

CHAPTER ONE

Jane arrived in plenty of time at Vine Street Police Station, in the heart of London's West End, for her nine o'clock meeting with her new DCI. The Vice Squad also worked out of Vine Street, but on a different floor, while the much larger Flying Squad was based at Scotland Yard. The duty sergeant directed her downstairs. She walked past the station cells and charge room area, then down the old stone steps and into the darkened basement. A door was ajar with 'DIP SQUAD' printed on a card pinned on it. She hesitated and then knocked. Getting no reply, she gently pushed open the door, to reveal a large, dank, squalid room. A string of worn desks, typewriters on a couple of them, ran across the room, and along one wall was a row of battered filing cabinets. The only window, high in the wall, was tiny and covered in cobwebs. It looked as if it had never been opened.

'Are you WDC Tennison?'

Jane whirled around to face a tall, angular man wearing a full-length leather coat, polo-necked sweater, and baggy trousers with a thick leather belt at the waist, walking out of a small office in the corner.

'Yes.'

'Bit early, aren't you?' He shook her hand. 'I'm DCI Jimmy Church. Take a pew and let me fill you in.' DCI Church spoke with a northern accent and chain-smoked, lighting one cigarette from the other as he moved around the room. He picked up an overflowing ashtray and emptied the butts into a waste bin as he spoke. 'The team are usually out nicking dippers, so this office is usually empty. We work all over London, but we bring any arrests back here to Vine Street to be processed and charged. The team here consists of me, plus two detective sergeants who each have a team of four

detectives working with them. We don't have any clerical staff, so we take reports for typing up to the main Flying Squad office at the Yard. Bit of a drag, but it's only a fifteen-minute walk. Or we use the one unmarked car we have.

'Oh . . .' Jane said, trying to take it all in.

Church turned at the sound of voices and heavy footsteps coming down the stone steps outside the office.

'Here come the lads!' He grinned. Jane was astonished at how much more youthful Church appeared when he smiled, his heavily lined face immediately lighting up.

The officers, who were all male, piled into the room. All of them wore worn-looking jeans and bomber jackets, and most had long hair and sideburns. They spread out sitting on the odd chair or perched on one or other of the desks. She recognised DS Stanley, who she'd worked with before, but the others were new to her.

'This is WDC Joan Tennison everybody.'

'It's Jane,' Jane said, as Church cocked his head to one side.

'Sorry. *Jane* Tennison. OK, that little wiry DS over there, who looks like the cat just dragged him in, is Stanley –'

'We worked together a long time ago at Hackney,' Stanley said, nodding to Jane. He still wore fingerless gloves and was even scruffier than she remembered, looking as if he had slept in a park somewhere.

'And that's DS George Maynard.' Church nodded at a well-built officer who was putting a stick of chewing gum in his mouth. He was dressed in a huge duffel coat, dirty trainers and jeans.

'Maynard plays drunk better than a drunk,' Church added.

Jane smiled at Maynard and was rewarded with a cursory nod.

Church gestured with his lit cigarette towards the rest of the group. 'You can get to know the other reprobates later.'

Jane doubted that she would be able to remember all their names on her first day and realised that the Dip Squad, like the glamorous Flying Squad, had no female officers apart from her.

She wondered if the Dip Squad might not be such an attractive proposition after all.

‘Right, before we get into what’s going down today, let me remind you all that the forthcoming Scotland Yard Detective Squad’s big annual black-tie dinner dance is only a couple of weeks away . . . Good Friday, 16 April, at St Ermin’s Hotel. You can’t miss it – it’s in Caxton Street, right opposite Scotland Yard. If you don’t have your tickets booked then you’d better get on to it, or you’ll lose out.’

Jane watched as a few of them handed over cash to Church. A couple said they would pay by cheque.

A young DC held his hand up. ‘It’s a bank holiday, isn’t it, Guv? Only I was booked to go on a fishing trip . . . can’t they change the date?’

‘Don’t be an idiot, Mead! It’s always on Good Friday because it is a bank holiday, and the squads are at minimum strength over the holiday weekend. Just cancel your bloody fishing trip . . . it’s a right knees-up, and worth getting your dickie bow out for.’

