

Treasure

### **1975: 9 April**

Leeds: 'Motorway City of the Seventies'. A proud slogan. No irony intended. Gaslight still flickering on some streets. Life in a northern town.

The Bay City Rollers at number one. IRA bombs all over the country. Margaret Thatcher is the new leader of the Conservative Party. At the beginning of the month, in Albuquerque, Bill Gates founds what will become Microsoft. At the end of the month Saigon falls to the North Vietnamese army. *The Black and White Minstrel Show* is still on television, John Poulson is still in jail. *Bye Bye Baby, Baby Goodbye*. In the middle of it all, Tracy Waterhouse was only concerned with the hole in one of the toes of her tights. It was growing bigger with every step she took. They were new on this morning as well.

They had been told that it was on the fifteenth floor of the flats in Lovell Park and - of course - the lifts were broken. The two PCs huffed and puffed their way up the stairs. By the time they neared the top they were resting at every turn of the stair. WPC Tracy Waterhouse, a big, graceless girl only just off probation, and PC Ken Arkwright, a stout white Yorkshireman with a heart of lard. Climbing Everest.

They would both see the beginning of the Ripper's killing spree but Arkwright would be retired long before the end of it. Donald Neilson, the Black Panther from Bradford, hadn't been captured yet and Harold Shipman had probably already started killing patients unlucky enough to be under his care in Pontefract General Infirmary. West Yorkshire in 1975, awash with serial killers.

Tracy Waterhouse was still wet behind the ears, although she wouldn't admit to it. Ken Arkwright had seen more than most but remained avuncular and sanguine, a good copper for a green girl to be beneath the wing of. There were bad apples in the barrel - the dark cloud of David Oluwale's death still cast a long shadow on police in the West Riding, but Arkwright wasn't under it. He could be violent when necessary, sometimes when not, but he didn't discriminate on the grounds of colour when it came to reward and punishment. And women were often *slappers* and *scrubbers* but he'd helped out a few street girls with fags and cash, and he loved his wife and daughters.

Despite pleas from her teachers to stay on and 'make something of herself', Tracy had left school at fifteen to do a shorthand and typing course and went straight into Montague Burton's offices as a junior, eager to get on with her adult life. 'You're a bright girl,' the man in personnel said, offering her a cigarette. 'You could go far. You never know, PA to the MD one day.' She didn't know what 'MD' meant. Wasn't too sure about 'PA' either. The man's eyes were all over her.

Sixteen, never been kissed by a boy, never drunk wine, not even Blue Nun. Never eaten an avocado or seen an aubergine, never been on an aeroplane. It was different in those days.

She bought a tweed maxi coat from Etam and a new umbrella. Ready for anything. Or as ready as she would ever be. Two years later she was in the police. Nothing could have prepared her for that. *Bye Bye, Baby*.

Tracy was worried that she might never leave home. She spent her nights in front of

the television with her mother while her father drank – modestly – in the local Conservative club. Together, Tracy and her mother, Dorothy, watched *The Dick Emery Show* or *Steptoe and Son* or Mike Yarwood doing an impression of Steptoe and his son. Or Edward Heath, his shoulders heaving up and down. Must have been a sad day for Mike Yarwood when Margaret Thatcher took over the leadership. Sad day for everyone. Tracy had never understood the attraction of impressionists.

Her stomach rumbled like a train. She'd been on the cottage cheese and grapefruit diet for a week. Wondered if you could starve to death while you were still overweight.

'Jesus H. Christ,' Arkwright gasped, bending over and resting his hands on his knees when they finally achieved the fifteenth floor. 'I used to be a rugby wing forward, believe it or not.'

'Ay, well, you're just an old, fat bloke now,' Tracy said. 'What number?'

'Twenty-five. It's at the end.'

A neighbour had phoned in anonymously about a bad smell ('a right stink') coming from the flat.

'Dead rats, probably,' Arkwright said. 'Or a cat. Remember those two dogs in that house in Chapeltown? Oh no, before your time, lass.'

'I heard about it. Bloke went off and left them without any food. They ate each other in the end.'

