

London's Night Stalkers

Chapter 9 - Mabina

“No human could ever walk as quietly as a vampire, or vanish as easily into any area of shadow. Hoods pulled over their faces, they walked quickly up the street.”

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Anthony could swing from being a decent human being, to the boss from hell, in less than a day. There must have been an advert placed on Gumtree for new sales staff, though Simon hadn't heard about it. New hopefuls were sat on the leather sofas in the reception area, potential new sales people. Maybe replacements for those who didn't meet their targets ! Anthony had been stomping about all morning, being less than subtle about his threats.

“There are new people to be interviewed. Some very good looking CVs.”

There were only so many cubicles, hiring meant firing, simple as that. There was staff turnover of course, but less than there once was. The economy still wasn't producing well paid jobs, so people were tending to hang onto the ones they had. Anthony brought the first interviewee right through the bear pit, the telesales room.

“We need people with energy and ambition.” Said Anthony. “Some of my current staff seem to lack both.”

It happened about four times a year, one of Anthony's great cleansings of the sales team. Simon knew he was safe, his figures well above all his targets. Others though ? There would be a few leaving the building for the last time that afternoon. Gwen was already crying. She'd been there for over a year and either had a lot of bad luck, or wasn't cut out for the job, Simon suspected it was the later. Well below her targets for months, she wasn't likely to be back at her desk after lunch.

“This is all fucking bullshit !” Someone shouted.

Last time about a quarter of the team had been changed. Simon was a predator, actually thriving on the dog eat dog environment. Some didn't though, Gwen was already putting some of her things into a carrier bag. Anthony's company sales would go up; the new people were always keen and performed well, for a while. In three months time, there'd be another set of leavers, angry and upset. Simon's mobile phone buzzed at him, Daniel's number showing on the screen.

“Daniel, how's life at Udney Electronics ?”

Too much noise in the bear pit, too many curious ears. Simon walked quickly towards the break room, with its water cooler and tranquil atmosphere. Off limits unless it was break time of course, but being top sales guy earned him a few privileges, as long as he didn't push it.

“Everyone in Udney is fine.” Said Daniel. “All four or five people and the six hundred sheep.”

“Good to hear it. What can I do for you ?”

“At least you're talking to me. Both Clara and Laura keep telling me to send texts or emails, if they bother to answer the phone at all. I think Laura actually has me on her auto-reject list.”

Simon had to chuckle, even if it did upset Daniel. For so long, he'd been the ne'er-do-well, the one everyone expected to say something outrageous. Now Daniel was finding out what that felt like.

“The way I see it Daniel, is that you're really old and quite crazy. I can accept that, perhaps even relate to it. The women folk have to punish you for a while though, make you suffer. Eventually they'll be fine with you again. Laura did volunteer to send you that book we found, so you're still in the loop.”

“Perhaps I could come down to London and stay with you ?”

“Not a good idea Daniel, send them emails for now. I guarantee that in a few months time, Clara will want to see her Uncle Daniel again.”

He was pushing it, quite enjoying an opportunity to tease Daniel and get away with it. Normally the Uncle Daniel comment, would have meant him being banned from the house in Udny, for months. It felt so nice, having the shoe on the other foot.

“Fine, I’ll send a long email about the book. It would help to see it though. Do you think Laura might send me the original ?”

“I can’t see that happening, she reads it every night, like a Harry Potter book or something.”

Daniel was humming and muttering and Simon really did need to get back on the phones. Every sales guy was only ever as good as his previous month’s figures and there were a lot of eager people out there, looking for jobs.

“Yes, yes Simon, I’ll make do with the copy. Laura mentioned Roy Barlow a few times in her emails, but not the woman. I take it you erm..... Sent her on a long vacation too ?”

Daniel suddenly being careful about what he said on his smartphone. A bit late in the day, but welcome.

“Woman ?! Sorry Daniel, I don’t understand.”

“The book is entirely written in a female hand Simon. The same hand, for all those years. Come on Simon, wake up my boy. Surely what I’m saying is bloody obvious ?!”

