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Written by Lynda La Plante

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Lynda La Plante

HIDDEN KILLERS



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To my many loyal readers. Your support through e-mail and social media has been a constant encouragement to me, and makes all the hard work worthwhile.

CHAPTER ONE

On Wednesday, 4th September, Jane was on the 2 p.m. late shift parade as Sergeant Harris inspected and posted the C Relief uniform officers to their beats and panda car duties for the shift. As Jane was about to be given her posting Detective Inspector Nicholas Moran entered the room and, as was the norm, everyone stood to attention for a senior officer. Harris had a look of disapproval on his face as he didn't like his parades interrupted, least of all by the CID. Moran nodded his approval at the officers' show of respect then gestured for everyone to sit down as he turned to Harris.

'Please finish posting your officers to their duties, Sergeant Harris, then I'd like to address them regarding some indecent assaults that have occurred on the ground in the last few weeks.'

'I've finished, so you can address them now. But if you could make it brief I'd be obliged as *my* officers need to get out on patrol,' Harris said, in a pompous manner.

'Thank you,' Moran replied with a skewed smile that conveyed his displeasure at Harris's attitude.

DI Moran was an experienced and well-respected

detective, having worked on the Clubs and Vice Unit at Scotland Yard prior to his recent promotion and transfer to Hackney CID. He was in his mid-thirties, with blond hair that was neat, tidy and collar length. He wore a dark navy blue suit and white shirt with a button-down collar, blue tie and black Cuban-heeled ankle boots that made him look taller than his actual five feet ten inches. Jane had seen him on a few previous occasions but being a probationary WPC she had not come into direct contact with him; the word around the station was that he was on the fast track and going places.

Moran told the officers that over the last few weeks a number of young women had been indecently assaulted after dark, in both the Victoria Park and London Fields areas of Hackney, and he strongly suspected the same man was responsible for all the attacks. He explained that the majority of the assaulted women had been prostitutes, probably because they were easy targets who would be least likely to report an assault. However, the last two victims were not prostitutes and the fear was that the suspect was becoming less discriminating about whom he attacked. As Moran spoke, all the officers present, apart from Harris, wrote down the information in their force-issue pocket books.

‘The suspect is about five feet eight inches tall, with a deep-voiced London accent. He wore all-black clothing, which consisted of a waist length bomber-style jacket, black roll-neck jumper and trousers.’ Moran paused to let the officers write down the details.

‘What about his colour and facial description?’ Harris

asked, in a manner that implied Moran was lacking in his information on the suspect.

‘Don’t know, Sergeant Harris,’ Moran said, and deliberately paused while Harris sat back with a smug grin. He then continued: ‘Sadly none of the victims would recognize the assailant again as he had his face covered during each attack.’

Harris kept quiet as Moran went on to say that he and some of his detectives would be carrying out undercover surveillance, with a decoy, at London Fields for the next few nights. He wanted two officers patrolling Victoria Park just after dark and the station panda cars should, if possible, make a sweep round the park at least every half-hour. This, Moran informed them, was a deliberate ploy to entice the suspect over to London Fields where there would be no uniform presence. Harris made an entry in the parade book, which was on the desk in front of him, and informed PC Jackson and PC Oliver that they would now be patrolling Victoria Park for the shift.

‘However, should the officers patrolling Victoria Park see anyone acting suspiciously, or matching the partial description of the suspect, they have my permission to stop and question the person about their movements. If you’re not happy with any explanation or answers they give, arrest them and phone the CID office. One of my detectives will be manning a radio and they will be on a different frequency to you. Are there any questions?’

Harris promptly closed the parade book and stood up. ‘Right, you all know your postings so book out your radios and vehicles, then get out on patrol ... and no cups of tea beforehand.’

Jane raised her hand, attracting Moran's attention.

'Yes, officer?'

'Sorry, sir ... it wasn't about your case or the suspect. It's just that Sergeant Harris hasn't posted me to a beat yet. I could cover Victoria Park as well, Sergeant, or relieve the officers for their refs break?' Jane asked, hoping that she might get the chance to stop and arrest the suspect in Victoria Park.