'They didn't eat each other,' Arkwright said. '*One* of them ate the other one.'

'You're a bloody pedant, Arkwright.'

'A what? Cheeky so-and-so. Ey up, here we go. Fuck a duck, Trace, you can smell it from here.'

Tracy Waterhouse pressed her thumb on the doorbell and kept it there. Glanced down at her ugly police-issue regulation black lace-ups and wiggled her toes inside her ugly police-issue regulation black tights. Her big toe had gone right through the hole in the tights now and a ladder was climbing up towards one of her big footballer's knees. 'It'll be some old bloke who's been lying here for weeks,' she said. 'I bloody hate them.'

'I hate train jumpers.'

'Dead kiddies.'

'Yeah. They're the worst,' Arkwright agreed. Dead children were trumps, every time.

Tracy took her thumb off the doorbell and tried turning the door handle. Locked. 'Ah, Jesus, Arkwright, it's humming in there. Something that's not about to get up and walk away, that's for sure.'

Arkwright banged on the door and shouted, 'Hello, it's the police here, is anyone in there? Shit, Tracy, can you hear that?'

'Flies?'

Ken Arkwright bent down and looked through the letterbox. 'Oh, Christ—' He recoiled from the letterbox so quickly that Tracy's first thought was that someone had squirted something into his eyes. It had happened to a sergeant a few weeks ago, a nutter with a Squeezy washing-up bottle full of bleach. It had put everyone off looking through letterboxes. Arkwright, however, immediately squatted down and pushed open the letterbox again and started talking soothingly, the way you would to a nervy dog. 'It's OK, it's OK, everything's OK now. Is Mummy there? Or your daddy? We're going to help you. It's OK.' He stood and got ready to shoulder the door. Pawed the ground, blew air out of his mouth and said to Tracy, 'Prepare yourself, lass, it's not going to be pretty.'

### **Six months ago**

The suburban outskirts of Munich on a cold afternoon. Large, lazy flakes of snow fluttering down like white confetti, falling on the bonnet of their anonymous-looking German-made car.

'Nice house,' Steve said. He was a cocky little sod who talked too much. It was doubtful that Steve was his real name. 'Big house,' he added.

'Yeah, nice big house,' he agreed, more to shut Steve up than anything else. Nice and big and surrounded, unfortunately, by other nice big houses, on the kind of street that had vigilant neighbours and burglar alarms dotted like bright carbuncles on the walls. A couple of the very nicest, biggest houses had security gates and cameras attached to their walls.

The first time you recce, the second time you pay attention to detail, the third time you do the job. This was the third time. 'Bit Germanic for my liking, of course,' Steve said, as if the entire portfolio of European real estate was at his disposal.

'Maybe that's something to do with the fact that we're in Germany,' he said.

Steve said, 'I've got nothing against the Germans. Had a couple in the Deuxième. Good lads. Good beer,' he added after several seconds' contemplation. 'Good sausages too.'

Steve said he'd been in the Paras, came out and found he couldn't handle civilian life, joined the French Foreign Legion. *You think you're hard and then you find out what hard really means.*

Right. How many times had he heard that? He'd met a few guys from the legion in his time – ex-military guys escaping the flatline of civilian life, deserters from divorces and paternity suits, fugitives from boredom. All of them were running from something, none of them quite the outlaws they imagined themselves to be. Certainly not Steve. This was the first time they'd done a job together. The guy was a bit of a gung-ho wanker but he was OK, he paid attention. He didn't smoke in the car, he didn't want to listen to crap radio stations.

Some of these places reminded him of gingerbread houses, right down to the icing-sugar snow that rimmed their roofs and gutters. He had seen a gingerbread house for sale in the Christkindl market where they had spent the previous evening, strolling around the Marienplatz, drinking *Glühwein* out of Christmas mugs, for all the world like regular tourists. They'd had to pay a deposit on the mugs and on that basis he had taken his back to the Platzl, where they were staying. A present for his daughter Marlee when he got home, even though she would probably turn her nose up at it, or, worse, thank him indifferently and never look at it again.