It was ! There is a saying about the light coming on and that is what happened to Simon. He’d been too preoccupied with Gwen crying and Anthony stomping around like a crazy man. It all became so obvious now, the woman’s clothing, the jewellery box, the medical person when Roy was just a guy who entertained kids. Of course there was a female vamp, it was obvious. A female vampire, maybe a doctor or a midwife, with..... a taste for Dior perfume. He’d picked up a few whiffs of it that night and thought nothing off it.

“She’s still in the wild Daniel, I’ve been a fucking idiot ! I have to go.”

“Christ ! Be careful and warn Clara.”

“I will.”

Simon used one of the plastic cups provided, to get a drink of cold water from the water cooler. It gave him time to think. No more days off for a while, for any of them. Anthony was likely to be in his stomping about mood for weeks and the hotel had already told Clara and Laura to watch their step. It had to be that night, there were even advantages to hunting at night. He sent a short text to both of the ladies who shared his life in Wood Green.

“There is a Mrs Vlad. We need to visit her tonight. Talk when I get home.”

Were they on any weird shifts ? No, Clara was really good about putting stuff like that on the fridge door. They’d all be home and ready to hunt Mrs Vlad, by about eight that night. Simon remembered an Elisabeta from Bram Stoker’s famous book. Yes, she’d be Vlad’s Elisabeta.

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Clara was busy when the text message arrived on her phone, too busy to even look at it. One of the big five firms of accountants, was actually interested in using their facilities for several major corporate events.

“We like ongoing relationships. If this year goes well, your hotel could well become our preferred choice for all our hospitality needs.”

This was the third meeting, two guys this time, Dan and Graham. Dan was a partner and the one doing most of the speaking, while Graham seemed to be there for the free drinks and a morning

away from the office. Clara was really turning on the charm; this could be the big one, the one to earn her some serious commission.

"There are several small conference rooms." She said. "Just large enough for those confidential meetings, best kept away from the office."

"Yes, I'd be interested in seeing those." Said Dan.

Graham just nodded and followed, as they moved towards the lifts. The rooms on the top floor had been used for many things over the years, including an overflow from the accounts department. They'd been redecorated and turned into conference rooms two years before, but had never been that popular. Clara hit the lift button, hoping the deal was in the bag.

"Clara..... I....."

Laura hurtled across the lobby, looking extremely agitated. She was learning though, slowing down as soon as she realised Clara was giving potential clients, the grand tour of the premises. She smiled, getting a particularly warm smile from Graham. It seemed Laura was his type.

"Sorry to disturb you." Said Laura. "There is an urgent text from head office, which you might want to look at."

"Thank you Laura, I'll look at it right away."

Laura left, leaving her in the lift with the two accountants. Clara took her phone from her pocket and read Simon's text. Like him, she cursed herself for not reading the obvious signs at the house. There was no way that Vlad had been a medically trained person and then there was the jewellery box. Of course there was a female vampire in the house and probably an angry one, now they'd killed her mate.

"Bad news?" Asked Dan.

"No, just a problem that needs sorting out. You know how it is, busy, busy, busy."

Clara showed them the nicest of the small conference room. It made an ideal place for those hiring and firing meetings, which companies were keen to keep off the corporate grapevine. The room was light and airy, she'd even had two vases of fresh flowers put on the conference table.

"Yes, this would be very useful." Said Dan.

"Does Laura also deal with corporate hospitality." Asked Graham.

"Yes, she's part of our corporate team."

A lie, but a harmless one. There would be no harm in letting Laura turn up to assist with some of their functions. Clara had already drummed into her, that none of the hotel staff or guests, could ever be looked upon as food.

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Laura drove, the SatNav in her new street sleeper, seemed better than the one in Clara's Peugeot.

"Plus my car was parked in their drive that morning, she might have seen it." Clara had said.

They'd armed themselves and taken Simon's bag of antique weapons with them, just in case they needed spare weapons. This was different to attacking Vlad that night, Elisabeta would be expecting them. Maybe not that night, but she had to realise that someone would eventually work out that they'd left Vlad's partner alive and return to finish the job.