Church handed out some crime reports detailing theft incidents on the Underground and in the busy shopping areas around Oxford Street and Regent Street.

‘As you can see, the descriptions of possible suspects are pretty poor and most of the victims didn’t even know they’d been dipped until it was too late . . .’

Jane was flicking through the crime reports, trying to take in all the information, then realised that Church had stopped talking and, along with everyone else in the room, was looking at her.

‘Sorry?’

‘Tennison, just concentrate and read the reports in your own time.’ He addressed the room again. ‘This bunch are obviously professionals, possibly from abroad. They’re working in a group of around four to six people, and their marks tend to be the wealthier looking members of the public.’

He turned to Jane. ‘D’you know what a “mark” is Tennison?’

‘The intended victim, sir,’ Jane replied.

‘Correct. Now, start counting to ten . . .’

Jane felt embarrassed and suspected she was about to be the butt of an initiation joke.

‘Come on, don’t be shy,’ Stanley said, nudging her.

She started counting aloud and as she reached number six she felt someone push her from behind, causing her to stumble forward. Stanley grabbed her left arm to catch her, and she heard several chuckles from the other officers. She turned around to face the huge DS Maynard.

‘What did you do that for? It’s not funny.’

‘Carry on counting,’ Maynard said, with a serious expression.

‘What?’

‘From where you left off.’

‘Um . . . four, five . . .’

Church interrupted. ‘You’d got up to six.’

Jane looked at him. ‘Had I? Sorry . . . six, seven . . .’

Maynard pushed her gently on the shoulder. Jane turned back to him sharply.

‘Would you please stop pushing me!’

Maynard was holding up her warrant card.

‘Is this yours?’

Confused, Jane hurriedly unzipped her handbag to discover that her warrant card was missing. As Maynard handed it back to her, Stanley asked, ‘What’s the time?’

Jane glanced at her left wrist and found that her watch was missing.

Everyone laughed as Stanley held up her watch, swinging it like a pendulum.

‘Tick tock . . .’

Jane was shocked. ‘How did you get that . . . and my warrant card?’

Church took her watch from Stanley and pulled up her shirt sleeve to replace it on her wrist.

‘Your mind can only properly focus on one thing at a time. Clever pickpockets distract their marks whilst simultaneously lifting their wallet, purse or watch. The targets don’t notice at the time because they’re too focused on the distraction. It takes a thief to catch a thief, Tennison, and we practice what the bad guys do . . . but only on each other. It keeps us on our toes. I like to think of myself as Fagin, and these reprobates are my little pickpockets.’

There was a unanimous groan from the squad. Stanley jovially twanged his red braces and launched into the song from *Oliver!*, ‘Consider yourself . . .’ Church gave him a good-natured swipe across the head.

‘All right, all right, Dodger, just calm down. I’m going to need you all to step out to the yard and do a little bit of “bump and lift” work for Tennison to observe. I’ll organise some teas all round and a few sandwiches whilst we’re out there.’

Jane was, in fact, observing how attractive DCI Church was, and noticed how much respect he had from the squad.

As they herded out of the room a tall, baby-faced officer stood beside Jane.

‘Don’t worry, I’m pretty new to all this as well. I’m DC Dunston, but they all call me Blondie.’

Jane thought he might be trying to distract her, and held her handbag tight to her side and checked her watch.

‘What’s bump and lift?’ she asked.

‘Sounds like a dance, doesn’t it? It’s the action Stanley and Maynard pulled on you earlier. Maynard distracted you with the push and when Stanley stopped you falling you thought he was helping you. He put pressure on your upper arm, again distracting you, then with his free hand he flicked your watch strap undone and slipped it from your wrist. At the same time, Maynard unzipped your handbag and took your warrant card.’

‘It all happened so quickly.’

‘That’s the way the dippers operate on the streets. This type of theft is a combination of distraction and misdirection, which gives the pickpocket just enough time to make the lift and walk away. If you think Stanley and Maynard were fast, the real dippers are like lightning . . .’