The frown on Harris's face said it all. Jane was well accustomed to his condescending, chauvinistic attitude.

'I've done the patrol postings ... you're in comms on the radio and VDU, Tennison.'

DI Moran gestured to Jane. 'Ah, yes, you're Jane Tennison? I'd like to have a chat with you about bringing your CID attachment forward to—'

Harris interrupted. 'She needs to be on comms to relieve the early turn officer.'

'And I need a female officer to act as a decoy tonight, Sergeant Harris ... unless you fancy putting on a wig, skirt and high heels yourself,' Moran said, in a tone that sounded as if he was being serious.

Harris ushered everyone out of the parade room, then slammed the door and turned to Moran.

'May I have a word, sir?' Harris said, indignantly. He walked a few steps away from Jane, followed by Moran.

Jane couldn't believe that even now, with only a few days of her probation left to serve, Harris still acted like a petulant child when it came to female officers' career opportunities. She also knew he was not a fan of the CID and often stated that young detectives didn't have much brawn or brains and depended on experienced

uniform men like himself to get them out of trouble. Although Harris pretended to whisper to Moran it was obvious he wanted her to hear every word.

‘You do realize that Tennison is still a probationer and inexperienced, and when it comes to the ways of the CID she may not be up to scratch, evidentially, if you make an arrest?’

‘If you are suggesting my detectives would encourage a uniform officer to fabricate evidence then I very much resent your remark, Harris. Rest assured, her well-being will be paramount throughout the surveillance operation.’

Moran looked at his watch before continuing. ‘You’d better get a move on . . . the early turn duty sergeant will be waiting for you to relieve him.’

Harris gritted his teeth as he left the parade room. Moran gestured for Jane to sit down. He pulled over a chair for himself, using the back of it as an arm rest and swinging his legs either side. Although she didn’t know Moran, judging by his cheeky smile and snazzy suit, Jane had formed an early impression that he reckoned himself as a bit of a charmer. Moran pulled a pack of Players from his pocket, took two cigarettes out, put the pack back in his pocket, and offered one to Jane, who declined. He tucked the spare cigarette behind his ear and lit the other with a Zippo lighter. For a fraction of a second Jane remembered DCI Bradfield using a similar lighter. But the moment passed as Moran flicked his Zippo closed, inhaled on the cigarette and blew out a ring of smoke.

‘You obviously heard what I said to Sergeant Harris?’

Jane nodded. ‘Yes, sir, and I’d really like to work with you on your operation.’

‘A WDC from Dalston nick was going to act as the decoy tonight, but she went sick an hour ago and I need someone to replace her. A couple of the lads in the office recommended you as a bit of a looker, with a good arrest record,’ he said, in a serious voice.

‘Thank you, sir,’ she replied, slightly embarrassed.

‘There are obviously risks involved, but I can assure you that we will be watching you discreetly from an observation van. There will also be further backup nearby. But the choice is yours . . . if you don’t want to be a decoy, I totally understand and you’ll still be welcome on your two-week CID attachment.’

‘I’d be honoured to be a decoy, and I know your detectives will watch my back.’

Moran sat upright and slapped his hands on the back of the chair.

‘That’s great, darlin’ . . . and whether or not we arrest the pervert you can add the next three weekdays with us as additional to your CID attachment.’

‘Thank you, sir, I won’t let you down.’

‘I’m sure you won’t, but first you’ll need to get the right clobber together.’

‘OK,’ she said, wondering what he was going to say next.

‘You’ll need to tart yourself up a bit . . . You’ve got to look sexy . . . sort out your hair and makeup, maybe get a long wig or something and look like you’re up for a good time . . . You all right with that?’

Jane nodded and Moran asked if she had any ‘scanty’

clothing to wear for the job. When Jane replied that she didn't Moran pulled out a leather wallet from his suit jacket and handed Jane two ten pound notes.