"She might have been hiding in the attic, all the time we were there." Said Laura.

"No, we'd have felt her, if she'd been that close." Said Clara.

"Do humans ever feel us?" Asked Laura. "Does that ever happen?"

It was something that had been bothering her, in case someone in the street recognised her as a vampire and caused a scene. She'd actually dreamt about it, far worse than the one about being naked at school speech day.

"I've had it twice in five hundred years or so." Said Clara. "Not shouting vampire or anything, just two people who were scared of me. Maybe some sort of instinct they had, but there was no huge drama, they just ran away. Simon has had a few encounters, one that was really weird."

"That was years ago."

"Ninety six Simon, almost yesterday to us."

"Come on Simon, it'll take my mind off the traffic." Said Laura.

And take her mind off what might be lurking in Vlad's house, though she didn't want to mention that.

"It was just an old lady, who thought I was the angel of death or something."

"Oh, Simon, you ruin stories." Said Clara. "Start at the beginning and tell it properly."

"Ok, it was when I worked for an office supply company, out near Brondesbury Park station, on the North London Line. I used to travel from Highbury and Islington, only about nine stops, twenty minutes if you weren't travelling in the rush hour, but sometimes an hour if you were. It was crushed, people crammed on, having to get off at every stop, so that others could leave the train or get on. It was pure hell on a hot summer's day."

"You should have learned to drive." Said Laura.

"Maybe, though there was a certain camaraderie on those trains. You get to know people, when you're constantly trying to jam into small spaces. There was the occasional bad tempered arsehole, but most people were friendly. There are times, when I miss the morning trip on the North London Line."

"Still sounds hell to me." Said Clara. "Camaraderie may be wonderful, but I prefer to travel with a little dignity."

"I can see how it could be fun." Said Laura.

"Fun might be over stating it," said Simon, "you get used to it. On that particular morning, the train had been standing at Camden Road for a while, with rumours that we'd all have to get off. Not unusual, the service was truly appalling and trains were always being pulled for no reason. The staff went into hiding, so rumours began to spread."

"Maybe fun was a bit too strong a word." Said Laura.

"In the end, we heard that the train would be going right through to Richmond, quite a rare occurrence some weeks. Everyone began to get back on the train, when she appeared. A tiny black lady, no taller than four foot ten or eleven. She looked so frail, that everyone stood back, to let her get onto the train. She was old too, looked older than Methuselah's grandmother."

"Are you making this up?" Asked Laura.

"No, he's been telling it the same way for years." Added Clara.

"I know it sounds a bit Stephen King, but it happened the way I'm telling it." Said Simon. "This tiny old lady ignored me, until the train moved out. She seemed to notice me then and she looked scared. She saw me, I was certain of it. The real me, as though I was standing there with my fangs out, shirt covered in blood. She began to tremble and her arm went up to point at me. I thought she was about to scream; 'Vampire!' To the entire carriage."

"Oh fuck Simon!" Said Laura. "Did she? What did you do?"

"Nothing, there wasn't much I could do. She didn't scream though, just moved towards me. Those passengers, already crammed in like sardines, moved back for her. The whole carriage seemed mesmerised by her. She came right up to me and put her hands flat on my chest, as high as she could reach. Her voice was quiet, a deep voice that carried and she had this really strong West Indies accent. 'I see you Angel.' She said."

“Crap Simon, I’d have died.” Said Laura. “Right there on the spot.”

Clara just sighed, but she’d probably heard the story quite a few times. There was after all, no one else for him to tell it to. It was hardly an anecdote for the telesales team.

“It was weird, she kept her hands there for station after station. Not as though she liked me, more as though keeping me where she could see me. It worked, I felt trapped. I smiled around the carriage, as though I was simply humouring a poor old crazy lady, but they weren’t smiling back. There was a sincerity about her, which seemed to be broadcast out to the other passengers in the carriage.”

“How did you escape ?” Asked Laura.