Jane nodded. ‘I’m certainly going to be wary when I’m out shopping from now on.’

They headed up a heavily worn stone staircase towards the back exit to the station yard.

Blondie continued, ‘There’s a lot to learn about the different distraction techniques and hand movements they use. There’s bump, grab and slip, fake lifts, oops sorry, and –’

‘Is there some sort of manual that I can read?’ Jane asked.

‘No manual, as such, but I’ve made my own list of distraction techniques and methods that the pickpockets use. You can have a copy if you want,’ Blondie offered as he held the back door open for her.

‘Thanks, that would be really helpful.’

‘The difficult part to follow is when one of the gang makes a lift and passes the goods to a “runner”, who then makes off with the property . . . sometimes they’ll pass a wallet or purse three or four times . . . it can be like a “guess who” game, and sometimes you end up stopping a suspect who’s empty-handed.’

They reached a small, stone-flagged yard surrounded by a high red-brick wall, with paint-peeled double gates and a run-down bicycle shed next to a row of aluminium dustbins.

‘It’s all much more complicated than I ever imagined. Do the suspects resist arrest?’

‘Sometimes. You need to be careful of the pickpockets who carry small razor blades to cut a rear pocket or handbag open. The cut is made against a wallet or handbag so the mark usually doesn’t feel a thing.’

Jane remembered an old case she’d been involved in.

‘At my previous station we had a bag-slasher who was using a switchblade. Is that the kind of weapon your pickpockets would use?’

‘Most pickpockets avoid using switchblades or flick knives . . . I know of only one occasion where an officer was cut, and that was just on his hand, by a razor blade. All in all, it’s interesting work and nicking a good team of pickpockets is really rewarding. Keeps Church happy if we get good results.’

An officer appeared with a tray of polystyrene cups and shouted ‘Tea’s up’. Maynard started to hand Jane a half-filled cup of tea. As she reached out to take it, he said. ‘We’re all having a break now, but here’s a word of warning: when you’re out working never be caught with a cup of anything in your hand. Let me show you why.’

Maynard gently bumped into Jane, causing some of the contents of her teacup to spill out. She immediately reached into her pocket for a tissue to mop it up, but Maynard produced a large handkerchief and started to pat down her jacket.

Stanley interjected. ‘Oh, come on, Maynard. Let’s get on with the real demonstrations. Tennison, just take it that you never carry any drinks whilst you’re on the job . . . it’s the easiest way for a pickpocket to distract and pinch the contents of your coat or jacket pockets whilst they are patting you dry.’

Church clapped his hands saying that the break was over, and it was time to demonstrate the various methods of distraction and misdirection. Although he was serious about the training there were several funny moments when officers, who took turns playing the mark, were oblivious to the fact that their wallet had been stolen. This was usually achieved by Stanley, who was the most adept at ‘dipping’, concealing his hand movements with a folded newspaper.

Jane was not the only victim. The team seemed to take great pleasure in removing Blondie’s wallet, not once but three times. When Stanley accidentally dropped some loose change on the floor,

Jane, without thinking, bent over to help pick up the coins. Whilst she was kneeling on the ground, Maynard stole Jane's purse from her handbag.

'I know what you've done,' Jane said, raising her eyes upwards.

Maynard held his huge hands up, saying, 'Search me! Search me!' Jane watched as Stanley made a rugby pass of her leather coin purse across the yard, to be caught by Church on the other side. He held it up.

'OK, fun's over. Let's get back inside.' Church handed Jane her purse.

Inside, Church showed her a covert radio, which they would be using when they went out on the streets.

'You have to learn how to listen. Stick with Stanley today to learn the basics. Here's a list of the radio terms you need to memorise for future jobs.' Church handed her a rather dirty page of typed radio terminology. Jane barely had time to glance at it before he continued, 'You'll be going on a surveillance operation this morning. We work it that when the suspect is in position and looks ready to jostle and do the business, such as nick a wallet or whatever, we move in so he's surrounded and nicked as soon as he commits the theft. But, in this instance this is an ongoing case: we're looking out for our suspect's pals as they're working in a team and we need to act fast to see who he's palming off the gear to. I won't be satisfied with just bringing in one of them. We all have concealed radios, so we cross communicate during the follow and when the arrest takes place, we've got a wagon on standby. If it's a good arrest, often the intended victim hasn't a clue what just happened. Are you with me?'

