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Lynda La Plante **BACKLASH**



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actual people, living or dead, events or locales is entirely coincidental.

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To the memory of George Ryan

Sometimes in life you are fortunate to meet someone who has a special energy. George was a young woman when she joined my company. She became an important part of my life at probably the most important time. I was so proud of her achievements, and to see her marry Glenn and become mother to two wonderful children – Felix and Isobella – was a joyous time. George was vibrant and loving and leaves everyone who had the fortune to know her sad and bewildered by her passing. This book is dedicated to her memory, and my admiration for her burns bright.

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Chapter One

‘Quiet night so far, isn’t it?’
‘Yeah, an’ we’ve still got seven hours to go before the shift finishes!’

The two uniformed officers in the night duty patrol car were chatting whilst driving past a council estate in East London, and all was quiet in the residential street, in contrast to the numerous clubs, bars, restaurants and buzzing nightlife of Shoreditch, just down the road. And so the van bearing the logo *KIDDIES PARTY DATES* stood out as it failed to give way for a pedestrian waiting at the zebra crossing.

‘Is he on another planet?’ said the officer driving.

‘Bit late for a kiddies’ party,’ his colleague joked. ‘Go pull him over, we’ve nothing better to do at the moment.’

As they drew closer the van driver began to accelerate away from them and suddenly, without indicating, took a sharp left down a side street.

‘He’s trying to avoid us. Turn the blues and twos on,’ said the officer at the wheel as he sped after the van and turned into the side street. ‘Where’s he disappeared to? There’s no way he could have made it to the other end of the road without us seeing him.’

As the police car moved slowly down the street they saw

Lynda La Plante

the van parked up between two cars with its lights off. On their approach the driver ducked down, seemingly avoiding their headlights, and the officers could clearly see the van's logo silhouetted in the patrol car's blue flashing light: a grinning clown's face with balloons and decorations painted around it.

'My kids would run a mile if they saw that bloody clown's face,' said the officer driving as he pulled up in the middle of the road.' Gives me the creeps. I wouldn't hire them.'

He got out and walked casually towards the driver, shining his torch into the van, and tapped on the window, indicating for the man to open it. As the window was slowly lowered, the driver put up a hand to shield his face.

'Leave the keys in the ignition and step out of the vehicle, please.'

'Why?'

'Because I've asked you to and you're acting suspiciously.'

The driver suddenly grabbed the ignition keys and tried to start the van. The officer yanked open the door, pulled the man's hand away from the keys and dragged him out of the vehicle while his partner, seeing what was happening, hurried out of the patrol car to help.

'Hands where I can see them.'

'I was just having a rest. I've been working all afternoon.'

The officers quickly had the driver face down on the pavement with his hands cuffed behind his back while they patted him down, discovering a worn leather wallet, which contained a few five-pound notes and a library card in the name of Henry Oates.

Backlash

‘Just stay still, Mr Oates. Is that your name?’

‘Yeah, Henry Oates.’

Oates didn’t argue, but remained calm, as one officer pulled him up from the pavement and pressed him against the side of the van, while his partner returned to the patrol car to check on its registration plates and the identity of its driver.

‘You’ve been working, you say?’

‘Yeah.’

‘Do you live round here?’

Oates straightened and half turned. The officer pushed him in the small of his back.

‘Just stay where you are. This shouldn’t take long.’

‘Christ.’

‘This your van, is it?’

‘It belongs to a friend. I just help him out.’

It turned out that the van was neither insured nor registered to Oates, and the MOT was out of date. The control room radio operator informed them that there had been a number of overnight break-ins in the area, leading the two officers to suspect that Oates might be involved and could be using the vehicle to carry stolen property.

‘Why were you trying to avoid us?’ asked the police driver.

‘I wasn’t. I didn’t even see you. I’ve parked up here cos it’s near home.’

‘What’s in the back of the van?’

‘For fuck’s sake, just party gear, balloons, pumps and stuff like that,’ Oates replied, becoming noticeably more agitated as he tried to turn towards the officers.

‘So we won’t find any nicked gear then?’

Lynda La Plante

‘No way,’ Oates said as he suddenly started to gasp for breath and mutter something inaudible as one officer started to walk to the rear of the van.

The officer opened the back door of the van and leaned forward with his torch then suddenly jumped back startled as a helium balloon with the grotesque clown’s face on it wafted almost mockingly out of the van. Composing himself he continued his search, making out a number of cardboard boxes with something large wrapped in black bin liners between them.

