying as much, but wondering if his mood was connected to a sleepless night coping with the new baby, decided to say nothing.

Lawrence looked at Moran. ‘It’s standard procedure for a lab sergeant to be called to all suspicious deaths and murder scenes at the earliest opportunity. Preserving the handbag for fingerprints showed good crime scene awareness by WDS Tennison.’

Moran ignored Lawrence and spoke to the divisional surgeon. ‘Can you give me an estimation of time of death?’

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. ‘There are many variables due to the weather conditions, breeze in the alley and other factors, which can affect body temperature. It’s hard to be accurate, but possibly just before or after midnight.’

Just about managing to keep his umbrella up, Moran wrote in his notebook. Jane could see Lawrence was not pleased. She knew his view was that divisional surgeons were not experienced in forensic pathology or time of death, and should confine their role to nothing more than pronouncing life extinct.

Lawrence looked at Moran. ‘Excuse me, sir, but now the sleet’s stopped, it would be a good idea to get a pathologist down to see the body in situ. He can check the rigor mortis and body temp—’

Moran interrupted him, shutting his umbrella. ‘The weather’s constantly changing, and more snow is forecast, so I want the body bagged, tagged and off to the mortuary as a priority for a post-mortem later this morning.’

Lawrence sighed, but he didn’t want to get into an argument about it. Opening his forensic kit, he removed a white body sheet and latex gloves. Using some tweezers, he picked up the three buttons beside the body and placed them in a plastic property bag. Then he unfolded the body sheet and placed it on the ground next to the body.

Lawrence looked up at Jane and Edwards. ‘I want to turn her over onto the body bag. If one of you can grab her feet, I’ll work the shoulders. Just go slow and gentle.’

Jane took a step forward, but Edwards said he’d do it and grabbed a pair of protective gloves from Lawrence’s forensic bag. As they turned the body over, Jane shone her torch on the victim, lighting up her contorted face and the rope around her neck. The strangulation had caused her tongue to protrude and her eyes were puffed and swollen. The victim wore little make-up, and looked to be in her late twenties to early thirties. She was medium height, with brown shoulder-length hair parted down the middle, and was wearing a pink blouse, which was torn, and her bra was pulled up over her breasts.

Lawrence pointed to the pavement area where the body had been lying. ‘It’s dry underneath her,’ he observed.

‘The sleet started about three a.m.,’ Jane said.

‘Then it’s reasonable to assume she was killed before then.’

‘How can you be sure it was three a.m., Tennison?’ Moran snapped, tapping the ground with the steel tip of his umbrella.

Jane got her notebook out of her inside coat pocket. ‘We’d just stopped a vehicle and I recorded the details and time in my notebook. I remember the sleet starting as I was taking the driver’s details. Let me find it . . .’ She flicked through the pages. ‘Ah – here it is. Time of stop, 3.03 a.m.’

‘Well, I want it checked out with the London weather office in case it becomes critical to the case,’ said Moran. ‘The body is a stone’s throw from Peckham Rye railway station. She might have been out late Friday night and attacked in the alleyway if using it as a cut-through to Copeland Road.’

Lawrence shrugged. ‘She might have thrown it away, but there was no train ticket on her. She may have been walking from the Copeland Road end and heading towards Rye Lane. The fact there were no house keys on her could suggest she was returning home and expecting someone to let her in.’

Moran nodded. ‘We can put out a press appeal with the victim’s description and ask if anyone recalls seeing her on the train Friday night. Also we can run a check with Missing Persons for anyone matching her description.’

‘Already in hand, sir,’ Jane said, without receiving so much as a thank you back. She glanced at Edwards, reminding herself to check exactly what description he had given Missing Persons.

Lawrence crouched down next to the body, looked at Moran and pointed to the victim’s torn blouse. ‘She may have been sexually assaulted as well. There’s four buttons missing on her blouse. I only recovered three beside the body and there’s no more underneath her.’

Jane raised her finger. ‘I had a good look up and down the alley before DS Lawrence arrived and didn’t find any more buttons.’

Lawrence stood up. ‘Best we check the soles of our shoes in case one of us has accidentally trodden on it and it’s got lodged in the tread. It won’t be the first time something has unintentionally been removed from a crime scene in that way. When you see the market trader who found her, check his footwear as well.’

Everyone checked the soles of their shoes.

‘Someone tread in dog shit?’

Jane turned around. Spencer Gibbs was wearing a trendy full-length brown sheepskin coat. His hands were deep in the pockets,

pulling the unbuttoned coat around his front to keep out the cold. He had a big smile and Jane could instantly see he was looking a lot better now than when she last saw him, almost younger, in fact. His hair had changed as well. It no longer stood up like a wire brush, but was combed back straight from his forehead.

Gibbs's smile widened when he saw Jane.