'Did you do that job in Dubai?' Steve asked.

'Yeah.'

'I heard everything went tits up?'

'Yeah.'

A car rounded the corner and they both instinctively checked their watches. It glided past. Wrong car. 'It's not them,' Steve said, unnecessarily.

On the plus side, they had a long driveway that curved away from the gate so that you couldn't see the house from the road. And the driveway was bordered by a lot of bushes. No security lights, no motion-sensor lights. Darkness was the friend of covert ops. Not today, they were doing this in daylight. Neither broad nor bright, the fag end of the

afternoon. The dimming of the day.

Another car came round the corner, the right one this time. 'Here comes the kid,' Steve said softly. She was five years old, straight black hair, big brown eyes. She had no idea what was about to happen to her. *The Paki kid*, Steve called her.

'Egyptian. Half,' he corrected Steve. 'She's called Jennifer.'

'I'm not racist.'

But.

The snow was still fluttering down, sticking to the windscreen for a second before melting. He had a sudden, unexpected memory of his sister coming into the house, laughing and shaking blossom off her clothes, out of her hair. He thought of the town they were brought up in as a place devoid of trees and yet here she was in his memory like a bride, a shower of petals like pink thumbprints on the dark veil of her hair.

The car pulled into the driveway and disappeared from view. He turned to look at Steve. 'Ready?'

'Lock and load,' Steve said, starting the engine.

'Remember, don't hurt the nanny.'

'Unless I have to.'

## S

### **Wednesday**

'Watch out, the dragon's about.'

'Where?'

'There. Just passing Greggs.' Grant pointed at Tracy Waterhouse's image on one of the monitors. The air in the security control room was always stale. Outside, it was beautiful May weather but in here the atmosphere was like that of a submarine that had been under too long. They were coming up to lunchtime, the busiest time of the day for shoplifters. The police were in and out all day, every day. A pair of them out there now, all tooled up, bulky waist-belts, knife-proof vests, short-sleeved shirts, 'escorting' a woman out of Peacocks, her bags stuffed with clothes she hadn't paid for. Leslie got sleepy from peering at the monitors. Sometimes she turned a blind eye. Not everyone was, strictly speaking, a criminal. 'What a week,' Grant said, making a gurning face. 'School half-term and a bank holiday. We'll be going over the top. It'll be carnage.'

Grant was chewing Nicorette as if his life depended on it. He had a stain of something on his tie. Leslie considered telling him about the stain. Decided not to. It looked like blood but it seemed more likely that it was ketchup. He had such bad acne that he looked radioactive. Leslie was pretty and petite and had a degree in chemical engineering from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, and working in security in the Merrion Centre in Leeds was a short, not entirely unpleasurable dogleg in her life's journey. She was on what her family called her 'World Tour'. She'd done Athens, Rome, Florence, Nice, Paris. Not quite the world. She'd stopped off in Leeds to visit relatives, decided to stay for the summer after she hooked up with a philosophy post-grad called Dominic who worked in a bar. She had met his parents, been to their house for a meal. Dominic's mother heated up an individual 'Vegetarian Lasagne' from Sainsbury's for her while the rest of them ate chicken. His mother was defensive, worried that Leslie would carry her son off to a faraway continent and all her grandchildren would have accents and be vegetarians. Leslie wanted to reassure her, say, It's only a holiday romance, but

that probably wouldn't go down well either.

'Leslie with an "ie",' she had to tell everyone in England because they spelt it with a 'y'. 'Really?' Dominic's mother said, as if Leslie was herself a spelling mistake. Leslie tried to imagine taking Dominic home to her own family, introducing him to her parents, how unimpressed they'd be. She missed home, the Mason and Risch piano in the corner, her brother, Lloyd, her old golden retriever, Holly, and her cat, Mitten. Not necessarily in that order. Her family took a cottage on Lake Huron in the summer. She couldn't even begin to explain this other life to Grant. Not that she would want to. Grant stared at her all the time when he thought she wasn't looking. He was desperate to have sex with her. It was kind of funny really. She would rather stick knives in her eyes.

