DI Jane Tennison arrived at her new station, hoping for a fresh start. She'd been transferred, at her own request, after she had investigated the case of the bodies found in an old air-raid shelter. She had been proud of the way she had handled the complex enquiry, but the DCI had given her little credit and she had found it impossible to continue working alongside him.

Jane had worked at three other stations, on a variety of cases, but none of them had really stretched her. After taking a month's long overdue leave, she had been eager to find out where she would be posted. She had requested that it be closer to Bromley as the travel had been an issue on the last investigations she had worked on.

One case in particular had been centred around Greenwich, which was a long drive from where she lived. She had become rather disillusioned with her career and had even considered, albeit half-heartedly, quitting the Met. And when she had received the details of her new posting, it didn't immediately make her feel any more positive. Although it was closer to home, the station only had a very small CID section. However, on the plus side, Jane was interested in meeting her new boss, DCI Fiona Hutton. She had never worked alongside a high-ranking woman, and wondered if it would give her career the boost it needed.

Jane was now living with Eddie Myers and they were engaged to be married, although they had not yet agreed a date for the wedding, partly because they had been so focused on refurbishments to the house. Eddie's handiwork had already almost doubled the property's value, and he was now working on the front and back gardens, laying down paving and ordering trees and plants.

During her leave, Jane had enjoyed spending time with Eddie, helping him to put the finishing touches to the redecoration, though at times she had found their lack of a shared interest beyond the house a little bit worrying. But he was so caring and good-natured that she put her doubts aside. And he certainly impressed her with his work ethic. He was becoming increasingly successful as a builder and renovator, and he and his team were working non-stop.

The drive to her new station only took fifteen minutes, and Jane arrived dressed in one of her smart suits, with a white shirt and Cuban-heeled shoes. She had recently had her hair cut shorter at her sister's salon, and Pam had encouraged her to have some more highlights. She was pleased to see there was a parking bay marked 'DI Jane Tennison' on a white plaque, and she was smiling as she made her way to the modern-looking, double-glass-fronted entrance.

Inside, the reception area was small, with a pine desk, typewriter and telephone, and a row of three hard-backed chairs against one wall. The access into the station offices was situated behind the desk and had a security keypad. The door was ajar and as Jane approached, a young, red-haired, uniformed officer walked out.

'Good morning. I'm DI Jane Tennison.' He smiled.

'Good morning, ma'am, I am Constable Peter Thompson. If you go straight down the corridor, you will see the main double doors for the CID office. I will inform DCI Hutton that you have arrived.'

The young man stepped to one side to allow Jane to pass, holding the door open and then closing it behind her.

The strip-lighting on the ceiling gave the corridor a clinical feel, not unlike a hospital, and it seemed much less atmospheric than any of the stations Jane had previously worked at. Jane hesitated, then opened the door and walked in.

It was a spacious room with a double row of empty desks with typewriters and telephones, all with decent swivel office chairs. Placed along one wall facing the desks was a large whiteboard with various scrawled felt-tipped messages. The office door to one side was closed and had a neat plaque saying 'DCI F. Hutton'. As Jane was taking in the empty room, the office door opened and a middle-aged woman in a tweed suit with a pink blouse came out carrying a thick file.

'You must be DI Jane Tennison. I'm Dora Phillips, head of the clerical staff. I think that desk by the window has been allocated to you. Right now, everyone is gathering for a briefing in the boardroom. Usually, we have a meeting on the first Monday of the month which always kicks off at eight thirty so everyone can have breakfast in the canteen. However, this morning there's a lecture taking place in about ten minutes. Now, if you would like to put your coat in the closet just by the double doors, and leave your briefcase on your desk, I can take you through.'

Jane deposited her coat and briefcase and followed Miss Phillips down the corridor to the boardroom. Jane began to feel nervous as the door closed behind her. Seated around a large table were fifteen officers, some in uniform and others in street clothes. They all turned expectantly to look at Jane. Two of the officers half-rose out of their chairs.

'Good morning,' Jane said. One of the officers, a big, burly, balding man, pushed his chair back and stood up.

'Detective Constable William Burrows . . . you must be Detective Inspector Tennison. Let me introduce you to everyone, and feel free to take the seat at the end of the table.'

Burrows went round the table making introductions and everyone smiled and raised their hands in acknowledgment. In all the years she had worked at the Met, Jane had never had an introduction like it and found the formality extraordinary. It was as if they were college students.

The double doors opened and DCI Hutton made her entrance. She was wearing an immaculate suit and high-heeled shoes that accentuated her six-foot height. She had thick blonde hair, held by a tortoiseshell clip, and Jane thought she was quite a formidable presence as she moved around the table to stand by her empty chair.