'Er, yes, sir, I do understand . . . I had to study powers of arrest in my probation. I'm just wondering if you're going to use me as some kind of decoy, being that I'm the only female on the team?'

Everyone laughed at Jane's remark as Church picked up the report sheet he had been handing out.

‘Before we can use you as a decoy, you need to get up to speed on exactly how we work, Tennison. I hope there’ll be plenty of opportunities in the future for us to use your feminine attributes . . .

‘We’ve got this guy in our sights and he’s been nicking gear left, right and centre. Yesterday, Stanley was able to confirm that it’s a three-man unit. So, we’re going to use all our tactics to nab the lot of them. First up, we need to find today’s victim. The thieves seem to work around midday at Oxford Street underground station or during evening rush hour. That means access to shoppers with money . . . you got that big exclusive store, Liberty, on the corner, and tourists shelling out big money all along Regent Street.’

‘Do you have any surveillance pictures or mugshots of the suspects I can have?’ Jane asked.

Again, there was laughter amongst the team.

‘That’s not how the Dip Squad works, Tennison! There’re loads of mugshots in that big album on the desk, far too many to carry round with us. It takes time, but we memorise photographs and descriptions, then go by eyeball on the street. You’ve got to understand that these guys work in a team. You can see them stalling or distracting a victim . . . they could have a newspaper concealing their hands, or you can have one of them acting like a helpful stranger whilst their mate is nicking gear out of the victim’s handbag. They can get a watch off your wrist and you wouldn’t feel a thing. Give her description of the bloke you got a look at, Stanley.’

‘I’d say he could be Spanish or Italian. He had dark, greasy hair, with shifty eyes and bad acne. He wears a big double-breasted overcoat and thick crêpe-soled shoes. He can move like lightening.’

Church clapped his hands. ‘OK, Stanley, take our new girl out with you and your guys and meet up back here when you’ve got them bang to rights.’

Accompanied by Stanley, Maynard and two other officers, Jane left the squalid office. She thought they would be using a patrol car

to drive to their destination but instead they caught a bus. She was now beginning to have severe doubts about what she had got herself into. The Dip Squad acted like day trippers. They laughed and joked with each other at the bus stop, and when they got on board and herded up the stairs to sit on the top deck, Stanley squashed into a seat beside her. He had overpowering BO and looked so scruffy that Jane had a moment of horror that someone she knew might get on to the bus and wonder what on earth she was doing sitting beside a tramp.

'You seen anything of Spencer Gibbs since his Hackney days?' Stanley asked, rolling a cigarette.

'Not for a while. He was at Bow Street, we worked together on a murder, but he was transferred whilst I was on my CID course.'

'I heard he was getting pissed every night.'

'No, he wasn't. I mean, you were there . . . you know the terrible events at Hackney hit him badly. He was very close to DCI Bradfield.'

'Yeah, that was a bad time – and as for that lovely Kath Morgan . . . At least we got the bastards. Clifford Bentley went down for thirty years. He'll die inside. Good riddance.'

Jane nodded as Stanley licked his cigarette paper.

'So, what brings you to the Dip Squad? What fuck-up got you foisted on us?'

She straightened in her seat.

'No fuck-up, actually . . . I asked to be transferred. I was told that it could be a way in to the Flying Squad.'

Stanley laughed. 'Yeah, and pigs might fly, sweetheart! You're only with us because we need a good-looking stooge to attract dippers. Added to that, the blokes on this unit are ahead of you in the pecking order. Well, most of them. Some got moved to the Dip Squad from the Sweeney because of one screw-up after another . . .' He saw the disappointment on her face and added in a gentler tone, 'We get better overtime in the Dip Squad, anyway.'

Stanley lit his roll-up, then stuck it in the side of his mouth as he checked his radio's speaker and told Jane to double-check hers.