The officer leaned in closer so he could reach the edge of the bin liner without getting into the van. He pulled at it gently, then gave it a hard yank, at which part of the bin liner came away easily. The beam of his torch fell on what appeared to be matted blonde hair covered in wet blood. Cautiously he leaned further forward and pulled away more of the bin liner. Now he realized that what he was looking at was a body – a woman’s body. Slowly he reached out and felt her neck for a pulse, but although she was still warm it was clear she was dead.

Easing himself from the van, he radioed for immediate backup, before turning back to his fellow officer and Oates.

‘Well, well, Henry,’ he said. ‘What sort of party have you been to tonight?’

During the journey to Hackney Police Station Oates stopped muttering, even appearing to accept his situation in a resigned, offhanded manner, and on arrival was booked in just after midnight on Friday, 12 October 2012. He said that he was thirty-eight and had no permanent address because he was living rough. He was given a clean police-issue tracksuit to wear, then after his DNA sample

Backlash

and fingerprints were taken Oates was allowed to speak with the duty solicitor on the phone, who advised him to say nothing and informed him that an Adan Kumar would attend the station in the morning to represent him. Oates was then placed in a cell for the night. He asked for a cup of tea, but made no reference to why he had been arrested.

The next morning at 5 a.m., much to the annoyance of his wife, DCI Mike Lewis was awoken by the sound of his mobile vibrating on his bedside table.

‘Mike Lewis,’ he grunted into the phone.

‘Sorry to disturb you, sir, this is DC Roy Hunter from the murder squad. A woman’s body has been discovered in the back of a van over in Hackney and they’ve arrested a bloke called Henry Oates.’

Mike sat up, and his wife moaned as he threw the duvet to one side.

‘What?’ Mike asked, still not fully awake.

‘DCS Hedges is heading up the investigation and he wants you in for a 7 a.m. handover briefing at Hackney Police Station.’

‘Gimme the address . . . no, the crime scene!’

He jotted down the address and leaned over to kiss his wife and give her his apologies, but she was fast asleep. Dressed and using his battery shaver he headed across the landing and peeked in to see his twin boys, who were still asleep, before quietly heading down the stairs.

En route to the station Mike visited the scene, and was immediately taken to one side by the Crime Scene Manager, who told him that a handbag had been recovered containing documents in the name of Justine Marks.

Lynda La Plante

The body was still in the back of the van as there were a lot of items around it that needed to be photographed then seized and bagged before she could be removed and taken to the mortuary. The post mortem was to take place at 2 p.m. that afternoon.

Mike decided that he would carry out a short interview with Henry Oates beforehand. Paul Barolli would assist him in doing so, while DC Barbara Maddox and DC Joan Falkland, with whom Mike had worked many times previously, set up the incident room at Hackney Police Station and obtained details of any next of kin for Justine Marks.

Mike Lewis and Paul Barolli entered the custody suite interview room. Oates was sitting on one side of the table with his legal representative, Adan Kumar, by his side. They sat down opposite Oates and Kumar. Paul informed Oates that the interview would be recorded and leaned over to the DVD equipment attached to the wall and pressed the start button, causing the recorder and two wall-mounted cameras in the room to light up. Mike introduced himself and Paul then cautioned Oates, telling him that he didn't have to answer any questions but that anything he did say might be given in evidence. Mike was about to commence his questioning when to his and Paul's surprise Oates suddenly sat upright and then leaned across the table.

'Right then, I may as well tell you what I already told my solicitor. Now where shall I start – or should I ask where you would like me to start?' Oates enquired.

Mike was about to ask a question when Oates raised his hand, indicating to Mike to be quiet.

Backlash

'If you want me to tell you what happened then please don't interrupt me.'

Mike and Paul looked at each other in surprise, taken aback by Oates's willingness to speak freely and Kumar allowing him to do so. Mike decided it was best to hear what Oates had to say before putting any questions to him and allowed him to continue.