She held out her hand. 'Hello, Spence. You look well.'

'Jane Tennison – long time no see!' He pulled her forward to give her a hug.

Jane noticed that DCI Moran didn't seem too impressed and wondered if Gibbs's jovial mood was due to drink, although she couldn't smell any alcohol.

Gibbs walked over to Moran. 'Good morning, sir,' he said, and they shook hands. Gibbs's coat fell open to reveal a blue frilled shirt, tight leather trousers, blue suede shoes and a large 'Peace' sign medallion. Everyone went quiet.

Moran frowned. 'So you really think that sort of outfit is suitable for a senior detective, DI Gibbs?'

'Sorry, guv. I did a gig in Camden town with my band last night, then stayed at my girlfriend Tamara's pad. Thankfully I'd added her phone number to my out of hours contact list at the old station. I didn't want to waste time by going home to change when I got the call-out, so after a quick dash of Adidas aftershave, I came straight to the scene by cab.'

Gibbs's looks and patter had become even more 'rock and roll' than they used to be.

'Your band do glam rock, guv?' Edwards asked, trying not to laugh at Gibbs's dress sense.

'No, we're more progressive . . . Serious rock and roll. Girlfriend's in the band as well. Looks like Debbie Harry – she's a real stunner.'

'Well, you look like a real pooffer in that gear,' Edwards replied, earning a playful slap on the back of his head from Gibbs.

Moran coughed loudly to get Gibbs's and Edwards' attention. 'Show a bit of respect, you two. We're supposed to be investigating a murder, not discussing bloody music!'

'Sorry, sir,' they said in unison.

'What have you go so far?' Gibbs asked Moran.

Moran frowned. 'A murder, obviously. I want you to organise house-to-house enquiries, DI Gibbs. Start with any flats in Rye Lane, and all the premises in Copeland Road. Tennison and Edwards can return to the station to write up their night duty report, then go off duty.'

Jane knew that organising house-to-house was normally a DS's responsibility and she was keen to be part of the investigation team.

'I should have the weekend off, sir, but I'm happy to remain on duty and assist the investigation. You've got a DS on sick leave, one at the Old Bailey on a big trial starting Monday, and one taking over nights from me tonight. House-to-house is normally a DS's role, so I could—'

Moran interrupted her. 'I'm aware of all that, Tennison. If you're willing to work for normal pay and days off in lieu, as opposed to costly overtime, then you can head up the house-to-house. Edwards, same rule goes for you if you want to be on the investigation.'

Jane and Edwards agreed. Earning extra money was a bonus, but never a big deal when it came to a murder inquiry; it was more about being part of a challenging case.

Moran closed his notebook and put his pen back in his jacket pocket. 'Right, DI Gibbs will be my number two on this investigation. We'll head back to the station. I'll get more detectives in from the surrounding stations and contact the coroner's officer to arrange a post-mortem later this morning. Tennison – you head back to the station with Edwards. Do your night duty report first, then prepare the house-to-house documents and questionnaires. You can get uniform to assist in the house-to-house, as well as

the Special Patrol Group. DS Lawrence and the SOCO can finish bagging the body and examining the scene. If possible, I'd like to know who the dead woman is before the post-mortem.'

'I'll take a set of fingerprints while I'm here,' Lawrence said. 'Uniform can take them straight up the Yard for Fingerprint Bureau to check. If she's got a criminal record they'll identify her.'

Moran nodded his approval. As he walked off with Gibbs, Edwards turned to Jane.

'He could have poked someone's eye out the way he was swinging that umbrella! I reckon he's in a mood because the baby kept him up, and his wife gave him a hard time about being called in.'

Jane said nothing, but she suspected there was some truth in Edwards' comment. Just as she was about to follow him back to the CID car, Paul called out: 'Can you grab the large roll of Sellotape from my forensic bag?'

He and the SOCO had wrapped the body in the white body sheet and twisted each end tight. Jane knew the procedure and helped by rolling the tape several times around each twisted end to secure them. She always found it surreal that a bagged dead body ended up looking like an enormous Christmas cracker.

'Thanks, Jane.' As the SOCO moved away, Lawrence asked, 'Is Moran always so tetchy these days?'

'Wife had a baby recently; sleepless nights are probably getting to him.'

'Well, he was wrong to have a go at you and ignore my advice. He should have called out a pathologist.'

'He was probably just asserting his authority to let us know he's boss.'

'He might be in charge, but he's spent most of his career on various squads like vice, so he's not had a lot of experience in major crime or murder investigations.'

'He did solve the Hackney rapes and murder committed by Peter Allard, the cab driver,' Jane pointed out.