“She got off the train at West Hampstead, it was as simple as that. She leant back and spoke to me for the second and last time. ‘Thank you angel..... I think I’ll be seeing you soon.’ Everyone heard and nobody laughed. She was old and probably knew she was going to die soon. I think she saw me as a dangerous killer, something non-human, something supernatural. In her mind, I was the angel of death, I’m certain of it.”

“Oh wow !” Said Laura. “I’m not sure I could handle that.”

“Rare Laura, only one experience like that in my seven hundred and change, years of life.”

“One day, you must tell her about Bella.” Said Clara.

“What story ?” Asked Simon.

“That one about your forbidden love and all your werewolf friends.”

“What ?..... who.....” Said Laura.

Then the penny dropped.

“Oh I see, a bit cruel guys. Tease the new vampire in class, I get it ! Was the old lady a real story !?”

“Yes, very real.” Said Simon.

Clara was just nodding at her.

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Patsy’s life was quickly getting back to normal. So quickly that she felt guilty, as she looked at the urn containing her dad’s ashes. He’d wanted to be scattered over the grass at Arsenal, had done all his life. It hardly seemed that much to ask, scattered thinly over the entire pitch, no one would even notice. But there were rules now and the management no longer allowed such things. Her mum had annoyed her, accepting the ludicrous rules without a fight.

“It was his lifelong wish mum; we should at least pester our MP.”

“Rules are rules Patsy ! No use battering against doors that will never open.”

After a brief incident of anger, maybe even violent psychosis, her mum had settled back into just wanting a quiet life. No tilting at windmills, no getting angry with the Arsenal management. Her mum had returned to being about as lively as a throw rug. Patsy too, hated the part of herself that just wanted to get back to normal, whatever that was. She picked up the urn, its weight still surprised her. She’d only looked inside once, expecting to see a fine dust, maybe something like talcum powder, but black or grey. Instead the contents of the urn had been decidedly gnarly, not nice at all. Now she just picked it up occasionally and felt guilty.

“I’m spreading you over the Emirates Stadium dad,” she muttered, “even if I have to break the law to do it.”

“Don’t you dare ! Your dad wouldn’t want you ending up in prison.”

Patsy jumped, she thought her mum was sound asleep in front of the TV. Her mum watched soaps, knitted clothes far too big for anyone and slept a lot. She’d been a bit of a dormouse before her dad’s death and now seemed to sleep more than Timothy, the family cat.

"I don't think I'd get sent to prison mum, even if they caught me. And what if they did ? Once dad is spread about, they can hardly Hoover him up."

"Oh Patsy, respect girl ! Show some respect for your dad."

She wanted to say that respect meant more than sticking his ashes on the mantelpiece, but didn't. Her mum would be upset, might even cry again.

"I'll get Simon to help me mum and tell you after it's done."

"Oh him !"

Her mum didn't like Simon, which wasn't surprising. Did parents with daughters, ever like the guys they slept with ? Probably not, even though Simon had made a real attempt to win her mum over.

"Everyone is worried about terrorists." Said her mum. "You'll never be able to get inside the ground, let alone onto the pitch."

"I'll do it mum, I'm determined to carry out dad's wishes."

She would and she'd get Simon to help her. There was something about Simon, something she couldn't quite put her finger on. She was sure that breaking the law, wouldn't be new to him.

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Laura ignored the protests of the satnav, turning it off and parking in the same street as Vlad's house, just a good hundred yards away, on the opposite side of the street. Her SUV was an American import, relatively rare in London. They didn't want to run the risk of anyone remembering it, if things in Vlad and Elisabeta's house went nuclear.

"She's probably out." Said Clara. "I'm guessing she's a doctor or nurse, who tends to work nights. Actually that's just about the perfect job for one of our kind."

The new car helped for some reason. Laura was becoming far more confident about giving her opinions. Besides, they'd discussed it all at least ten times on the drive out to West London.

"We agreed," she said, "she has no reason to think we'll come back tonight."