'She's passing Workout World,' Grant said.

'Tracy's OK,' Leslie said.

'She's a Nazi.'

'No she's not.' Leslie had her eye on a group of hoodies lurching past Rayners' Opticians. One of them was wearing some kind of Halloween fright mask. He leered at an old woman who flinched at the sight of him. 'We always prosecute,' Leslie murmured, as if it was a private joke.

'Ey up,' Grant said. 'Tracy's going into Thornton's. Must need her daily rations topping up.'

Leslie liked Tracy, you knew where you were with her. No bullshit.

'She's a right fat pig,' Grant said.

'She's not fat, just big.'

'Yeah, that's what they all say.'

Leslie was small and delicate. A cracking bird if ever there was one, in Grant's opinion. Special. Not like some of the slags you got round here. 'Sure you don't want to go for a drink after work?' he asked, ever hopeful. 'Cocktail bar in town. Sophisticated place for a sophisticated laydee.'

'Ey up,' Leslie said. 'There's some dodgy kids going into City Cyber.'

## S

Tracy Waterhouse came out of Thornton's, stuffing her forage into the big, ugly shoulder bag that she wore strapped, like a bandolier, across her substantial chest. Viennese truffles, her midweek treat. Pathetic really. Other people went to the cinema on an evening, to restaurants, pubs and clubs, visited friends, had sex, but Tracy was looking forward to curling up on her sofa with *Britain's Got Talent* and a bag of Thornton's Viennese truffles. And a chicken bhuna that she was going to pick up on the way home and wash down with one or two cans of Beck's. Or three or four, even though it was a Wednesday. A school night. More than forty years since Tracy left school. When had she last eaten a meal with someone in a restaurant? That bloke from the dating agency, a couple of years ago, in Dino's in Bishopsgate? She could remember what she'd eaten – garlic bread, spaghetti and meatballs, followed by a cr8Fme caramel – yet she couldn't recall the bloke's name. 'You're a big girl,' he said when she met him for a drink beforehand in Whitelock's.

'Yeah,' she said. 'Want to make something of it?' Downhill from there on really.

She ducked into Superdrug to pick up some Advil for the Beck's headache she would wake up with tomorrow. The girl behind the till didn't even look at her. Service with a

scowl. Very easy to steal from Superdrug, lots of handy little things to slip into a bag or a pocket – lipsticks, toothpaste, shampoo, Tampax – you could hardly blame people for thieving, it was as if you were inviting them. Tracy glanced around at the security cameras. She knew there was a blind spot right on Nailcare. You could have taken everything you needed for a year's worth of manicures and no one would be any the wiser. She placed a protective hand on her bag. It contained two envelopes stuffed with twenties – five thousand pounds in all – that she'd just removed from her account at the Yorkshire Bank. She would like to see someone trying to snatch it from her – she was looking forward to beating them to a pulp with her bare hands. No point in having weight, Tracy reasoned, if you weren't prepared to throw it around.

The money was a payment for Janek, the workman who was extending the kitchen in the terraced house in Headingley that she'd bought with the proceeds of the sale of her parents' bungalow in Bramley. It was such a relief that they were finally dead, dying within a few weeks of each other, minds and bodies long past their sell-by date. They had both reached ninety and Tracy had begun to think that they were trying to outlive her. They had always been competitive people.

Janek started at eight in the morning, finished at six, worked on a Saturday – Polish, what else. It was embarrassing how much Tracy was attracted to Janek, despite the fact that he was twenty years younger and at least three inches shorter than she was. He was so careful and had such good manners. Every morning Tracy left out tea and coffee for him and a plate of biscuits wrapped in cling-film. When she returned home the biscuits were all eaten. It made her feel wanted. She was starting a week's holiday on Friday and Janek promised everything would be finished by the time she returned. Tracy didn't want it to be finished, well, she did, she was sick to death of it, but she didn't want *him* to be finished.