‘Yes – but I also recall he was accused of faking Allard’s confession. If it hadn’t been for your dogged work in that case, he wouldn’t have solved it. He showered himself in glory because of you, Jane. He seems to have forgotten that you stuck your neck out for him that night in the park acting as a decoy. You were the one that got attacked by Allard, not him.’

‘I know, Paul, but I think he’s mellowed since our Hackney days. Apart from this morning he’s been OK towards me.’

‘Well, I’d be wary of him, Jane,’ warned Lawrence. ‘He likes to think he knows best, which puts not only the investigation at risk, but the officers on it as well.’

CHAPTER TWO

After leaving the murder scene, Jane returned to the station to prepare for the house-to-house. It was 10 a.m. and she was in the canteen with DC Edwards and DI Gibbs, who was still dressed in his rock band gear and looked like someone working undercover in Carnaby Street. She was ready to brief thirty detectives and uniforms – male and female officers – who had been called in to assist with the house-to-house from local stations. Placing thirty blue A4-size folders down on the table, she waited for Gibbs to address the officers first.

‘H-to-H is your show, so tell ’em what you want done,’ Gibbs whispered to her, sitting on the edge of a canteen table.

It was the first time she’d briefed fellow officers as a DS, but despite feeling nervous, she spoke in a loud, firm voice.

‘OK, listen up, please. I’m Detective Sergeant Jane Tennison, in charge of the house-to-house enquiries on this murder investigation. For those of you who are not aware, the body of a white female was found in Bussey Alley at four thirty this morning by a local market trader. It appears she’s been strangled and possibly sexually assaulted . . . Misper enquiries have so far proved negative and it is imperative that we identify her as soon as possible. Thorough and detailed house-to-house enquiries are critical to the investigation.’ Jane paused. The room was silent, then an elderly PC spoke.

‘You really a DS, love?’ he asked in a condescending manner.

Jane was annoyed at being called ‘love’, but before she could reply, Gibbs stood up and pointed at the officer.

‘Yes, she is, and if you don’t like it then I suggest you bugger off back to your station and tell them DI Gibbs kicked you off house-to-house because of your attitude.’

There were raised eyebrows around the room. Due to his unusual attire, nobody had suspected that Gibbs was a DI.

‘I’m sorry, sir,’ the offending officer replied.

Jane was irritated that Gibbs had spoken for her. ‘And you can call me Sergeant or Sarge,’ she said, looking at the PC, pausing briefly before continuing.

‘Each folder contains a description of the victim. Every resident must be asked if they know or had seen anyone matching that description in the last twenty-four hours. I want full background details of all the occupants in every residence. There is also a questionnaire about their movements and whereabouts on Friday and the early hours of Saturday morning.’ Jane pointed to the blue folders on the table in front of her. ‘Help yourselves to a folder. Each one has the street and premises numbers to be visited on the front. If you feel that anyone is lying, hiding something or being evasive, then inform myself, DI Gibbs or one of the Murder Squad. Please leave the completed forms and questionnaires in the CID office, which is being used as the murder incident room. I have marked up a desk tray as: “In, completed H-to-H”.’

As the officers stepped forward and helped themselves to a folder, Gibbs leant towards Jane.

‘Well done. Good briefing.’

‘Thanks. I could have handled that PC myself, you know, so next time, please don’t . . .’

‘Yeah, I know you could, Tennison. It’s just that those bolshie “wooden tops” really get up my nose, especially the old sweats who try to impress the crowd.’

‘I’ll keep an eye on him while I’m out monitoring the house-to-house.’

‘Edwards can do that. Post-mortem’s set for eleven a.m. and you need to be there.’

‘Will Moran be OK about that?’

‘You were first on scene, so officially you have to ID the body to the pathologist. I’ve not had much dealing with Moran before,

other than briefly on that Allard case. Is he always so grumpy and po-faced?’

‘He and his wife are struggling with a new baby, keeping them up a lot. Edwards thought Moran might take some time off and let you run the investigation.’

Gibbs laughed. ‘He probably gets more peace and quiet here . . . Shitty nappies and sleepless nights don’t appeal to me either. You must be knackered yourself, what with being up all night?’

‘No, I’m fine. I’ll finish writing up my night duty report and give you a lift to the mortuary.’

‘I’m waiting for my girlfriend to bring me in a change of clothes from my flat, so I’ll meet you there,’ Gibbs said, walking away.

Moran, Jane and Lawrence were in Ladywell mortuary, Lewisham, with Professor Dean Martin, the forensic pathologist. Lawrence knew Martin well, having worked with him on countless murder investigations. Jane had met him on previous murders she had been involved in.

Dean Martin made the usual crack about his name to the audience. ‘As good looking as I am, I’m not to be confused with the Rat Pack crooner.’