The atmosphere in the SUV changed. Laura felt it, but couldn't stop it, her brain was switching over to hunting mode. The other's too, she could almost taste the change in their auras. Humans had adrenalin for fight or flight, but with vampires their entire brain began to alter connections, changing even their visual cortex. Simon was first to open a car door and get out.

"Let's do this !" He said.

No human could ever walk as quietly as a vampire, or vanish as easily into any area of shadow.

Hoods pulled over their faces, they walked quickly up the street. Laura loved the changes, even if she had no conscious control over them. The background almost vanished, her mind concentrating on whatever moved, or gave off the aura of a living creature. The two women walking dogs, weren't even aware that three vampires, had walked right past them. The hunt was wonderful, it was beginning to be the thing that gave Laura's life meaning. Not better than sex, but it was a damned close second.

"No car in the driveway." Said Clara. "I think we took the family run-around and Mrs Vlad is walking to work."

"The hospital is quite close." Said Laura.

They'd already been through the various options for where Elisabeta might work. Vets didn't tend to work nights, so the good old NHS was their best guess as her likely employer. They hadn't kept the keys from the first visit, it had seemed unlikely that they'd have a use for them. Simon walked up to the front door, crouching to look at the lock.

"It's new, but we did think she'd change all the locks." He said.

No real chatter, they'd thought through the various options. Laura looked over the outside of the house, not seeing any new CCTV installation or alarm box. Why would there be? Elisabeta probably felt safe, assuming they were likely to be unaware of her existence. Clara went round of the left side of the house, while Simon and her, went through an unlocked door, into the back garden. They met up at the back door, which was in darkness.

"We simply break in round the back of the house and wait for her to come home." Clara had said in the car, summing up their plan.

"Then we kill her!" Simon had added.

Only they weren't preparing for a break in, they were all looking at the note on the door. Fixed to the inside by sticky tape, the sort of note left for the milkman or delivery guys. Clara shone the light from her smartphone on it.

'Hello Simon and Clara.

Sorry to miss you when you called.

I promise to call on you, very soon.

Love Mabina XX.'

"Crap!" Said Simon.

"So, Mrs Vlad now has a name." Said Clara.

"I take it we're not breaking in?" Asked Laura.

"Think what we'd do, if it was us." Said Simon. "I dread to think what she might have set up in there, all sorts of mousetraps for unwary vampires."

Clara took a picture of the note and they walked away, heading back to her SUV, without anyone actually suggesting it. Laura felt awful, her hands were beginning to shake. Her body had gone through a lot of chemical changes to get her ready to fight, none of it used.

"So what do we do now?" She asked.

"We'll talk in the car." Said Clara.

They sat in her new SUV for quite a while, saying nothing, waiting for their bodies to drop out of fight mode. Simon opened a few windows and tuned her radio to a station playing jazz.

"I hate jazz, but it helps me think." He said. "We need to do what Mabina did to her place. Change all outside locks for something more secure. I know someone who can put in an alarm system, probably this weekend."

Good old Simon, he did seem to know all the right people.

"Camera's too." She said. "I'd feel safer if he put a few cameras up at the same time."

"They are quite small now." Said Simon. "He can put them up while he's doing the alarm and run them to a recorder. You'll never spot them unless you know where they are. Shall I call him?"

There was only Clara to give her agreement and she nodded at Simon.

"We need to get something out of tonight." Said Clara. "Something to stop it being a complete disaster. We have a name and the hospital isn't far away. Just confirming she works there would be a good start and a second name for her, I doubt if it's Mrs Barlow."

"How did she get your names?" Asked Laura.

"Vlad and wife have probably known we existed for years." Said Simon. "The same way we knew about Vlad. All she has to do is walk around Wood Green and feel for where we live."

"Probably Sunday morning." Said Clara.

"Yes, Sunday morning, while I'm making us all bacon sandwiches." Said Simon. "Our house would shine out like a beacon, when all three of us are home. Though I doubt if she knows about Laura,

which might give us an edge. As to the names ? There are at least half a dozen websites, which will tell you who lives at an address.”