She wondered if he would stay on if she asked him to do her bathroom. He was champing at the bit to go home. All the Poles were going back now. They didn't want to stay in a bankrupt country. Before the Berlin Wall came down you felt sorry for them, now you envied them.

When Tracy was on the force her fellow officers – male and female – all assumed she was a dyke. She was over fifty now and way back when she had joined the West Yorkshire Police as a raw cadet you had to be one of the boys to get along. Unfortunately, once you'd established yourself as a hard-nosed bitch it was difficult to admit to the soft and fluffy woman you were hiding inside. And why would you want to admit to that anyway?

Tracy had retired with a shell so thick that there was hardly any room left inside. Vice, sexual offences, human trafficking – the underbelly of Drugs and Major Crime – she'd seen it all and more. Witnessing the worst of human behaviour was a pretty good way of killing off anything soft and fluffy.

She'd been around so long that she had been a humble foot soldier when Peter Sutcliffe was still patrolling the streets of West Yorkshire. She remembered the fear, she'd been afraid herself. That was in the days before computers, when the sheer weight of paperwork was enough to swamp the investigation. 'There were days before computers?' one of her younger, cheekier colleagues said. 'Wow, Jurassic.'

He was right, she was from another era. She should have gone sooner, only hanging on because she couldn't think how to fill the long empty days of retirement. Sleep, eat, protect, repeat, that was the life she knew. Everyone was fixated on the thirty years, get out, get another job, enjoy the pension. Anyone who stayed on longer was seen as a fool.

Tracy would have preferred to have dropped in harness but she knew it was time to go. She had been a detective superintendent, now she was a 'police pensioner'. Sounded Dickensian, as if she should be sitting in the corner of a workhouse, wrapped in a dirty shawl. She'd thought about volunteering with one of those organizations that helped mop up after disasters and wars. After all, it was something she felt she'd been doing all her life, but in the end she took the job in the Merrion Centre.

At her farewell piss-up they had given her a laptop and two hundred quid's worth of spa vouchers for the Waterfall Spa on Brewery Wharf. She was pleasantly surprised, even flattered, that they imagined she was the kind of woman who would use a spa. She already had a laptop and she knew the one they gave her was one of those that Carphone Warehouse gave away for free, but it was the thought that counted.

When she took the job as head of security in the Merrion Centre Tracy thought 'fresh start' and made some changes, not just moving house but getting her moustache waxed, growing her hair into a softer style, shopping for blouses with bows and pearl buttons and shoes with kitten heels to wear with the ubiquitous black suit. It didn't work, of course. She could tell that, spa vouchers or no spa vouchers, people still thought she was a butch old battleaxe.

\*CACA\*CACA\*

Tracy liked getting up close and personal with the punters. She strolled past Morrisons, the gap where Woolworths used to be, Poundstretcher – the retail preferences of the lumpenproletariat. Was there anyone in the entire soulless place who was happy? Leslie perhaps, although she kept her cards close to her chest. Like Janek, she had a life somewhere else. Tracy imagined Canada was a good place to live. Or Poland. Perhaps she should emigrate.

It was warm today. Tracy hoped the weather would last for her holiday. A week in a National Trust cottage, lovely setting. She was a member. That was what happened when you grew older and had nothing full filling in your life – you joined the National Trust or English Heritage and spent your weekends meandering around gardens and houses that didn't belong to you or gazing in boredom at ruins, trying to reconstruct them in your mind – long-gone monks cooking, pissing, praying inside walls of cold stone. And you spent your holidays on your own, of course. She'd joined a 'singles social club' a couple of years ago. Middle-aged, middle-class people who didn't have any friends. Rambling, art classes, museum visits, all very sedate. She joined thinking it might be nice to go on holiday with other people but it hadn't worked out. Spent all her time trying to get away from them.

The world was going to hell in a handcart. The Watch Hospital, Costa Coffee, Wilkinson's Hardware, Walmsley's, Herbert Brown's ('Lend and Spend' a fancy rhyme for a pawnbroker, eternal friend of the underclass). All human life was here. Britain – shoplifting capital of Europe, over two billion quid lost every year to 'retail shrinkage', a ridiculous term for what was, after all, straightforward thieving. And double that figure if you added the amount of stuff that the staff nicked. Unbelievable.