'Here's a score. Use it, but get receipts so I can claim the dosh back as expenses for the decoy operation.'

Moran looked at his watch and stood up. 'Right, it'll be dark by eight p.m. so you go get yourself sorted and be back here for a half-seven briefing in the CID office.'

Jane nodded and Moran used his foot to shove the chair back against the wall before leaving the room. Jane sat for a few moments trying to think what clothes she had that might be suitable, but nothing came instantly to mind. This was a big opportunity and she didn't want to blow it. Looking at the money Moran had given her Jane wondered if she'd find anything suitable at Chelsea Girl or British Home Stores, but she doubted it. And Carnaby Street clothes would be too expensive.

She was relieved that she had nearly five hours to get ready. But first she had to inform the miserable Sergeant Harris that she was now officially on her CID attachment. She headed out of the briefing room and down the stone-flagged corridor with its peeling green paint and fading notices. Eventually she tracked him down in the snooker room and explained that DI Moran had said she needed to buy the appropriate clothes for her undercover assignment.

'No doubt you'll have the "appropriate" clothing at the section house, Tennison, so I won't be authorizing any cash for you to buy anything.'

He wafted his cue for her to leave, then bent down over the snooker table to line up for a shot on the black

ball. Jane walked to the door then smiled as she turned back to Harris, who was just about to take his shot.

‘That’s fine, Sarge ... DI Moran gave me a score.’ Harris pushed his cue forward and his hand slipped, causing the tip to scrape into the green baize, almost tearing it.

‘Whoops!’ she said, closing the door quickly behind her.

Jane took her uniform jacket and hat from her locker and left the station to get the 253 bus to Ede House, her home now for almost two years. Ten minutes later she was hurrying up the stairs to her room. She took off her uniform skirt and hung it in the wardrobe. Pushing the coat hangers apart one by one she looked through her clothes, even though she knew she didn’t really have any that fitted the term ‘scanty’. She thought about the money DI Moran had given her, but felt bad about spending it on something tacky that she would never wear again. In desperation Jane pulled on a pair of jeans, a white T-shirt and short jacket, but looking in the wardrobe mirror she realized she would definitely need to buy some suitable clothes.

There was one person she knew who used to wear boob tubes, hot pants, miniskirts and long boots on a night out to the disco. Jane laughed, remembering how her sister Pam would sneak out of the family flat with her outfit in a shoulder bag, so that her disapproving parents wouldn’t see. She would then nip to a friend’s house to change before going out to places like the Empire Ballroom in Leicester Square. One time Pam had arrived home after midnight and as she let herself

into the dark hall she had fallen over on her high wedge boots, and their mother, hearing the commotion, had hurried from her bedroom.

‘Do you know what time it is?’ she had said so loudly that Jane had come out of her room. Pam had very obviously been drinking as she swung the bag with her clothes that she intended changing back into and had to prop herself up against the wall.

‘I am only late cos I have been sick, I had a prawn cocktail at Norma’s.’

Mrs Tennison had shaken her head, and told Jane to get her sister some Bisodol for her upset stomach, and, looking ashamed, she had returned to her bedroom.

‘How much have you had to drink?’ Jane had demanded as she had helped her sister to the bathroom and taken off her coat.

‘Just a few Babychams, s’nothin’, but I stayed on dancing and didn’t get time to change back into ...’ She hadn’t finished as she had started to retch and Jane had to help her to the toilet. As Pam had bent over Jane couldn’t believe that she was wearing a miniskirt so short she could see her knickers, and even more shocking, was that Pam was not wearing a bra under her silky frilly blouse.

‘You are not wearing your brassiere,’ Jane said in a harsh whisper.

‘Oh for goodness sake, get with it, I haven’t worn one for ages, nobody wears them now.’

‘Well, I do,’ Jane said, taking from the medical cabinet the pink Bisodol bottle and holding it out just as Pam was violently sick.