Oates told his story: he had borrowed the van off the owner James Hully, who was selling it. He had taken it out at night for a test drive only because he didn't have a driving licence or insurance and he knew there would be less traffic and fewer police about. He went on his own to the Eagle pub in Hackney just before closing time where he'd noticed a group of 'pissed-up' women. After one pint he left to go home and was driving down the road when he saw one of the women and was worried because she was drunk and on her own so he stopped to offer her a lift, but she had refused and continued to walk on. Oates had followed her and asked her again if she needed a lift. This time she had been, in his words, 'Rude, told me to leave her alone.' He had driven past her for about fifty yards and then stopped and got out to tell her he was just trying to help. Oates claimed that she told him her name was Justine and she agreed to accept his lift and got into the passenger seat. She agreed to have sex with him and he had driven to some waste ground by Hackney Marshes and they had both got into the back of the van to 'do the business'. After they had sex she suddenly turned hysterical and violent, kicking him in the balls, and he had panicked and hit her to keep her quiet. Oates explained that he had just reached out for anything close to force her to stop screaming. He thought he had struck her with a section of the pump used to blow up the balloons.

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Lynda La Plante

Mike was not happy with Oates's claim that Justine's death was unintentional but he knew before a further interview that he would need not only the results of the post mortem, but also to speak with Justine's friends who were at the pub and importantly with any next of kin, who should by now have been traced by Barbara. Before ending the interview Mike asked Oates where he currently lived.

'I live rough.'

'Then why did you say you left the pub to go home?' Mike asked.

'I don't have a home as such, just a squat that I use sometimes.'

'Where?' asked Mike.

'Number eight, Holcroft Road,' Oates indignantly replied.

'That's a two-minute walk from the Eagle pub where you first saw Justine, isn't it?' Barolli enquired.

Oates made no reply and Mike Lewis informed him that he would remain in police custody while 'the squat' was searched, the post mortem carried out and some further enquiries were made about him. Oates suddenly became agitated.

'I've told you what happened. It was an accident so why do you need to keep me here?'

'You don't just hit someone by accident, Mr Oates, and the post mortem will tell us if your story is a lie or not. So unless there is another version of events that you want to tell us about, this interview will be terminated.'

There was a long pause; Mike began to gather up his paperwork and Barolli was about to turn the recording equipment off when Oates said that there was something he'd like to tell them.

Backlash

‘Are you going to tell us what really happened to Justine?’ asked Barolli.

‘I’ve already told you.’

Mike said that he had had enough of Oates’s truculent behaviour and that the interview was over.

‘Justine wasn’t the first. Before her was a ginger girl, exchange student from Dublin called Julia.’

‘Are you saying you’ve committed other murders or you know who has?’

‘If you let me finish I’ll tell you. Julia was about a year and a half ago, but she was the second.’

‘You just said that the student Julia was before Justine,’ Mike said, and Oates interrupted him.

‘No. You’re not listening to me, are you! Julia was the second, long before her was Rebekka Jordan – she was the first.’

Mike was taken aback by Oates’s sudden admissions, particularly about Rebekka Jordan. There had been extensive press surrounding her disappearance just over five years ago when she was only thirteen years old. The enquiry, which had been quickly moved up from a missing person case to a suspected child abduction and probable murder, had been headed up by none other than Detective Chief Superintendent James Langton. Mike knew that he needed detailed answers from Oates, who appeared to relish the sudden renewed attention, but with Kumar present he would have to play this by the book as he needed Oates to make a full and frank confession concerning any other murders he might have committed.

‘Have you murdered other women?’ Mike asked.

‘You’re the detective, you tell me,’ Oates replied and laughed loudly.

Lynda La Plante

Kumar was quick to interject, suggesting that it was a good time for a break as he would like to have a private consultation with his client before he answered any more questions. Mike told Oates that he didn't have to take Kumar's advice as this was his opportunity to say what happened to Rebekka Jordan and Julia.

'Are we playing roulette, officer?'

'Oates decides if he wants to play, Mr Kumar, not you!'

'Well I am advising him to make no further comment.'

'It's a simple yes or no, Oates. Did you kill Rebekka Jordan?'

Oates said nothing but arrogantly turned and nodded to Kumar.

'Looks like Henry wants to take my advice, DCI Lewis.'

As Mike stormed out of the room he barked at Barolli to close the interview and then meet him in the office.

Mike was still seething by the time he had climbed the two flights of stairs to the allocated murder squad office, where he found Joan and Barbara were inputting data into the HOLMES computers and preparing the incident board. It was immediately obvious to everyone present that DCI Lewis was in a foul mood.

'Joan, request a copy of the Rebekka Jordan cold case file from archives and check with the national missing persons bureau for a Dublin girl by the name of Julia. Get them to search back over the last five years.'