As Jane watched him put on his green mortuary gown and black wellington boots, she thought that he had put on weight since she last saw him. He was now in his late fifties, the top of his head was bald with thinning grey hair at the sides, his half-moon glasses were perched unsteadily on the end of his bulbous red nose, his cheeks had become ruddier through alcohol consumption and he was walking with a limp.

‘Have you hurt your leg, Professor?’ Moran enquired.

‘No, a build-up of uric acid crystals in my foot is giving me hell,’ Martin replied gruffly.

Moran looked confused, but Lawrence whispered an explanation. ‘The prof has gout due to too much booze . . . It’s extremely painful so he may be crotchety throughout the PM.’

The victim's body was already laid out on the steel mortuary slab, covered with a white sheet. Moran looked at his watch.

'Where is DI Gibbs? It's nearly ten past and I told him to be here for eleven.'

'His girlfriend turned up with some more suitable clothes, so he went to the men's locker room to get changed before coming here.' Jane thought it was strange that Moran wanted Gibbs to be at the PM. Normally only one senior officer attended, whilst the other looked after the incident room and made sure all the necessary actions were being undertaken.

The mortuary door suddenly flew open.

'Sorry I'm late.' Gibbs sauntered in wearing a very fashionable tan-coloured tweed suit, matching waistcoat, white button-down shirt, matching wool tie and brown slip-on boots.

There was a stunned silence as everyone took in what Gibbs was wearing.

'You forgot your deer stalker hat, Sherlock,' Lawrence remarked.

Gibbs smiled. 'I'll have you know that it's herringbone tweed and made to measure from a shop in Knightsbridge . . . Admittedly it's a second-hand shop where high society locals take their unwanted clothes, but nevertheless, great quality and a bargain.'

Martin laughed. 'It's probably a dead man's cast-off.'

'That may be so, Prof, but it's better than the creased, shiny-arsed, grey pin-striped suits the rest of CID wear . . .' Gibbs replied, pulling his tweed jacket forward by the lapels to accentuate how classy he thought he looked. Gibbs saw Lawrence nudge his head towards Moran, who was wearing a grey pin-stripe suit.

'Of course you're the exception to that statement, guv,' Gibbs said sheepishly, in an effort to cover his faux pas.

Moran shook his head. 'It's one extreme to the other where your dress sense is concerned, Spencer. Now, if you don't mind, I'm sure the professor would like to get on with the post-mortem.'

Martin pulled the white sheet from the body, in the manner of a magician working an audience when they reveal something during a conjuring act.

‘Do we have a name for this poor girl?’ Martin asked.

‘No. A dead set of fingerprints was taken to the Yard. No match so far, but they’re still working on them,’ Lawrence replied.

‘Unfortunately the mortician is unwell, though I suspect it’s an excuse as he was out on the booze last night. DS Lawrence, I’d be grateful if you would assist me as you have a great deal of experience in mortuary procedure.’

Lawrence gowned up and asked Jane to list and package the exhibits, which she was happy to do. She identified the body as the one in Bussey Alley and confirmed that, as yet, Missing Persons and house-to-house enquiries had still not revealed who she was. Moran added that the divisional surgeon had stated time of death was just before or after midnight. Jane saw Lawrence discreetly raise his eyebrows at Moran’s remark, as Martin lowered his head and glared over the brim of his half-moon glasses at Moran.

‘A divisional surgeon should only pronounce life extinct; comments on injuries or time of death are *not* their domain. If I’d been called to the scene, I could have taken a rectal body temperature, checked hypostasis, state of rigor mortis, whether it was present, and or affected by weather conditions – all critical factors in determining a reasonably accurate time of death.’

Moran looked embarrassed. By his silence he clearly knew he should have heeded DS Lawrence’s advice at the scene. Tactfully not looking at Moran, Lawrence took some photographs of the victim before she was undressed and her clothing put in exhibit bags for forensic examination at the lab. Her blue mac, pink blouse and bra were removed first. Lawrence remarked that the clothes didn’t look expensive and the blouse had a Littlewoods label inside the collar. Jane double-checked the blouse and confirmed that, although they had only recovered three buttons, four had come off, so one

was still missing. She confirmed that the market trader's boots had been checked by a DC when he came in to make a statement, but no joy. As Lawrence removed the victim's pleated skirt, they could all see that she wasn't wearing any underwear.

'Her underwear may have been taken by the killer, as some sort of sick souvenir,' Jane suggested.

'Or she may not have been wearing any,' Gibbs added politely.

'Either of you could be right. However, there are no scratch marks around or below the hip area or upper thigh to suggest they were forcibly removed.'

Lawrence took out the stockings and suspender belt, then handed them to Jane, who had a closer look.

'There's not a tear or ladder on either of these stockings, which seems strange if she was attacked in the alleyway and forced to the ground.'