Jane took a bus towards her parents' home in Maida Vale, stopping off at Pam's salon, which was only a short distance from the family flat.

Pam was surprised to see her and Jane briefly explained that she was going on an undercover operation and needed to change her appearance. Pam made her wait until she had finished her client's tint, and then said she only had twenty minutes before she would have to comb the tint through as the other hairdresser wasn't in until later.

In the small back annexe of the salon there was a bag full of wigs. Pam explained that when they were training junior stylists the wigs were pinned to a head stand and would be cut or coloured. There were short bobs, long straggly blondes, and frizzy permed wigs, none in very good condition. Jane tried some of them on but they looked so false, until she put on a curly dark chestnut-coloured wig.

'Can I borrow this one, Pam?'

'Yes, but you'll have to return it ... that's real hair. What else do you need?'

'Do you have any makeup here?'

'Yes, cos sometimes I'm in so early I don't have time to do my face. I've also got a lot of samples as I do the makeup for the hair models when I'm doing one of the stylist events.'

Pam tipped out from a cardboard box an array of foundations and lipsticks, eyebrow pencils, liquid eyeliner and false eyelashes. Jane checked herself in a mirror, still unsure about the wig.

'If you wait around I can do your makeup for you and

comb out the wig and put some carmen rollers in it. You could do with a trim as well.'

'No, I have to go, but another time. I really appreciate this.'

Jane eventually left with the wig and some of Pam's spare makeup in a paper carrier bag. Pam had rather enjoyed helping and showing her how she could change her appearance, demonstrating how to stick on the false eyelashes. The sisters hadn't even discussed how long it had been since they had seen each other, or how things were going with Pam's new husband, Tony. A sixteen-year-old junior was sweeping up and washing around the basins; she couldn't help overhearing Pam and Jane's conversation. As soon as Jane left she asked Pam what it was all about. Pam tapped the side of her nose conspiratorially.

'Can't say, Cheryl, but my sister's a police officer, going undercover.'

She turned away and returned to her client who glanced at her watch, indicating that she had been waiting too long.

'Right, let me just comb this through for you, that extra ten minutes will give a better overall colour.'

If Pam had been surprised to see Jane, Mrs Tennison was even more so. She immediately thought something terrible had happened, and it took a while for Jane to calm her down and explain that she was only there for a quick visit as she fibbed that there was a patrol car waiting, and she just wanted to give her mum a hug and a kiss. Mr Tennison was out playing bowls, which was fortunate, as it meant that Jane could see her mother,

get what she needed and leave. Her bedroom was always just as she had left it, and it made her feel quite emotional. Everything was neat and orderly, although that soon changed as Jane rummaged through her wardrobe and overhead cupboards.

‘Why don’t you tell me what you’re looking for, dear, and maybe I can help you find it?’

‘It was just a costume I had years ago, when we did a school play . . . and some things I had for a Halloween party,’ Jane said, standing on a stool and rifling through an assortment of her clothes in the cupboard.

‘They might be in Pam’s old bedroom . . . I put lots of things in there for the Salvation Army. There’s some of her clothes she doesn’t want in there as well. Daddy and I were going to drop them off but haven’t got round to it yet. Do you want me to look for anything special? Is it for a party?’

‘Yes, it’s for one of the officers that’s leaving . . . but don’t worry, Mum, I’ll go and have a look.’

Jane stepped down from the stool. There was no way she was going to tell her mother exactly why she needed to find the costumes.

Jane could not believe how many plastic bags were stacked in Pam’s old bedroom. Mrs Tennison started opening one after another.

‘Is it fancy dress, dear? Here’s that pair of thigh length boots Pam wore as Dick Whittington . . . they cost a lot of money because she bought them from Biba . . . they’re not real patent leather, and fit up over the knee.’

Jane and her mother sorted through old clothes, most of which were Pam’s and were things she wouldn’t be

seen dead in now that she was a qualified hairdresser and ran the local salon. Jane selected the clothes she wanted and put them into an empty plastic bag. She hugged her mother and left her refolding and packing up the discarded items. Mrs Tennison wanted her to stay for an early dinner but Jane was eager to get back to the section house and try everything on.

