

BRAVO JUBILEE CHARLIE OWEN

**LIFE ON MARS
MEETS
THE SWEENEY...
ONLY HARDER**



**1977: NEVER MIND THE
QUEEN'S SILVER JUBILEE,
THERE'S ANARCHY IN THE UK...**

Bravo Jubilee

Charlie Owen

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For Mum and Dad - with love.

Acknowledgements

After two and a half years as a police pensioner, I was worried that my memories of my career would fade and be lost, and I would start to smell of piss. At least in the case of my memory, the reverse has been true. The events of thirty years ago are in fact as clear today as they were then — the colours as vivid, the smells as obnoxious, the sounds as clear, and the old men I know today still the vibrant young bucks I knew then.

I'm beginning to forget some things - most often the names of my children and I'm reduced to addressing them as, 'You, that one, the small noisy one,' or, 'You know, your brother,' and I apologise profusely to them, but fortunately I never forget a face.

As ever, I am extremely grateful to so many of my former colleagues who never fail to regale me with long-forgotten stories and anecdotes whenever we meet or talk. Because I can't rely on my memory as much as I used to, I now take notes but they don't seem to mind and I hope they enjoy seeing our stories appear in one form or another in the books.

There is no doubt that the passing of the years puts a rose- tinted perspective on the past. My second book, *Foxtrot Oscar*, was set in the summer of 1976 which I have always remembered as the hottest summer of my life to date. In fact the real heat wave in

June that year lasted a mere fourteen days. The rest of the summer was dry, but the ninety-plus degree heat lasted just two weeks. Yet it has passed into folklore as something extraordinary.

This book is set during 1977 and includes the period of the Queens Silver Jubilee. Again my memories of Jubilee night itself are probably rose-tinted and certainly vague. I know I spent the night going from one street party to another and there was little trouble, but then again, I was absolutely trashed by the time I booked off duty.

My thanks are due specifically to Trish Fleming who transferred my handwritten manuscript into a word document, Paul Dockley for his insight into Operation Julie, Chris Taylor for the chemistry lessons, and Jim Gall, Ken Price, John Bateman, John Sutch, Martin Kosmalski, Rick Moulder and Ken Stewart for an endless supply of outrageous anecdotes.

Lastly, I must again thank my patient editor Martin Fletcher for his support and encouragement during the writing of this book over what was a difficult period. The more I see of Martin, the more I'm convinced we encountered each other during my .service. You weren't at Trafalgar Square on 31 March 1990, were you, Martin? Under the scaffolding by the South African Embassy? I'm sure I remember you there! (Martin's note - I definitely wasn't there; I was on another demo elsewhere.)

Chapter One

Spring 1977

PC Henry 'H' Walsh could smell the blood before he got to the front door of the dimly lit maisonette. As he pushed gingerly at the slightly open door and put his head into the hallway he detected the telltale metallic smell of the abattoir. His heart pumping and with a lump of fear in his throat, he stepped back to the handrail along the walkway and called down to his colleague waiting alongside the area car, call sign Bravo Two Yankee One.

'Don't look good, Jim. Keep an eye on that bastard.'

PC Jim Stewart didn't reply, but glanced down at the man spread-eagled at his feet, ground his boot harder into the side of the man's neck and twisted the wrist he held firmly in his right hand.

'What you been up to then?' he growled.

The man kept his eyes shut and remained quiet though he grimaced in pain.

'I'm talking to you, you little shit,' continued Jim, grinding and twisting harder.

'Fuck you,' gasped the man, briefly opening his eyes which with considerable

effort he rolled in their sockets to flash a look of pure hatred at Jim.

He had fallen foul of H and Jim, otherwise known as the Grim Brothers, a few minutes earlier and quickly became a recipient of the violence for which they were notorious.

The Brothers were the original odd couple. On paper they had nothing in common. H, a public schoolboy and the son of a naval officer - albeit with a punch like a sledgehammer - Jim a former paratrooper who had faced shots fired in anger whilst in Ulster; yet they had gelled from their first meeting. They were the coppers that Handstead New Town just north of Manchester deserved. The Brothers possessed almost telepathic abilities, with each able to recognise when the other was about to get their revenge in first and drop a scumbag. Violence was their calling card and it was rare for them to take prisoners who didn't get a good hammering to be going on with. Where they failed, however, was that they never had a plan B. They approached everything with fists and boots flying, regularly inflaming peaceful situations. Their colleagues at Handstead - the arsehole of the world that they called Horses Arse - dreaded their arrival at incidents they had peacefully under control, but welcomed them with open arms when the wheels had come off. The Brothers were isolated from the others by their violence, but they were that way because it was the only way to survive in Handstead. Away from work they were the complete opposite. They were, by and large, honest, hard-working coppers with noses for the wrong'uns. In common with their eclectic colleagues, they had worked out that to keep their heads above water in Handstead, they needed to at least match the local villains in terms of mindless hooliganism and had quickly gained reputations with them as a pair of hard-boiled bastards - which pleased them no end. Nothing pleased a busy street copper more than to see his name scrawled on walls followed by comments about his parentage, and the hooligans of Handstead had used many gallons of paint besmirching the names of H and Jim.