Martin looked closely at the victim's hands, knees and face. 'Her hands are quite calloused – possibly from some form of manual labour. I can't see any abrasions consistent with being forced face down onto the pavement, or dragged along it. That's not to say she landed on her back in the first instance, but we'll get to that later. There are faint signs of old stretch marks on her tummy, so I'd say your victim has given birth, but not recently.'

Martin took swabs from the victim's mouth, vagina and anus to be tested for semen.

'Has she been sexually assaulted?' Moran asked, pointing to some marks on her inner right thigh.

'The abrasions on the thigh are linear scratch marks, but there's no bruising to her vaginal or anal area. The abrasions are parchment-like, the surface is dry and there are no signs of bleeding or bruising, so in my opinion the scratches occurred after death.'

'Sorry, but I'm not quite sure what you mean, Professor?' Moran said.

'Her assailant may have committed necrophilia and that's why there's no vaginal bruising.'

There was silence in the room as everyone felt sickened at the thought of such a depraved act. Jane was used to attending post-mortems, and although hardened to some of the horrific sights she saw, she always felt sad for the victims and the fear and pain they must have suffered at the hands of their killers.

At Martin's request, Lawrence helped him lift the victim's head and shoulders to sit her upright, so he could get a look at her back and the knotted end of the ligature on the nape of her neck. Martin pointed to a circular-shaped bruise in the middle of the victim's back.

'This is not uncommon when someone is on the floor being strangled from behind: the killer kneels on the victim to get a better grip on the rope and stop him or her getting up or struggling. However, if it happened like this, and she struggled, I'd expect friction abrasions on her forehead or nose from contact with the pavement – but as you can see, there are none, which is very unusual.'

Lying the victim back down, Martin asked Lawrence for a small scalpel. Gibbs stepped back, thinking Martin was about to cut the body open for an internal examination. The last thing he wanted was anything splashing onto his tweed suit.

Martin placed the scalpel blade on the rope. 'I don't want to disturb the ligature knot, so I will cut through the rope at the front.' He took his time, slowly cutting through the cord before removing and handing it to Lawrence.

The deep black and blue bruising imprint of the rope around the victim's neck was now visible.

'Considerable force must have been used to strangle her,' Martin muttered.

Lawrence placed the cord down, on top of a property bag, for closer examination.

'It's not hemp, so probably cotton or synthetic. About one inch thick and slightly frayed at both ends, as if it has been cut with scissors or a sharp knife, but I'll get a scientist to look at it,' Lawrence said.

‘It’s tied in a form of slip knot,’ Jane observed, wondering if the victim was attacked from behind in the alleyway.

‘Like a hangman’s noose,’ Gibbs remarked.

Moran leant over. ‘Looks like a sailor’s slip knot to me.’

Gibbs and Jane turned to Moran.

‘You’d know, would you, guv?’ Gibbs remarked.

‘Yes. I’ve been in the Met sailing club for ten years, so I know a bit about knots and loops. I’d say that if you untied the knot and laid it out flat, the length would be about three foot.’

Gibbs was impressed. ‘Good call, guv. Might help when we get a suspect, especially if he’s into sailing.’

Moran shrugged. ‘Possibly, Spence, but rock climbers, and even scouts, use the same or similar sorts of knots.’

Lawrence was deep in thought and didn’t hear Martin ask him for a large scalpel.

‘Is something troubling you, DS Lawrence?’

‘It’s the lack of abrasive injuries on the front of the victim, plus there was some smeared blood on the back of her coat, which may have come from the suspect, yet there were no drops of blood on the pavement at the scene, which is making me wonder if she was murdered elsewhere and her body dumped in Bussey Alley?’

Jane always respected Lawrence’s eye for detail.

‘Very astute, DS Lawrence,’ Martin responded. ‘The settling of blood on the front of the body, known as lividity, is consistent with the position she was found in. However, lividity begins to work through a deceased within thirty minutes of their heart stopping and can last up to twelve hours. Only up to the first six hours after death can lividity be altered by moving the body, but—’

‘So she could have been murdered elsewhere and moved,’ Moran impatiently interrupted.

Martin looked over the rim of his glasses, the habit that inevitably preceded a curt reply. ‘I wasn’t called to the scene, DCI Moran, to examine the lividity on her body in situ, so in answer to your

question, I don't know for certain, but she could have been. And before you ask, I will give an estimation of time of death after *my* post-mortem.'

Moran looked annoyed by the professor's tone of voice. Martin was often blunt and to the point, but Jane felt he was being particularly condescending, especially as Moran was the senior officer in the room and in charge of the investigation.

Martin continuously made notes throughout the post-mortem and spent the next two hours dissecting the body, removing the internal organs and brain, weighing them and taking samples of blood and urine to test for drugs and alcohol. When he'd finished, he put down his clipboard of notes and removed his gown.

'What was the state of rigor on the body at the scene?' Martin asked Lawrence.