'A few more details would be helpful, sir. I thought we were dealing with the Justine Marks case?'

'And maybe a whole lot more by the looks of it, so just do as I ask. Where are we with next of kin?'

Joan informed him that Justine's husband was Simon Marks, a stockbroker in the City, and arrangements had

Backlash

been made for a detective to take him to the mortuary at 1 p.m. to formally identify the body of his wife.

Mike sat in his office, fully aware that there was a lot to do and little time in which to do it. He wondered what Oates was up to and if his tentative admissions to two other murders were even true. It didn't make sense that Oates should be lying about Rebekka and the unknown Irish girl Julia, however Mike knew both cases would have to be fully investigated and Oates's involvement proved or disproved. The burning question was when, if at all, should he inform DCS Langton, as he was currently on sick leave recovering from a knee operation and DCS Hedges was in temporary charge of the murder squads. Mike Lewis made up his mind and asked Barbara to get everyone gathered for an office meeting in thirty minutes.

With the team all there Mike gave them a rundown of the interview with Oates, unaware that Paul Barolli had already filled them in on why he was in such a bad mood. Mike had decided that the Justine Marks murder would be the initial priority and he himself would attend the mortuary for the identification by Simon Marks. He told Barbara to contact the Eagle pub and see if they had any CCTV and to arrange interviews with Justine's work colleagues. Joan informed Mike that she had asked 'Mispers' to run an enquiry on any Irish girls with the name Julia but it could be some time before they got back with any results on such limited details for a five-year span.

Joan also said that the owner of the van that Oates had borrowed was indeed a James Hully, who had a history of petty crimes and had, he insisted, been sick in bed when

Lynda La Plante

Oates had borrowed his van. His wife maintained that her husband had not left their flat for two days and that on the night of the 11th of October he had had a very high temperature and was in bed very ill. Hully lived on the estate close to the pub and had access to a lockup garage where he kept his van. He claimed that it was not insured or licensed because of poor business and he was planning on selling it. Oates had told him he was interested in buying the vehicle and wanted to test drive it so he let him try it out while he was ill as long as he did a few party deliveries for him. Hully alleged that he did not know Oates very well, but had met him occasionally at a local pub. He said they had played darts together and during a game he had mentioned to Oates that he was selling his van and quitting his job as a children's entertainer. Apart from that, he knew nothing more about Oates or where he lived.

Before finishing the meeting Mike Lewis raised a couple of actions that he felt needed urgent attention.

'Joan, I need you to prepare a full file on Oates. I want to know everything about him since the day he was born. Paul, contact the Crime Scene Manager and organize a full forensic search of the squat address Oates gave us.'

Mike then thanked them all for their hard work so far but continued that as there was still a lot to do he would have to cancel all weekend leave for the team. There were a few sighs around the room as they got up from their chairs to go home.

'Hold it. I haven't finished yet,' Mike said and they all sat down again.

'The fact that we are looking at Oates for other possible murders is to stay within these four walls and there will be serious repercussions if there's any press leaks. DCS

Backlash

Hedges or I will decide as and when DCS Langton should be informed of any developments concerning the Jordan case.’

Simon Marks was devastated and needed to be helped from the mortuary viewing room. He told them that Justine was twenty-seven years old and was a bank clerk at a Hackney branch of the NatWest Bank. She’d been joining some of her co-workers for a baby shower party after work on the 11th of October. She had not taken her car into work as she knew they would be drinking and the girls had ordered taxis to take them home. Justine told him not to wait up for her as she would be late, and when he discovered she had not returned the following morning he had not been that concerned as he thought she might have stayed over with one of her friends. Simon only became worried later that morning when he called her work to be told that she had not come in. He had started to ring round various friends when the police arrived to give him the terrible news.

Whilst at the mortuary Mike, anxious to know the cause of death, spoke with the pathologist, who was at the time still completing the external examination of the body, photographing, measuring and detailing all the injuries. He said that he would not be able to give an exact cause of death until he had completed a full internal examination as well, but Mike pressed him for his opinion on his initial observations. It was immediately clear that Oates had been lying about Justine’s death.