“She will eventually know it all with a bit more online digging.” Said Clara. “Where we work, what car I drive, everything.”

“Oh fuck !” Said Laura. “I’ll do it, I’ll go into the hospital and find out if she definitely works there and the second name she’s using. It has to be me, Mabina might well know your faces.”

“She has a point.” Said Simon.

“Are you sure you want to do this Laura ?” Asked Clara. “I’ll go if you want.”

“No, it has to be me and I want to do it. I’ll go in looking sweet and harmless, asking about the Mabina, who looked after my mum so well. You’re always telling me, girls are harmless ! We’re sweet and nice, no one ever thinks we’re a threat.”

She gave them her best smile, her real Sunday go to church best.

“Well, I’m convinced.” Said Simon.

“Fine Laura, just be careful.”

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Laura parked her huge shiny SUV in the hospital car park, gasping at how much an hour’s stay was going to cost her. She gave Simon all his weapons back, even leaving her jacket, hung over the back of her seat.

“Can you spare a hair band ?” She asked Clara.

She pulled her hair tight back into a long pony tail, securing it with the band. Laura grinned at her two fellow conspirators.

“How do I look ?”

“About fourteen.” Said Clara.

“Good, wish me luck.”

It wasn’t that warm a night, but vampires didn’t really feel the cold, unless it’s either sub-zero, or close to boiling, nor do they get goose bumps. She walked into the hospital and the front desk had an empty enquiry window. The man sat behind the glass, beckoned her to move forwards.

“What can we do for you today ?” He asked.

Laura put her head on one side and tried to look ditsy, harmless, yet still worth taking seriously. In truth, she realised she probably just looked ditsy.

“I’m not actually ill.” She said. “My mum was in here a while ago and mentioned a Mabina, who’d been very nice to her. I was wondering.....”

“Follow the brown line, it’ll take you to the correct ward. I think Mabina is on duty tonight, but someone on the ward will definitely be able to help you.”

The lines spread out from the front desk, like the tentacles of an octopus. Laura followed the brown line, along boring corridor after boring corridor, even having to go outside and back into another building. Eventually the brown line stopped, just a few feet in front of a nurse’s station. Two fed up looking young nurses, sat glaring at her, almost defying her to bother them, with whatever nonsense she’d come about. Or so it seemed, they both actually smiled at her, when she was stood in front of them.

“Yes, can I help you ?”

She was young, with that coffee with a dash of cream complexion, which is almost impossible to place. Her eyes looked alert though, always a good sign.

“My mum was treated here a little while ago.” She replied. “All she can talk about, is how nice a lady called Mabina had been to her. I just wanted to send her some flowers, but all I have is a first name.”

The two nurses smiled at each other.

"Everyone loves nurse Mabina. She's a senior nurse, who specialises in geriatric care. Her name is Mabina Gladitch and any flowers sent to the hospital, will reach her."

"How do you spell her second name?"

"It is unusual, I'll write it down for you. Mabina is on tonight but she has a patient in ICU to look after."

Laura clutched the piece of paper, which contained the name of their nemesis. It was a huge thing, a major piece of information. Now they could watch her as she came off shift, maybe even take a few pics, as long as they were careful. Eventually they'd know the best spot to attack her.

"Thank you, I appreciate your help."

Instead of the brown line, she followed the signs that said exit, coming out into a car park she didn't recognise.

"Damn."

Laura had one of those pieces of good luck, which life seems to sprinkle about so sparingly. She re-entered the hospital, looking for the brown line again, or a sign that mentioned the main desk. A noticeboard was in front of her, full of yellowing A4 paper notices. Hospital functions, someone who had kittens for sale and a notice about last year's fund raiser for two dialysis machines. The nurse holding the almost obligatory oversized cheque looked so ordinary. She looked fit, in the old use of the word and her hair was long and black. Just another smiling nurse, with a caption below her; 'Nurse Mabina Gladitch, completed her sponsored double marathon, raising a sensational £12,000 towards this year's appeal for two new dialysis machines.'