‘I have to go, Mum, but thanks for all your help.’

‘Well, I hope it’s a fun party, dear ... Daddy and I will get all these other things to the Salvation Army ... not that I think any of their people would want to wear some of Pam’s clothes. She used to worry me so much ... all those flared trousers and skimpy tops.’

‘Bye, Mum.’

Jane stuffed the wig and makeup into the same bag as the clothes and left her mother still packing everything else away.

By the time she returned to the section house it was almost 6 p.m. On her bed she laid out a miniskirt, a sequined stretch boob tube, a maroon padded bra, a pair of fishnet tights and the awful fake patent leather boots. She had also taken a frilly blouse, some blue plastic hooped earrings and an array of bangles and beads. Jane brushed the dark auburn wig to get some of the tangles out, then pinned back her own hair and pulled the wig on. It hung down to her shoulders and, looking at herself in the mirror, she couldn’t believe how different it made her appear. She put on the frilly blouse and then discarded it for a red boob tube, pulling it down to put on the padded bra and eventually showing a lot of cleavage. She smiled, thinking how her

mother would have had a heart attack if she could see what she looked like.

After Jane had pulled on the fishnet tights and zipped up the leather miniskirt, she had to stand on a chair to see herself in the sink mirror. She decided against the miniskirt and tried on a pair of dark green velvet hot pants instead. Climbing back onto the chair to check the outfit, she had a *déjà vu* moment. When she had first started her probation at Hackney, there had been the wretchedly sad investigation into the murder of a young prostitute called Julie Ann Collins. It was strange for Jane to recall how she had reacted when she had first seen the Polaroid crime scene photographs of the murdered girl. The seventeen-year-old Julie Ann, a heroin addict, had been wearing boots and hot pants when her body had been discovered.

The memory triggered a sudden wave of sadness as images of Kath and DCI Bradfield sprung back into her mind. Jane had to clench her hands into fists to fight back unexpected tears. She didn't want to remember them, not now, not when she was about to begin undercover work. It could jeopardise her chances of gaining a much longed-for place in the CID. She became angry with herself for being emotional, and as she had done so often before, she refused to let herself cry. It felt as if someone was squeezing her heart and she had to force herself to take slow, deep breaths until the pressure subsided. She had told no one about these 'attacks', which were now less frequent, and she was certain she was capable of controlling them.

Jane stepped down from the chair and took out all

of Pam's makeup, spreading it out on her small writing desk: the pale pink lipstick, the rouge and pots of eye shadows, and sticks of pan makeup. Pam had been quite a rebellious teenager, and Jane couldn't help smiling at how different they were. Perhaps it was just as well that Pam had started work in the salon straight from school and had met her husband and married so young, or she might have ended up going off the rails. Sisters they may be, but they had very little in common. Since Pam had got married and Jane had moved into the section house, they rarely saw each other.

It took Jane several attempts, using a small magnifying mirror, to stick on the false eyelashes. She had never worn them before, and found the tiny tube of glue very fiddly. She used one of the darker sticks of pan to cover her face and work into her neck as Pam had shown her. There was no makeup brush, so she had to apply the rouge with a tissue. Jane chose a blue eye shadow and then wet the mascara from the tap at her washbasin and applied two thick coats, being careful not to unstick the eyelashes. She spent a long time checking her reflection and then lastly put on the pale pink lipstick.

It was nearly 7 p.m. and Jane realized she'd better get a move on as she didn't want to be late for the briefing in the CID office. She began to feel almost satisfied with her appearance until she realized that it was going to be quite cold as she would be out late, so she tied the blouse she had discarded in a knot around her waist. She realized it wouldn't be warm enough but she reckoned the adrenalin rush of working undercover would keep her from feeling the cold. Finally, she clipped on the big

hoop earrings and pulled the cheap bracelets onto her wrists. She rather hesitantly looked at her police issue shoulder bag, but knowing she wouldn't be using it, she picked up the plastic makeup bag that belonged to Pam and popped her warrant card inside. It had a floral print and a zip and she could use it as her purse.