'A lot of our equipment is bloody useless and outdated. Flying Squad gets the new gear and we get their hand-me-downs.'

Jane glanced at him. 'How come you're with the Dip Squad?'

'Rapped over the knuckles, darlin', for being a naughty boy. Besides, I like Jimmy Church – I rate him. But a word of warning: don't get on the wrong side of him . . . and his sidekick, DS George Maynard, is also a piece of work. You think it's his duffel coat makes him look well built, but he's solid muscle underneath it, and he can throw one hell of a punch.'

Jane was desperately trying to take it all on board, and wasn't sure how to respond. Stanley turned away from her as if he didn't want to talk anymore, his roll-up cigarette still stuck between his lips, getting damper and smaller. Why on earth had she left the relative comforts of Bow Street?

After half an hour they piled off the bus in Regent Street and made their way towards Oxford Circus underground station. Jane thought they could have walked there faster. The four of them kept their distance from one another as they looked up and down the street for any suspects. Stanley was next to Jane when he spoke over his radio.

'Looks like a male suspect from our mugshots heading down into the Underground. Early twenties, tanned face, dark-haired, unshaven, wearing a leather coat.'

Jane pressed her radio earpiece further into her left ear, and checked the mouthpiece was securely attached to her wrist – the wires were hidden along her jacket sleeve and attached to the radio in her pocket.

Stanley nudged her. 'Radios are bloody useless in the Underground, we go by hand signals, just stick close to me, OK?'

Jane nodded as she followed Stanley down into the Underground. They flashed their warrant cards to the ticket guard, who

let them through, and moved on to the escalator, with the other two officers close behind. The southbound Central line platform was crowded with passengers waiting for the next train, it was hard to see through the throng of people as they moved along the platform, keeping their distance from the suspect.

Jane glanced around cautiously and saw the suspect moving in behind a well-dressed man in an unbuttoned camel coat, carrying a briefcase. The man had just taken out a thick wallet and checked something before replacing it inside his coat pocket. Stanley looked at his colleagues, nodded, then touched his eye with his index finger and discreetly pointed to the suspect.

One of the other officers repeated the same signals to Stanley and Jane as a young, tanned, dark-haired man with acne wearing a leather coat slipped in casually to stand beside the target. Jane spotted him glance almost imperceptibly to his right, where an older, grey-haired man in an expensive-looking black raincoat was also moving slowly towards the target. Each undercover officer discreetly confirmed they had eyeballed these three men as possible dippers.

Even though she was watching for it, Jane almost didn't see the dip. As the unshaven man in the leather coat jostled the victim and lifted his wallet, his two sidekicks moved in, ready to palm it. Stanley and his team stepped in to collar them. The victim, surprised by their sudden appearance, dropped his briefcase. An approaching train screeched in the tunnel, and Jane found herself being pushed backwards by the crowd towards the tracks. She teetered on the edge of the platform as a train thundered towards her. Stanley saw her at the last minute and dragged her to safety.

As the train came to a halt and passengers began to stream onto the platform, it became clear that the pincer move had gone astray. The other officers chased after the two younger suspects but the grey-haired man in the black raincoat managed to get onto the

train. The doors closed behind him before Stanley or Jane could fight free of the crowd.

Stanley turned to the badly shaken Jane.

‘What the hell do you think you were doing? Haven’t you got any bloody sense? You should never stand with your back to the tracks!’

‘I’m sorry. I thought they were going to steal his briefcase when he put it down on the platform . . .’

‘They were after his wallet, Tennison! I thought, after seeing all those demos in the yard earlier, you’d understand what we were doing? Thanks to you, we’ve now lost the guy who was probably running this show . . . that grey-haired man in the black raincoat was our prime suspect.’

Stanley ran his hands through his hair in frustration. His expression cleared a little. ‘Well, I expect the team have arrested the other two, and I am sure they’ll have retrieved the stolen wallet. No thanks to you, Tennison. DCI Church is not going to be a happy man.’

Jane was crestfallen. ‘Sorry, Stanley.’

‘We’ll get the victim back to the station and take his statement.’