When the body first arrived at the mortuary the pathologist had carefully cut open the bin liners to preserve them for fingerprints. He had noted that Justine’s bra had been

Lynda La Plante

pulled up around her neck and twisted so tightly that the hook and eyes of the strap had left puncture marks in the nape of her neck. Her tights and knickers, although still on her, were both torn and ripped. Her leather zip-up boots had scuffmarks on both heels, which implied she might have been dragged backwards along the pavement and into the back of the van. Justine had also suffered a heavy blow to the back of her head with a blunt instrument, which had caused a depressed fracture and an indentation mark in the shape of a half-moon. The pathologist was of the opinion that the head injury probably didn't kill her but it would certainly have knocked her unconscious. From the severe bruising and scratch marks to her thighs and vagina, it appeared that she might have been raped whilst unable to struggle or defend herself.

All her clothing, swabs and toxicology samples had already been taken to the forensic lab for examination. Because of the head injury and the possibility Justine might have been strangled or suffocated to death the brain would have to be left in formaldehyde for two weeks and then sent to an expert in forensic neuropathology for examination, which would further delay the pathologist's final report and his finding on the actual cause of death.

Mike Lewis asked if a balloon pump handle could have caused the head injury but the pathologist doubted that it would be heavy enough or leave the half-moon impression. Mike put in a quick call to the lab and asked for details of items that had been recovered from the back of the van. Amongst them was a nine-inch heavy-duty spanner which the pathologist said could leave the type of head injury that Justine had suffered. Mike asked the lab to make the spanner a priority.

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Backlash

On his return to the incident room Barbara informed Mike that there was no CCTV at the pub but she and other officers had spoken with Justine's colleagues. On the evening of the 11th at about 7 p.m. eight of them had taken over a small private room in the Eagle pub, and they had ordered food and bottles of wine to be brought up from the bar. The evening was to be a baby shower for their co-worker Avril, who was expecting her first child, but as she had decided that she would not return to work after the birth, it was also a farewell party. At just after eleven the party broke up. Two of the girls' husbands had turned up to give them a lift home and Avril, who had not been drinking and had her car, had offered to give two of the girls a ride home as they lived quite close to each other. The other two got into a taxi, but Justine had said she would get her own one as she lived in the opposite direction. The last sighting of Justine was as the girls were driven off in their taxi. She had waved to them from outside the pub, standing in the car park.

All the girls were certain that Justine had been the last to leave. None of them could recall ever seeing Henry Oates and not one of them said that Justine was the type of girl to get into a stranger's car, let alone agree to have sex with someone she didn't know. Justine was a very calm, quiet woman and in a loving relationship with her husband. Avril, in particular, was inconsolable. She said that Justine was one of the nicest people she had ever known, always helpful and had bought a beautiful gift for her forthcoming baby. She wept when she said that Justine had confided that she and her husband Simon were desperate for a child and were saving for IVF treatment as Justine had some medical problem with her fallopian tubes. She was adamant that Justine would not have

Lynda La Plante

accepted a lift from Oates; she was by far too cautious.

Barbara said their accounts of the evening matched Oates's description of seeing the group of girls leaving the pub just after closing time, but if Justine had been going to get her own taxi home it seemed strange that she should start to walk up the road as Oates had described. Mike wondered if yet again Oates was lying and he had in fact hit her over the head and dragged her into the van whilst still in the Eagle car park.

Barolli had obtained a search warrant and gained access to Henry Oates's property. It was a basement squat in a run-down Victorian terraced house and was only three miles from the estate in Hackney. Although the present owner wanted to demolish it he was unable to do so due to a preservation order and the premises had not been lawfully occupied for six years. The owner didn't actually object to the squatters as he hoped it would encourage the council to lift the preservation order. The three rooms used by Oates were filthy and stank of stale food and urine. A team of forensic officers began the careful search for evidence.

The wardrobes were full of dirty clothes and boots and there appeared to be no clean laundry. The single bed was disgusting, with filthy sheets and blankets heaped on a bare mattress. They did find numerous items of women's clothing in a black bin liner and these were removed for further examination. The bathroom contained worn, dirty towels and a shower curtain grey with a hideous residue of grime hanging limply over a brown-stained bath. The toilet looked as if it had been out of order for some time; the bowl stank and the chain to flush it was broken. The team found numerous knives in the small kitchen annexe, plus a

Backlash

carpenter's bag that contained hacksaws and hammers and two large sharpened screwdrivers. These were also taken away to be tested by the forensic team. The overpowering smell in the kitchen came from fifteen beer bottles lined up by the back door; they all contained urine. Opening the back door there were even more bottles, which were smashed, and the officers could only presume that Oates had used them to piss into as his toilet was broken.