Jane practised walking up and down the length of her small room. The boots made it difficult as the plastic kept rubbing her knees, and she had to constantly pull up the flap at the top. They were platform and had a stacked wedge heel, making it very hard to walk properly and mimic a confident 'hooker's stride', swinging her hips and turning her head as if looking for punters.

Jane continued to increase her confidence by practising her new role on the bus journey from the section house back to the station. To begin with, she was very nervous and self-conscious, wondering if anyone would recognize her or try to approach her. In recent months she had arrested several Toms for soliciting and she remembered how they gave a 'cold shoulder' steely eyed look when questioned. For her journey to work Jane had taken off the earrings and bracelets and was wearing her black raincoat over her disguise. She went into the station via the back entrance in case anyone saw her walking in by the front counter. As she walked along the corridor to the locker room two uniform officers stopped to question her.

'Oi, what d'you think you're doin' on police premises, luv?'

'The same as you, luv ... it's me, WPC Tennison ... want to see my ID?'

One of them muttered ‘Fuckin’ Ada’, as they both moved off sharply down the corridor. The fact that they had not recognized her gave Jane a boost.

While storing her coat in her locker Jane had another moment of *déjà vu*. It was over something completely unconnected, but after being confident about controlling her emotions, this came on so strongly she had to brace herself. Jane had forgotten to spray on any perfume, and she had a visualization of Kath and her heavy French scent, which all the men used to tease her about. Kath had once sprayed Jane with it to get rid of the smell of Dettol from the first post-mortem she had attended.

Her recollection was suddenly interrupted by a loud knock on the locker room door, and DI Moran’s voice.

‘Two rather stunned uniform lads just said they’d seen you in the corridor ... all right if I come in and have a look?’

‘Yes, sir,’ Jane said, brushing herself down and shaking her head so the wig would look better.

‘My God, you look the part ... especially the sequined boob tube, which is very revealing,’ he said, his eyes transfixed on her, adding, ‘This is for you.’ He tossed her a pale blue waist length rabbit fur coat. ‘It’ll be pretty cold out there so you’ll need something to keep you warm that goes with the rest of the gear. It’s evidence in a handling case, but for now it’s yours.’ Jane gratefully put on the cheap rabbit fur jacket, which reeked of patchouli oil.

‘I’ll just check my makeup and then I’ll be up for the briefing, sir.’

‘Your makeup’s fine. I’d like to get out on the plot,

so I'll brief you in the obo van. Get the duty sergeant to book you out with us . . . the obo van is in the yard.'

Jane clipped on the earrings and went to the front office where Sergeant Rodgers was sitting at the duty desk. She liked Sergeant Rodgers. Unlike Harris he had a sense of humour and didn't bark out orders. He nearly fell off his seat when he saw Jane, but she was quick to identify herself to him and reassure him that she was not a trespasser in the station.

'Bloody hell, you look lovely, Tennison. Harris said you were getting dressed up for a UC job, but I never imagined you looking anything like this.'

Jane smiled, but realized he wasn't joking as he stared at her in admiration.

'Fancy me, do you, Sarge?'

'I dunno how you done it . . . you look like a movie star. Pity I got a wife, three kids and a cross-breed Alsatian at home. Listen, good luck tonight, be careful and don't go sticking your neck out. You'll have plenty of backup out there, so use it.'

'Thanks, Sarge. Can you book me out with the CID, please?'

Rodgers nodded and watched as Jane sashayed off down the corridor before booking her out in the station duty book. He noted that WPC 517 Tennison had left the station at 7.45 p.m. to work with CID on an attachment. Closing the duty book he tapped it with his hand and sighed. He knew how young Tennison was, and doubted that she had any concept of what she might have to face. Looking like a tough street-wise Tom could get her into a nasty situation.