The pickpockets’ mark, Clive Hughes, was from a wealthy family. His wallet held over a hundred pounds, as well as quite a few credit cards. Jane asked him to tell her exactly what had happened, but he hadn’t noticed anything untoward, or felt a thing, and he had no idea how they had managed to steal his wallet.

‘Can you describe any of the men who were standing next to you just before the train arrived and we moved in to make the arrests?’

‘No.’

‘Did you feel anyone bump into you?’

‘Not really. The platform was busy and people were all squashed together.’ He paused, then smiled.

‘There was an attractive girl in a mini skirt and low-cut top in front of me. She turned to look at me as if I’d done something to upset her. I felt rather embarrassed . . .’

‘Embarrassed? Why?’

‘Well, it was as if she thought I had deliberately brushed up against her . . .’

‘Did you brush up against her, Mr Hughes?’

‘No! I didn’t. I don’t know why, but I said I was sorry and she gave me a warm smile.’

Jane thought about the incident at the underground station. Church had said at the briefing that the dippers usually worked in groups of four to six, yet they had only seen three men acting suspiciously and jointly making the theft. She wondered if the team had been distracted by concentrating on the three men.

‘Can you describe the woman to me in a bit more detail?’

‘D’you think she might be part of the gang that stole my wallet?’

‘I don’t know for sure, but it’s possible that she deliberately distracted you while the others moved in to make the lift.’

‘Oh, my goodness! She was about 5’6”, very young-looking, maybe late teens, with long dark hair. She was tanned . . . sort of olive-skinned. She was wearing a black mini skirt and low-cut white blouse, with a hip-length fur jacket, which was undone.’

Jane glanced up from her notebook. Clive Hughes seemed to have a detailed recollection of the girl.

‘Her fur jacket was undone?’

‘Deliberately, I suppose, to reveal her cleavage.’

‘Did she say anything to you?’

‘No, not a word.’

When Jane returned to the Dip Squad office, Stanley and Maynard had become frustrated. Their suspect, who had been wearing the heavy leather coat, was refusing to talk. However, they had discovered hidden pockets throughout the lining of his coat containing

watches, jewellery, wallets and other trinkets that had all been stolen. Blondie Dunston was instructed to list all the stolen goods, while the younger dark-haired suspect with acne was given a good grilling. Stanley was slapping him around the back of the head.

'I know you can speak English otherwise you wouldn't be able to find your way around the Underground or buy a ticket . . . so, stop fucking us about, and tell us where the guy in the black raincoat has pissed off to.'

'No hablo ingles, Señor.'

Stanley looked at Maynard.

'If we know where he's from we could get an interpreter in.'

'That's just going to waste more time . . . he's pissing us about. Aren't you?'

'Yo no hablo inglés, Señor.'

'Is he Spanish? He sounds Spanish,' Maynard muttered.

'Español?' Stanley asked.

'Colombia,' the suspect replied.

Stanley pushed his face in front of the young man. 'Oh, a lying thief *and* a drug dealer then!'

'Yo no soy traficante de drogas . . . Yo no soy un ladrón.'

Maynard slapped him again. 'Stop speaking the Dago language . . . Speakee de English so we understand. *You* understand?'

Stanley raised his hand to slap the suspect, but Jane interjected. She had witnessed her male colleagues physically assaulting prisoners before but she never understood why they resorted to violence – it never seemed to get them the information they wanted.

'Colombians speak Spanish. He said he's not a drug dealer or a thief.'

There was silence in the room. Both men turned, looked at Jane with surprise and spoke in unison.

'You speak Spanish?'

'A little. I did it for A level, but it's been a few years now . . . I'm nowhere near fluent.'

‘Well, I’m sure he can understand you, so start asking what we need to know . . .’

‘You’d be better off getting an interpreter,’ Jane replied.

‘We need answers right now. If we get an address there could be tons of nicked gear there. We’d clear up loads of pickpocket thefts, and it’d be a good result for the team. We need to find the older guy in the raincoat. Thanks to your near miss with the train, he got clean away.’

Maynard, like Stanley, was annoyed with Jane. He turned to the suspect.