'What an absolute shithole,' Barolli told Lewis. 'Toilet full of piss and crap, not to mention the floor and—'

'For Chrissake, I don't need any more description, Paul. The guy is a pig and obviously lived like one,' Mike said, shaking his head.

'They got bags of stuff to be sifted through at the forensic lab. Poor bastards'll need to wear masks, everything stinks,' Paul further informed Mike, who walked off into his office.

As Lewis and Barolli prepared for a further interview with Oates, Joan again spoke with missing persons, hoping to identify the woman called Julia that Oates said he had killed over a year ago, but as yet they had not found a match. Mike gave instructions for Joan to continue pressing them for a result and asked what she had found out about Oates's background. She'd discovered from her enquiries with Jobseeker's that he was unemployed and living on benefits. He had worked spasmodically at various building sites as an unskilled labourer, but had been in and out of work for many years. He was divorced and his wife and their two children had returned to live in Scotland eight years ago.

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Lynda La Plante

Mike Lewis and Paul Barolli questioned Oates for the second time with Adan Kumar, his solicitor, present. Oates was delighted that they wanted to speak with him again and he seemed in an almost euphoric mood. Mike went over the Justine Marks murder first but Oates calmly and firmly maintained that her death was an accident and he had never meant to hurt her, repeating that she had come on to him for sex. When Mike informed Oates of his visit to the mortuary, the bra round Justine's neck, her head injury, torn clothing and the bruising consistent with rape, Oates accused him of lying and trying to fit him up with murder. He then started spurting out one name after another, saying they were all well-known cases where the police had 'stitched them up'. Mike had never heard of any of the names and Oates was rambling so fast that he and Barolli had difficulty in following what he was saying. Realizing that he was not going to budge on Justine's death, Mike was content that Oates's performance would show a jury he was a conniving but not a very convincing liar.

Mike now moved on to the disappearance of Rebekka Jordan. No sooner had he mentioned her name than Oates became noticeably irritated, chewing his bottom lip and repeatedly beating his right foot on the floor like a distressed animal. Mike asked him if he had abducted and killed her. Oates snapped back that what he said before was all bullshit and made up 'for a bit of a laugh' and he knew Rebekka Jordan's name because of all the news coverage the case had received. When Mike asked why he had suddenly become so upset and defensive, Oates replied it was because he knew that the police would try and fit him up with the Rebekka Jordan murder as well.

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Backlash

Mike Lewis walked away from Oates sickened, but determined to put the loathsome creature away for the murder of Justine Marks. He also intended to thoroughly investigate the other cases. The CPS gave the go-ahead to charge Oates with the murder of Justine Marks and so he appeared at the magistrates' court the next morning. Kumar made no application for bail and Oates was remanded in custody in Wandsworth Prison to await trial for murder. Mike, who had attended the hearing, took the CPS solicitor aside to tell her about Oates's admissions regarding Rebekka Jordan and the girl called Julia, and that he would be making further enquiries.

Back at the incident room, Joan informed Mike that there were a few possible hits about Julia from 'Mispers' and that Barbara had gone over to their offices to get copies of the reports. Meanwhile, the Rebekka Jordan case file and Langton's investigation report had been collected from archives overnight and were in his office.

Mike was taken aback. The thick file of documents for the Jordon case made it obvious that Langton had left no stone unturned. After nearly two years of enquiries with hundreds of statements, Langton had been unable to uncover a suspect. Rebekka Jordan had disappeared after taking a riding lesson at her local stables in Shepherd's Bush. She was last seen on CCTV footage walking from the stables towards Shepherd's Bush Tube Station, wearing a backpack believed to contain her riding hat. There were no blackmail notes, no calls and no sighting of the little girl, even after the extensive press coverage and television crime show requests for anyone with information to come forward. Thousands of photographs of Rebekka had been

Lynda La Plante

posted up by her family as well as the police, along with a description of what she was wearing the last time she had been seen: a yellow polo-neck sweater, jodhpurs, a riding jacket and black boots. All these items of clothing were replicated for a reconstruction using a lookalike girl to re-enact her last walk from the stables. Again, it had brought in no useful information. Rebekka had disappeared without trace.