'DI Tennison, I must apologise to you for not being available to welcome you and introduce you to everyone, but I am sure DC Burrows has already done that for me. I would just like to welcome you and give you a brief outline of how we usually work. We normally have a once-a-month informal morning's briefing, but today there's something a bit different.'

She drew back her chair and sat down, giving Jane a warm smile, before opening a large, initialled, leather notebook.

'Detective Paul Lawrence is due to arrive any moment to give a talk about a major breakthrough in forensic science. I felt it would be beneficial for everyone to listen and take notes.'

Jane knew Paul Lawrence well, and when a moment later he was ushered into the boardroom by Miss Phillips, she was really pleased to see him. Paul had hardly changed from when they had first worked together, when she was a probationer at Hackney, although his wavy blond hair was now thinning a little. He gave Jane a quick smile of recognition as he went to stand beside Hutton.

Paul opened a thick file, thanked DCI Hutton for the invitation, and began.

'I am sure many of you have heard of the new scientific breakthrough: DNA. DNA stands for deoxyribonucleic acid, which is a complex molecule that contains all of the information necessary to

build and maintain an organism. All living things have DNA within their cells; in fact, nearly every cell in a multicellular organism possesses the full set of DNA required for that organism. Although 99.9 per cent of human DNA sequences are the same in every person, enough of the DNA is different that it is possible to distinguish one individual from another with a DNA profile. To make any test, a smear or swab has to be taken from inside the cheek or mouth. Or you can use blood, saliva, semen, vaginal lubrication and other bodily fluids, or even personal used items like hairbrushes, toothbrushes and razors, which can all have traces of DNA, as well as stored items such as banked sperm or biopsy tissues.'

Paul looked up from his notes and asked if anyone had any questions. Hutton was the first to speak.

'Do twins have the same DNA?'

'Only if they are monozygotic, which means identical. Anyone else have questions, or shall I go on to give you an example, which will hopefully help you fully understand this amazing breakthrough?'

'Please go on,' Hutton said, when no one spoke up.

Paul nodded. 'When a sample such as blood or saliva is obtained, the DNA is only a small part of what is present, so before DNA can be analysed it has to be extracted from the cells and purified.'

It was Hutton again who raised her pen to indicate she wanted to ask a question.

'Could you give us an example of a case that has recently used DNA to obtain a result?'

'Sure. As I have said, this is still a very new science but very soon it's going to become a vital tool, particularly in solving murder and rape cases. In July last year a young girl was murdered, and from the MO the officers were certain the same killer had murdered another young girl in 1983. The police already had a suspect arrested, and a sample of his DNA was compared with the DNA from blood samples recovered at both crime scenes. He was released because his genetic code did not match.'

There were frowns around the table as the officers wondered how DNA evidence had helped solve the case.

Paul waited for a moment before continuing. 'Hard to believe, but a woman in a bar overheard two men talking – one of them saying he had got away with murder because the police had arrested someone else for the crime. The man was traced and his DNA was found to match both crime-scene samples. He admitted to the murder and also pleaded guilty to previous rapes.'

The conclusion of Paul's story was met with unanimous applause, and the meeting broke for coffee, during which Paul answered more questions before continuing for another twenty minutes, focusing on how important it was to observe a strict protocol to protect DNA samples from contamination, and make sure any samples taken were transferred correctly to the laboratories.

When he finished, Jane was keen to talk to him, but he only managed a quick 'Let's catch up soon' before being ushered from the room by Miss Phillips and on to his next appointment.

DCI Hutton asked for everyone to stay and have their usual update meeting but to keep it as brief as possible. Jane opened her notebook as officers began talking about various cases. Jane was surprised that there seemed to be no murder enquiries or investigations into any other serious criminal offences, and instead most of the discussion was about petty crimes and disorderly conduct.

The most serious case involved a teenage cannabis possession arrest. DCI Hutton glanced at her wristwatch, and that appeared to be the unspoken signal for the team to get to work. Notebooks were closed and chairs pushed back as Hutton gestured to DC Burrows.

'I'd like you stay, DC Burrows, and brief DI Tennison on the dispute at Clarendon Court.'

Burrows moved his chair to sit beside Jane as Hutton left the boardroom and opened a file bulging with documents.

'Right, this has been quite a lengthy investigation involving a dispute between neighbours that has been ongoing for many years, and is basically about one of them building a fence around his property and a set of gates allowing access into his garden. There were letters and all sorts of insults and lawyers getting involved, until the planning board eventually gave permission for the fence to be built, which is apparently when the dispute escalated, culminating in an incident that left one man in hospital on a life-support machine. I've spent many hours interviewing the families of both parties to try and find out what happened. I have also had a brief interview with the neighbours living opposite, but they were not at home when the incident occurred.'