‘You obviously just understood what my colleague said about being a drug dealer so I’ll ask you again, you piece of shit . . . where is all the nicked gear and where’s your older mate?’

Jane moved in between the suspect and Maynard. She spoke slowly.

‘¿Cuál es su nombre?’

‘Miguel Hernández.’

‘Miguel . . . um . . . *sabemos que había una señorita joven contigo.*’

The suspect reacted, looking nervous, and avoided eye contact with Jane. Stanley nudged her.

‘Whatever you just said got to him.’

‘I told him we know there was a young woman working with him.’

‘What’re you talking about, Tennison? It was three *men!*’ Stanley shouted. ‘And thanks to you one of them got away.’

Jane handed Stanley Clive Hughes’ statement.

‘Read the last paragraph, Stanley. I’d say the woman is part of the gang and was used to distract the victim so the others could dip him.’

‘You saying we’re all blind?’ Maynard asked, angrily.

‘No, I’m saying the platform was so busy we were all concentrating on the mark and the three male suspects . . . so we missed the female.’

Jane bent down and, placing her fingers under the suspect's chin, raised it so she had direct eye contact with him.

‘Estos hombres seguirán lastimándote . . . dime dónde está la mujer y el otro hombre y se detendrá . . .’

The suspect looked Jane in the eye and was close to tears. She had told him that the officers would continue to hurt him, but if he told her the whereabouts of the girl and other man they would stop. The suspect said nothing and sat looking up at Maynard as he stepped forward with his hand raised. Miguel winced in anticipation but Jane held up her hand to stop Maynard.

‘Let him talk . . .’

There was a brief pause, then Miguel looked at Jane.

‘Gracias, señorita.’

‘Habla usted Inglés, Miguel?’

‘Yes, I speak leetle English.’

‘Good. Was there a girl with you?’

‘Si . . . She my sister, Regina. They say if we no help them then they hurt us.’

Jane pulled up a chair to sit next to Miguel.

‘We can help you and your sister, but in return you have to help us.’

It wasn't long before Miguel revealed that he and his fifteen-year-old sister, Regina, had been brought to London by their uncle, Andres Hernandez, on the promise of employment and somewhere to live. Andres had subsequently taken all their money, and their passports, and was now forcing them to steal for him.

After further lengthy, and tedious, interrogation, Miguel was put into a cell whilst DCI Church was given an update. As he listened to them and glanced through their notes he looked up at Jane.

‘Well, that was a right fuck-up this afternoon, wasn't it, Tennison? On your first day you nearly get swept under a train and we lose our number one suspect! Have we got an address for this uncle?’ Church asked Stanley.

‘Yes, it’s in the interview notes. Miguel said that the uncle owned the house they were living in. It’s in Shepherd’s Bush, not far from the flyover and near Portobello Road. If these guys are professional dippers, then Portobello Market would be the perfect location to offload their stolen goods. When we ran a check on the uncle, Andres Hernandez, it turns out he’s wanted for aggravated burglary and a brutal sexual assault eighteen months ago. So, we’ve already got a file on him . . . he’s a nasty customer. Miguel is terrified about his uncle finding out that he’s talking to us . . . he’s very concerned for his young sister’s safety.’

‘I don’t believe a word these dagos say. That girl’s probably not even his sister,’ Maynard retorted.

‘I disagree,’ Jane replied. ‘I think Miguel is telling the truth, and if his sister is only fifteen then she’s vulnerable and we need to find her.’

Church interjected. ‘We’ve now got grounds to get a search warrant, and find this girl . . . as well as a shedload of nicked stuff. This is sounding much more promising. Perhaps your first day hasn’t been such a total disaster after all, Tennison.’

‘Thank you, sir . . .’

‘Don’t thank me yet. Go back to your boyfriend and get him to give us a diagram of the floorplan of the house in Shepherd’s Bush. Then he can show us where it is.’

Church turned to Dunston and handed him the interview notes.

‘Blondie, get over to Bow Street Court and get a search warrant from the magistrate for the address Miguel Hernandez gave us . . . then we’ll pay this uncle a surprise visit.’