The paper notice was over a year old and had a few rips in it, but the picture was still clear and it had been printed in colour. They had a fucking picture of the bitch!

"You're dead lady!" She muttered.

There was no one about and the flash on her phone's camera, sometimes didn't want to go off. The corridor was dark and quiet, as Laura carefully pulled the notice off the board and rolled it up into a tube. It took her a while to find her shiny new SUV, the hour on her parking ticket was almost up. Clara and Simon looked relieved to see her.

"Well, does she work here?" Asked Clara.

Laura unrolled the year old notice, turning on the interior light, so that they could see it better.

"Oh yes, Mabina Gladitch works here."

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Budgets were tight, their commander had just sent them all an email, stressing just how tight things were.

'..... overspending on non-essentials, might cause a reduction in head count.' It ended.

Mike Marcou knew what that meant in the real world, less coppers to get the job done. Request surveillance when it wasn't necessary, put in requisitions for equipment you didn't really need and some poor sod was likely to get a P45 in with his or her payslip. Nonsense of course, all done to stop the blame falling where it was due. There were going to be cuts in staff, everyone knew it. Nothing to do with buying too much stationery, the police were struggling with a budget that didn't cover their current costs. He remembered the famous Dicken's quote from David Copperfield, the words of Mr Micawber.

"Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen pounds nineteen and six, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds nought and six, result misery."

At the moment, it seemed like many more years of misery. He looked at his computer screen and brought up the file on the missing lawyer, Stuart Martin. There wasn't the money to set up surveillance on Laura Selway, or any real inclination to do so. If ever he'd seen a genuine piece of hatred, it was her feelings about her ex-boss. There were standard and fairly cheap things that could be done though. Much of it was electronic these days, the same sort of online delving that the public can do, only more in depth and backed up by a court order, if the need arose. Lastly the local police station could be asked to keep a watchful eye on someone, or an address. Nothing that specific, just asked to keep a watch for anything out of the ordinary. It wasn't ideal, but had the distinct advantage of being a very low cost method of watching someone.

"Jeez Susan, I'd have sworn she was straight ! I'd have bet my life on it !"

Susan Eversley had been part of his team for a long time, long enough to ignore most of his outbursts. She looked over the top of her PC's monitor, frowning at him.

"Who Mike ? We have about three hundred live cases."

"Laura Selway, the PA to that missing Lawyer in Potters Bar."

Susan's frown deepened, considerably.

"Oh her. I didn't like her one little bit."

"You're paranoid Sue, you don't like anyone."

"Good attitude for a copper to have !" Someone shouted.

Sue came round his desk, sitting herself on the visitor's chair, looking at his terminal.

"Local station noticed a black SUV outside her address and ran it through vehicle licensing. Look who it belonged to, until being transferred into her name." Said Mike.

He'd done a few mental flips when seeing the name, especially as the man mentioned was currently serving time in a maximum security prison.

"William Jarrold ! Crap Mike, didn't he kill a young copper once ?" Asked Sue.

"Yep, twenty year ago. He said it was self-defence and the jury believed him. There had been a few cases of police brutality in the news and William got lucky."

Sue was stood up, looking at the screen over his shoulder.

"Look at the spec on that Chevrolet Suburban Mike. You wouldn't get much change out of sixty grand, if you wanted to buy it."

"Or, he might have lent it to her."

"Either way Mike, this is big now ! A connection with William Jarrold, makes it of interest to the organised crime guys."

She was right of course, damn her. His team didn't have the manpower or the budget, to handle a major case like that. A connection between William Jarrold and a corrupt lawyer in Potters Bar though, it was the sort of case that made careers. He wasn't going to let it go, until he really had to.

"We'll see how it plays out Sue, might turn out to be nothing."

"Yeah, right guv."

She had a way of saying guv, which made it sound like an insult.

"Firstly we'll need to do the unforgivable." He said. "I'm going to request a full round the clock surveillance of the house in Wood Green."

"The boss will have your guts for garters."

She was right ! Mike just prayed that there wasn't some simple and honest reason for Laura to be driving that particular SUV.

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