Think how many starving kids you could feed and educate with all that missing money. But then it wasn't money, was it, not real money. There was no such thing as real money any more, it was just an act of the collective imagination. Now if we all just clap our hands and believe . . . Of course, the five thousand pounds in her bag wasn't going to benefit the Inland Revenue either but modest tax evasion was a citizen's right, not a crime. There was crime and then there was crime. Tracy had seen a lot of the other sort, all the p's – paedophilia, prostitution, pornography. Trafficking. Buying and selling, that's all people did. You could buy women, you could buy kids, you could buy anything.



Western civilization had had a good run but now it had pretty much shopped itself out of existence. All cultures had a built-in obsolescence, didn't they? Nothing was for ever. Except diamonds maybe, if the song was right. And cockroaches probably. Tracy had never owned a diamond, probably never would. Her mother's engagement ring had been sapphires, never off her finger, put on by Tracy's father when he proposed, taken off by the undertaker before he put her in her coffin. Tracy had it valued – two thousand quid, not as much as she'd hoped for. Tracy had tried to squeeze it on to her little finger but it didn't fit. It was somewhere at the back of a drawer now. She bought a doughnut in Ainsleys, put it in her bag for later.

She clocked a woman coming out of Rayners' who had a familiar look about her. Resembled that madam who used to run a brothel out of a house in Cookridge. Tracy had raided it when she was still in uniform, long before she was exposed to the full horrors of Vice. All home comforts, the madam offered her 'gentlemen' a glass of sherry, little dishes of nuts, before they went upstairs and committed degrading acts behind the lace curtains. She had a dungeon in what used to be her coal cellar. Made Tracy feel squeamish, the stuff that was down there. The girls were indifferent, nothing could surprise them. Still, they were better off in that house, behind the lace curtains, than they would have been on the streets. Used to be poverty that drove women on the game, now it was drugs. These days there was hardly a girl on the streets who wasn't an addict. Shopmobility, Claire's Accessories. In Greggs she bought a sausage roll for her lunch.

The madam was dead a long time ago, had a stroke at the City Varieties when they were filming *The Good Old Days*. All dressed in her Edwardian finery and dead in her seat. No one noticed until the end. Tracy had wondered if they'd caught it on camera. They wouldn't have shown a corpse on TV in those days, these days they probably would.

No, not the ghost of the dead madam, it was that actress from *Collier*. That was why the face looked familiar. The one who played Vince Collier's mother. Tracy didn't like *Collier*, it was a load of crap. She preferred *Law and Order: SVU*. The actress who resembled the Cookridge madam looked older than she did on screen. Her make-up was a mess, as if she'd put it on without a mirror. It gave her a slightly unhinged air. The woman was obviously wearing a wig. Perhaps she had cancer. Tracy's mother, Dorothy Waterhouse, died of cancer. You get to over ninety and you'd think you would die of old age. They talked about treating it with chemo and Tracy had objected to wasting resources on someone so old. She had wondered if she could sneak a DNR bracelet on to her mother's wrist without anyone noticing but then her mother had surprised them all by actually dying. Tracy had waited so long for that moment that it felt like an anticlimax.

Dorothy Waterhouse used to boast that Tracy's father had never seen her without make-up, Tracy didn't know why as she gave the impression of never having liked him. She put a lot of effort into being Dorothy Waterhouse. Tracy instructed the undertaker to leave her mother *au naturel*.

'Not even a bit of lippie?' he said.

Electricity everywhere. All the bright shiny surfaces. Long time since everything was made from wood and lit by firelight and stars. Tracy caught sight of herself in the plate glass of Ryman's, saw the wild-eyed look of a woman falling over the edge. Someone who had started out the day carefully put together and was slowly unravelling during the course of it. Her skirt was creased over her hips, her highlights looked brassy and her bulging beer belly stuck out in a mockery of pregnancy. Survival of the fittest.