Mike Lewis was totally drained after looking over the files that now covered his desk for nearly three hours. Was it possible that Henry Oates was telling them the truth? Had he been involved in the murder of Rebekka Jordan, or was he making up the details in some sick game that he wanted to play with them? There was a knock at his door and Paul Barolli entered.

‘We were wondering what time you wanted to call it a day. A few of the team have evening arrangements, it being a Saturday, but I’m up for a pint if you fancy one.’

‘Everyone can knock off at five and then tomorrow I want the case file and statements for Justine Marks put together so we can concentrate on the Jordan case from Monday.’

‘You think he’s bullshitting us?’ Barolli asked, thumbing through a file of witness statements.

‘Christ knows – he clearly lied about how Justine Marks died then says he killed Rebekka Jordan and a Julia who we don’t even know exists yet. To be honest I couldn’t tell you, but I can’t just ignore his claims, lies or not.’

‘No way you can do that, especially not with the Jordan girl. It’s bloody Langton, Mike, he ran the enquiry into Rebekka Jordan’s disappearance. You’re going to have to run all this by him.’ Barolli tapped the file in front of

Backlash

him.’ This must have hurt; no result after this amount of work.’

‘Yeah. I know he’s probably hurting right now, he’s just had knee surgery. I don’t even know if he’s out of hospital.’

Barolli grinned. ‘Well that should keep him out of our hair. He’ll come down on this like a ton of bricks. You know him, hates to lose and an unsolved case is always hard to stomach.’

‘I’ve got to call Hedges first and update him as he’s the boss while Langton’s off sick. To be honest I’d like some guidance from Langton and if this Julia links to a “Misper” there will be mountains of work, more staff needed and it’s all going to cost.’

‘Fancy that pint then?’

‘No thanks, I promised the wife a bottle of wine and a takeaway curry.’

Mike phoned Hedges, who seemed to be upset that his evening in front of the television was being interrupted. Mike tried to be as brief as he could, going over the salient points of the investigation so far and requesting more staff. Hedges said that more staff was not an option as Mike had no direct evidence as yet to link Oates to Rebekka Jordan’s disappearance and as far as he could see the name Julia had just been plucked out of thin air by Oates.

‘DCS Langton was in charge of the original investigation into the disappearance of Rebekka Jordan so I wondered if I should make contact with him about the latest development concerning Oates?’ Mike asked cautiously, knowing that Hedges and Langton were not the best of friends.

‘That’s entirely up to you, DCI Lewis, but while he is off sick I am in charge of the murder squads so any lines of

Lynda La Plante

enquiry he raises will go through me for approval,' Hedges curtly replied.

'Yes, sir, and I'm sorry for bothering you when you're busy but have you considered getting Sky Plus so you can pause live TV when your viewing pleasure is interrupted?' Mike asked tongue-in-cheek but his irony was wasted on Hedges who simply put the phone down.

Mike was just switching his office light off when he saw Barbara come through the door, clutching a folder.

'I'm just off home – I thought you'd be long gone by now.'

'No, sir, I've been at "Mispers" all day looking over files.'

'The look on your face tells me I'm not going to like this.'

'Well it's only a possibility, but her name's Fidelis Julia Flynn, aged twenty-one. She's originally from Dublin but was living in Kilburn, had ginger hair and has been missing for about eighteen months.'

'You said her name was Fidelis.'

'Yes but all her friends know her as Julia. Told them she preferred it to Fidelis.' Barbara handed the file over to Mike. "Mispers" made a lot of enquiries, took a shedload of statements, but nothing, just like Rebekka she disappeared without a trace.'

Mike looked at the young woman's photograph on the front of the file. 'In some ways I hoped that Oates was lying. Not because I don't want another case to investigate, but it's the thought that another young girl has probably been beaten, raped, then murdered, leaving a whole family destroyed by one man.'

'Sorry, sir.'

Backlash

‘Don’t be sorry, you’re just doing your job. I’ll look over the Flynn file at home tonight.’

Mike checked the time and decided he’d put off the call to Langton until he’d read the Flynn ‘Misper’ file. He also felt way out of his depth, but wouldn’t want anyone to know it. The Henry Oates investigation could make or break his career. He needed a good night’s sleep to determine how to approach the case because it could easily spiral out of his control. Mike knew if he was to take on the Rebekka Jordan and Fidelis Julia Flynn investigation as well as that of Justine Marks then Hedges would have to give him a very big team of officers, even more so as one of those cold cases had been headed up by DCS James Langton.