After initially being disappointed that this seemed to be a case of neighbours quarrelling over a fence, Jane's interest was now piqued, especially when Burrows explained that the victim was still in a critical state and that it therefore could turn out to be a murder case, even though the alleged assailant, Mr Caplan, armed only with a garden spade, was claiming he'd acted in self-defence. She started looking through the documents.

'His wife claims that he was not in any way intent on using it; it just happened to be leaning against a wall when the two men began to argue,' Burrows explained.

Jane turned a page and tapped it with her finger.

'Is this his statement when he was brought into the station? Did Mr Caplan have any injuries consistent with being hit with an iron bar? I see he claimed that he only used the spade to protect himself, as his neighbour had an iron bar and struck him first.'

'Yes, but there was no bruising or other marks where he said he was struck, and no iron bar was recovered from the scene. So Mr Caplan looks like he's going to be facing an assault charge at the very least.'

'I'd like a map of the area,' Jane said. 'It's difficult to visualise the exact layout of the properties and also the letters regarding the dispute.'

Burrows collected all his documents and handed them to Jane. Then he pushed his chair back and suggested they go into the CID office where a drawing was pinned up on the board. The large room was busy and Jane put the file on her desk and went to join him in front of the board, where she saw a rather amateurish drawing in crayon showing a large square marked tarmac.

On one side were the outlines of two substantial properties, along with drives and garages, numbered 4 and 8. On the right-hand side of the tarmac were two smaller properties numbered 10 and 7 respectively, with martin boon property written prominently and in brackets victim.

Then, opposite numbers 4 and 8, there was the most substantial property of all. This was number 12 and the owner was marked as David Caplan.

'As you can see it's a very secluded courtyard,' Burrows explained. 'We have an estimate of the value of the properties. Numbers 4 and 8 are fairly new builds and we reckon to be worth £500,000 each, if

not more, as they both have extensive back gardens. Th e two smaller ones, numbers 10 and 7, are more likely around £300,000 as their rear gardens are not up to much. The big property, number 12, would have been the original twelve bedroomed manor house, with indoor swimming pool, two large gardens and a triple garage – valued at about three to four million. I would say that all the properties around it had been built when the land was sold off by the original owner's heirs. It's now owned by David Caplan. He bought it five years ago.'

Jane stifled a yawn, trying to concentrate, as Burrows tapped the number 12 with his pencil.

'This is the fence and the gates that have been the cause of all the bad feeling between them. Mr Caplan had been given planning permission to take down the fences and replace them with a high wall and a pair of electric gates, even though Boon had objected to the wall and complained to the council. Boon also claims that where the fence is now is four inches over the boundary!'

Jane chewed her bottom lip, then pointed to the tarmacked courtyard.

'Who owns that, or do they all share it?'

'They've all got right of way, but they are not allowed to park there. It's owned by number 10.'

'What? The tarmac area belongs to that small house? That doesn't make much sense.'

Burrows shrugged. 'You tell me! It's owned by Mr and Mrs Larsson, and she is a nasty piece of work; very rude and unhelpful. According to Mr Caplan, her husband has threatened his wife because she had parked outside their own double gates. She was also unpleasant when they moved in, and claimed the new double gates would not be allowed to open outwards as she owned the courtyard.'

Jane shook her head. It all sounded like a very odd situation.

'So, this woman, Mrs Larsson, has she got any involvement in the assault?'

'No, but we think that she is pulling Mr Boon's strings. He seems to have been very friendly with her and easily influenced.'

Burrows looked at his wristwatch. 'I ought to be going to the hospital. If Mr Boon dies, obviously it puts a whole new slant on the enquiry. I'll leave you to go through the file, and we'll get back together in the morning to discuss the next steps. I think Stanley should be back soon, and he'll be able to answer any queries you might have.'

Jane went to her desk. It all seemed so tedious, she had not really been paying much attention to what Burrows was saying. She decided to go and have some lunch before returning to her desk and making some notes.

It was after two when Jane returned to her desk and started wading through the contents of Burrows' file. Jane turned her head when she heard the door opening. She could hardly believe it! DI Stanley stood there, wearing a smart dark suit and black tie, his usual wild hair cut neatly, and with no moustache. He looked older, with lines etched on his face. On seeing Jane, he gave her a wide grin and walked over to her desk.

'Long time no see, Jane!'

He leaned over to give her a kiss on the cheek. She could smell the alcohol on his breath, and he looked quite flushed.

'I didn't expect to see you here!' she said, as he pulled up a chair.

‘I could say the same about you! I’m just waiting out the last couple of years for my pension. And then my knee needs replacing . . . same old injury . . . so what’s your excuse?’

Jane blushed. ‘I haven’t really got one, Stanley. I wanted to be transferred closer to home. I live in Chislehurst now.’

He rolled his eyes. ‘Yeah, actually I don’t live that far from here either . . . but I never thought I’d end up in this tin-pot excuse for a cop shop.’