'Pretty stiff, but not fully when we lifted her onto the body bag.'

'Right, the rigor was fully stiff when we started at eleven, the stomach contents contained some semi-digested food particles, which is common in people who died two to six hours after a meal. This is in no way conclusive, but assuming she last ate between twelve and two, that gives a possible time of death range anywhere between two p.m. and eight p.m., which suggests that your thoughts about the body being murdered elsewhere and dumped in Bussey Alley are correct, DS Lawrence.'

'If that occurred, I am somewhat confused about the number of buttons we discovered at the site where we found the body. We found three buttons and, on checking both her overcoat and the torn blouse, it appears there was a fourth button that was not recovered.' Lawrence said.

Jane nodded. 'The missing button could possibly have been left at the actual scene of the murder, unless she lost it before.'

Lawrence glanced towards her but no one else seemed interested.

'The alleyway would be regularly used by the public and train commuters on a Friday night, yet the body wasn't found until early

Saturday morning. Makes sense he'd dump her after midnight when there's less likely to be anyone about,' Gibbs added.

'He may have used a car and travelled some distance, or the murder scene may be in nearby premises and he carried her out to Bussey Alley,' Jane stated, unintentionally yawning as she looked at the mortuary clock. It was just after 2 p.m.; she'd had no sleep for nearly twenty-four hours and was beginning to feel nauseous.

'Might be a good idea if Jane went home and got some sleep,' Lawrence suggested to Moran.

Moran shook his head. 'Not at the moment. Our priority is finding out who our victim is, as it may well lead us to her killer and the scene of her murder. House-to-house is critical to this investigation. I want the forms that have been completed so far checked for anything that might assist or need urgent attention. A DCS will be appointed to oversee the case by Monday. I'd like unanswered questions resolved by then – even better, her killer in custody.' Moran closed his notebook and left the room.

Jane returned to Peckham with DI Gibbs. The three-storey red-bricked Victorian station was like Hackney, but much bigger, with a warren of small overcrowded offices. The stone-flagged floors, metal staircases and high windows cast a dull greyness inside the building. Even the array of wanted and missing persons' posters looked well worn, like parts of the building itself that needed repair and a lick of paint.

The large green corkboard on the wall in the far corner of the CID office was now covered with photographs the SOCO had taken in Bussey Alley. The victim's facial description was written up with an approximate age of late twenties to early thirties. Next to her name, address and time of death were large question marks. Gibbs picked up a black felt-tip pen and started to write down Professor Martin's observations re the time of death span and the fact the body was dumped. He also wrote: *Murder scene unknown.*

DC Edwards sat at the indexer's desk, looking through some of the house-to-house forms. He looked up at Jane.

'Hope you don't mind, Sarge, but I've been checking the completed H-to-H forms the uniforms brought in. Being a Saturday morning, a lot of people were at home . . .'

'Which is where I wish I was right now, Brian.'

Edwards lifted a pile of the forms. 'Me too . . . Anyway, I've been through half of these questionnaires, but so far there's nothing to help us identify the victim. A few people had friends, or knew other residents, who were similar in description, but they were all checked out and none of them are missing or unaccounted for.'

'Thanks, Brian. I'll have to go through them anyway and sign each one off as correctly completed.'

'No, you don't,' Gibbs said.

'Yes, I do . . . Not that I don't trust Brian's abilities, but you heard what Moran said at the mortuary. If something gets missed, I'm the one Moran will have a go at, not you or Edwards.'

'You don't have to because I will check them. You're so tired you could easily miss something . . . Go on, the pair of you – scoot and get some sleep. Give me your home numbers, then if anything important comes in I'll ring you so you won't miss out.'

Jane was about to leave when the uniform PC who had called her 'love' at the earlier briefing walked in with more completed house-to-house forms. He asked her if she'd like them or should he put them in the appropriate tray. Jane held out her hand to take them but Gibbs stepped forward and took them from the officer.

'Anything of interest for me?' Gibbs asked the PC.

Jane frowned at Gibbs, feeling that he was undermining her. 'Or that needs my urgent attention as the house-to-house supervisor?' she said.

The officer took out his notebook from his jacket breast pocket and glanced at them both. 'There was a light blue 1976 Austin

Allegro outside 86 to 96 Copeland Road – they’re a two-storey block of flats that I visited on my house-to-house enquiries—’

‘And?’ Jane interrupted, wanting him to get to the point.

‘The vehicle looked a bit out of place as—’

Gibbs looked bemused as he interrupted, ‘Allegros are one of the most common cars on the road. It may have missed your attention but virtually every police force in the country uses them because they’re so cheap to run.’

‘It was a top-end Allegro, 1976 Vanden Plas Princess 1500 automatic, deep-pile carpet, leather seats and walnut trims – all in pristine condition. I asked in the flats and no one owned it or had seen it there before. Admittedly it did have a flat front offside tyre with a screw stuck in it.’

Jane wondered if the PC was trying to impress them in an effort to make up for his earlier behaviour towards her.

‘Have you recorded the details about the Allegro in your house-to-house folder?’ Gibbs asked, hoping he’d say ‘yes’ and so wouldn’t have to listen to the matter-of-fact, boring tone of the officer anymore.

‘No, I couldn’t find an owner for it in the flats, so I wrote my observations down in my pocketbook. The vehicle’s reg is tango, lima, yankee, two, two, five, romeo. All the doors and boot were locked and it did not appear to have been hotwired. The radio was missing and the connecting wires were exposed, so it may have been nicked.’

Jane took a deep breath. ‘Have you done a computer check on the car to see who the owner is, or if it’s been reported lost or stolen?’

‘Not yet. Wanted to report it to you first before any further action. I’ll nip downstairs and do that right now,’ the PC said and started to walk off.

Jane tried not to smile as Gibbs clenched his fists towards her, indicating his frustration with the PC.

‘No, no, we’ll do the checks and make further enquiries about the car. Thanks for informing us – very diligent of you,’ Jane said, forcing a smile.

The PC handed Jane the copy of his notes and left.

‘I’ll pop over to Copeland Road and have a look at the vehicle on my way home, see if there’s anything untoward and get it brought in if necessary.’

Gibbs shook his head and took the notes. ‘You get off home. I’ll make further enquiries, but looks like the PC, as irritating as he is, did a good job checking it out. If it’s got a flat tyre, that may be why it was left there. We should also check into the missing radio because, again, it doesn’t quite make any sense if it was stolen and then the thief locked up the car.’

Jane struggled to concentrate whilst driving home along the Marylebone Road. She pulled up at the red traffic lights by the junction with Gloucester Place and nodded off whilst waiting for them to turn green. The sound of repeated beeping of the car horn behind made her muscles tense as she jerked awake. For a split second she wondered where she was, then raised her hand in an apologetic manner and pulled away, turning right into Gloucester Place, then into Melcombe Street, where she lived in a top-floor flat of a three-storey Victorian building. Thankfully, being a weekend, the parking restrictions were lifted so she didn’t have to drive up and down the back streets looking for a residents’ space.

Jane had grown to like Melcombe Street, with its narrow three-storey white stucco-fronted houses and its proximity to Regent’s Park, where she regularly jogged. Baker Street tube was virtually on her doorstep and was handy for getting into central London, shopping in Oxford Street or a night out in the West End. It wasn’t so great for getting to Peckham, however, which is why she used her car to travel to and from work. Spotting a space close to her flat, Jane parked the car, got out and locked it. Her first car had been a second-hand VW that was an unfortunate bright yellow, but she had now traded it in for a newer version, which the team had jokingly nicknamed ‘the Jaffa Cake’ due to its orange body and black roof.

As Jane headed for her flat, she contemplated popping into the Spar shop to buy something to cook for supper, but she was so tired that she decided she would just heat up some leftovers.

She smiled to herself as she stopped to catch her breath on the stairs. She was fit and could normally manage the three flights at a brisk pace, but her body was physically drained from lack of sleep and food.

The flat had been in good condition when Jane first moved in almost three years ago. Other than a lick of paint here and there, and a few pieces of furniture, she'd done little to it by way of further maintenance. Although small, it had two bedrooms and a well-equipped kitchen incorporating a small dining area. There was no sitting room and her mother was always saying 'the place is so small you can't even swing a cat in it'. Despite the fact she'd nearly been murdered in her flat by an active member of the IRA, she felt safe there.

Natalie Wilde had deliberately befriended Jane to cajole police information out of her about IRA suspects, whilst at the same time planning to bomb Scotland Yard's annual CID Good Friday party. On realising Jane had discovered her deceit, Natalie tried to murder her, and if it weren't for the intervention of one of her colleagues she would have died. At the time, she felt emotionally drained and depressed, but after the experience with Natalie she'd learnt to develop her own coping mechanisms, and face her demons head on.

Jane ate some reheated spaghetti bolognese, had a relaxing hot bath and went straight to bed. She was woken by the bedside phone ringing and, looking at her alarm clock, saw that it was only 6.30 p.m. Feeling groggy, she stretched out for the receiver, picked it up and heard her mother's voice.

'Hello, dear. I know it's a bit last minute, but your father and I were wondering if you'd like to come over for Sunday lunch? Pam and Tony are coming with baby Nathan.'

'I'd love to, Mum . . .' Jane's mouth was so dry she paused to lick her lips before continuing.

‘Great. I’ll do roast beef, Yorkshire puds and veg. We’ll eat at one o’clock.’