Jane kept her voice low, moving closer to him. ‘I expected we would have our own offices, even more so now I know you’re here.’

‘’Fraid that’s down to me. I’ve always liked to be in the thick of things. I was shown a poxy office, far end of the corridor, so I asked to have a desk here. The office is now used as a storage cupboard. It’s better to be in here.’

He leaned forwards to look over the papers on her desk.

‘Christ, you been put on this with Burrows. I’ve been doing the rounds on it, but it’s just a bloody load of domestic shite . . . unless the bastard dies, of course . . . then there’ll be piles of paperwork.’

‘Have you been able to obtain any previous medical history?’

‘Not yet. I was going to talk to his GP this morning, but it was Dexter’s memorial service, and I wasn’t going to miss that.’

Jane felt as if she had been punched in the stomach. She could hardly get the words out.

‘A memorial service for Alan Dexter?’

Stanley nodded, his emotions clearly close to the surface. Before Jane could say anything more, DCI Hutton entered the room and called Stanley over. He stood abruptly and hurried to join her. Jane watched Hutton place a comforting hand on Stanley’s shoulder. Then Stanley went to his desk, took a file from a drawer and before Jane could say anything, walked out of the room. Hutton went into her office and Jane got up from her desk and hurried aft er Stanley.

The corridor was empty. Jane was not sure if he had gone to the gents’ or whether he had left the station. Then she spotted young DC Thompson coming down the corridor.

‘Have you seen DI Stanley?’

‘He just passed me as he headed out of the station.’

‘Thank you.’ Jane raised her hands in a confused gesture.

‘Straight down the corridor and through the car park exit, ma’am.’

Jane ran to the indicated exit, pushed the door open, and went down three steps into the rear yard of the station that was used by the patrol cars. She could see Stanley striding towards a Morris Minor and called out to him. He turned, swinging the car keys in his hand, as she joined him.

‘Boss gave me the rest of the day off. I’m sober enough to drive now. Left my car here and got a taxi back from the memorial.’

‘I need to ask you about Dexter,’ Jane said. ‘I hadn’t heard anything, and didn’t know about his memorial.’

Stanley pursed his lips, then opened the passenger door to toss in the file he had taken from his desk.

‘What happened?’ Jane asked.

‘Get in, it’s cold out here. There’s always a nasty wind whistling through . . . The high walls act like a wind tunnel.’

Jane climbed into the passenger seat, picking up the file and putting it on her knee as Stanley went round to sit in the driving seat.

‘Was it a bomb disposal incident?’ Jane asked.

‘No, love. Dexter sort of sidestepped from working for that unit. He was on a six-month sabbatical, or sick leave, whatever you want to call it. He got badly burned, but he was recovering well when I last saw him.’

‘So what happened?’

‘Well, you know what a mad keen racing driver Dexter was. He went over to France to have a private session at Le Mans. Apparently, he’d driven the Sarthe circuit there a couple of times, which is well known for being very fast. He took a sharp right corner, near the River Sarthe. There was another safer circuit he could have driven, the Bugatti, but anyway, he was on the main track driving his Porsche 917 . . . they reckoned he was doing over 120 miles per hour when he lost control. I’m just repeating what I’ve been told, so I don’t know all the details. It was a fatal accident. A family member had his body brought back for a private funeral, then the lads got together for the memorial today. It never made it into the press. I suppose he went the way he lived . . . right on the edge.’

Jane was struggling to swallow; her mouth felt bone-dry. She didn’t know what to say, and it was hard to take it all in. Stanley had talked as if he had repeated the story many times. She took a deep breath.

‘Thank you for telling me. Feeling a bit shell-shocked.’

Stanley watched Jane walk back towards the station, feeling relieved that she hadn’t broken down in tears. He doubted he would have been able to handle that. He had cried for his crazy, adrenaline-fuelled and fearless friend, even though he had not been that close to him. Not many people had really got to know Dexter, as he always kept himself at a distance, but he could also turn on the charm and be a warm and charismatic man. He had been a real ladies’ man and always had a different beauty hanging on his arm; in fact, there had been three ex-girlfriends at the memorial.

Stanley sighed as he saw Jane turn at the station door to look back to him. Her face was drained of colour. He wondered if Dexter had ever screwed her, but he doubted it; she didn’t seem his type. He chuckled to himself, realising he didn’t know what Dexter’s type was; like everything about that man, it was a mystery.

He started the engine and noticed that Jane was still standing by the door. She had pressed her face to the glass panel, and he now suspected that Dexter must have had sex with her. But it didn’t matter one way or the other. Now crazy Dexter was dead and buried, it was all in the past. He drove out.

This is an extract from *Taste of Blood* by Lynda La Plante

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