‘Mum, I’m sorry, but I can’t come as I’ve got to work tomorrow.’

‘I noted on the wall calendar that you were off this weekend, after a night shift?’ her mother replied brusquely.

‘We had a murder last night, Mum. I’m on the investigation team, so—’

‘You’ve only been at Peckham two weeks and already someone’s been murdered?’

‘I don’t think my arrival at Peckham has anything to do with it.’

‘Don’t be flippant, dear. You know I worry about you, especially if you are having to arrest people who commit such violent crimes . . . Was it a woman or man that was killed?’

‘A woman. I’m in charge of the house-to-house enquiries, not the arrest team, so don’t worry yourself. I’m really tired and need to get some sleep, so I’ll ring you later.’

Jane didn’t dare worry her mother more by telling her any details about the murder, especially as the victim was around the same age as her.

‘You always seem to be busy with work, Jane. The family haven’t seen you in ages. You should at least make the effort to see Pam and your new nephew.’

‘I saw Pam and the baby last weekend. I went round to her place and she did my hair before I started night shift.’

‘Oh, Pam didn’t mention your visit to me,’ Mrs Tennison replied, sounding annoyed that she wasn’t told.

Jane was irritated. ‘Why should she, Mum? It was just a haircut. Look, I really need to get some sleep. I’m sorry about tomorrow but I’ll let you know when I’m next free and can come over.’

‘It would be nice if you offered to babysit for Pam and Tony so they could have a night out together. Honestly, Jane, sometimes it feels like you put the needs of the police force before your family . . . I’m sure the CID could cope without you now and again . . .’

‘So can you, Mum . . . I’m sorry if my work inconveniences you,’ Jane replied abruptly.

Mrs Tennison said nothing and put the phone down. Jane instantly regretted her thoughtless remark. Despite her tiredness, she wondered if she should ring her back to apologise. However, not wanting to get into another argument, she decided not to until she’d had a decent sleep. Jane pulled the duvet over her shoulders and snuggled into the foetal position. No sooner had she closed her eyes than the phone rang again.

She picked up the receiver. ‘I’m sorry for upsetting you . . .’

‘You haven’t,’ a surprised Gibbs replied, curious about who Jane had just been speaking to.

‘Sorry, I thought you were my mother . . . I was tired and I snapped at her . . . Has there been a development in the case? Do you need me to come in?’

‘No. Just thought I’d let you know I’ve been up to Copeland Road to have a look at the Allegro car and it’s not reported lost or stolen. It was locked, the ignition was not hotwired and the front tyre was as flat as a pancake. I doubt the radio was nicked as the loose wires had tape on the end to stop them sparking if they touched. Definitely not the sort of thing a thief would do if they’d just nicked it.’

‘Do you think the car could belong to our murder victim?’ Jane asked as she sat up in bed.

‘No. Clean as a whistle inside, pair of driving gloves on the front passenger seat, with a tartan rug and cushions on the back seat. It’s more an older person’s type of car. The registered owner is ex-directory, lives in St John’s Wood, just by Regent’s Park. It’s probably not connected to the investigation, but you need to find out why it’s been left in Peckham.’

‘I know where it is, but I’m in bed now . . . I’ve hardly slept . . .’

‘You can do it in the morning on your way in. The address is—’

‘Hang on, let me get a pen and paper.’ Jane opened the bedside cabinet drawer. She had quickly learnt that having a pen and notepad

close to hand was crucial, even in bed. She told Gibbs to go ahead and he gave her the car registration as TLY 225R. The owner, shown on the police national computer, was a Mrs Sybil Hastings, flat 42, Viceroy Court, Prince Albert Road.

‘Have you checked her name against missing persons?’ Jane asked.

‘Of course. She isn’t reported missing and there’s no one on mispers matching our victim’s description either.’

‘Anything else, or can I get some sleep now?’ Jane asked irritably as she tore the bit of paper from the notepad.

‘I’ll meet you there at nine a.m.’ Gibbs said.

‘I’m quite capable of doing a simple vehicle enquiry on my own, you know.’

‘Yes, but I need a lift as my Triumph Stag’s in the garage having a new head gasket fitted. Tamara’s flat is in Mayfair so I’ll get her to drop me off at Viceroy Court. We’re doing a gig at a pub in Belsize Park tonight – why don’t you come along, Jane?’

‘No thanks, Spence, I just need to get some sleep . . . I’ll see you in the morning.’ Jane put the phone down, realising, with slight annoyance, that Gibbs had given her the vehicle enquiry so he could get a lift in to work. She didn’t mind too much as he’d at least been to Copeland Road to check the vehicle out and someone would have to have spoken with the owner anyway.

Pulling the duvet over her head, Jane was in a deep sleep within seconds, all thoughts of the investigation pushed from her mind, for the time being.