'Hard man, are you?' growled Jim in his broad Geordie accent, applying even more pressure.

From the balcony above the Bishops Gate parade of shops, H took a deep breath to compose himself before he went into the house. Around him the darkened Bishops Gate estate was silent in the warm spring night, the only sounds being an insistent dog barking, a plane passing far above him and, downstairs, the frenzied click-clicking of mah-jong tiles and raised, excited Chinese voices from the now closed Chinese restaurant.

It was just after 1 a.m. and the Brothers had been driving along the service road at the back of the shops, lights off, returning to check their cotton traps across the numerous yards at the rear of the shops. Like generations of night duty coppers before them, earlier in the evening they had stretched lengths of dark cotton across the yard entrances at ankle height and had returned to see if any had been broken to signal an intrusion into a yard. As they cruised quietly into the service road with the shops and yards, and the maisonettes to the left, Jim had suddenly hissed, 'Look at this one, H,' and pointed urgently up to the maisonettes. A man was sprinting along the first-floor walkway, clearly visible in the orange bulkhead lights, away from an open, illuminated door. He flew down a set of metal steps, two or three at a time, the noise of his footsteps

echoing in the dark, out into the service road and into the path of the unlit Yankee One. He went to dodge past the nearside of the vehicle but was brought to a dead stop by Jim who threw the door open into him, sending him crashing into a pile of rubbish bags.

He was still groggy when the Brothers pulled him roughly on to his front and Jim stood on his head. It was a surprisingly warm night for early spring, and the Brothers were working in shirt sleeves, but not warm enough to account for the sweaty state of the man they had just flattened. His grey T-shirt was sodden and his shoulder-length dark hair was plastered to his pale, gaunt face. Sweat ran down his clearly broken nose and mingled eagerly with the blood streaming from it.

'What have you been up to and where are you off to in such a hurry?' asked Jim, giving his arm a good twist. There was no reply, only the sound of radio traffic and static from inside Yankee One.

'Hang on to him, Jim, I'll go and have a look round,' said H before returning to Yankee One to get his Maglite torch, switch off the engine and toss the keys to Jim. He had then jogged up the stairs from where the man had come and walked slowly back along the first-floor walkway towards the still open door.

Heart pumping, he pushed the door fully open and stepped into the dingy entrance, lit by a naked sixty-watt bulb. The entrance contained only a pair of bicycles, one a child's, and to the left a flight of stairs led to the living area.

'Hello, anyone here?' called H, his nostrils twitching as the acrid, cloying smell of blood enveloped him. The house was uncomfortably hot. H walked to the foot of the stairs and glanced up to the landing which was similarly lit by a naked bulb. He began to climb the threadbare, garishly carpeted stairs. A Chinese restaurant calendar was tacked to the wall and he noted absently that yesterday's date had been circled and clearly a child had scrawled, 'My birthday!!' At the top of the stairs, H again paused and called out, 'Hello, anyone there?' The awful smell was stronger than ever. Directly ahead of him, in darkness, was obviously a bathroom and toilet. Off the landing were two further doors, probably bedrooms but both doors were shut. An overflowing laundry basket stood just outside the bathroom. H quickly glanced into the bathroom to confirm it was empty before he knocked quietly at the first of the doors. As he waited for a response that he knew he would never get, the click-clicking of the mah-jong tiles and the excited voices downstairs increased in intensity briefly. Then silence again.

Steeling himself, H opened the door slowly and peered into the darkened room. The smell of blood was overpowering, threatening to wash over and drown him. For a moment he felt like turning and fleeing but again he fought against those demons. Using his Maglite he quickly located a light switch on the wall to his left.

A scene of horrific butchery lay in front of him. The young Chinese woman on the double bed over on the right of the room lay on her back amongst a heap of stained bedding and pillows, her mouth open, blood pouring from multiple wounds to her torso, across her windpipe and both eye sockets. Barely able to comprehend what he was seeing and with his heart racing, H walked over to the bed and looked closely at her. The deep wound to the throat would probably have been enough to kill her, but she had clearly been stabbed dozens of times around the chest and abdomen, and several times in the

face, but the wounds that caused him to gasp out loud and stagger backwards were the ones to the eyes. Both eyes had been brutally pierced and the dark bloody sockets stared up at H.

'Sweet Jesus,' he stammered, staggering away from the bed and leaning against the wall. Downstairs the click-clicking of the mah-jong tiles continued. H gave himself a minute to control his breathing and regain some composure before he left the room. After a final look at the staring, bloody eyes and the blood splatters up the wall, he stood breathing heavily at the top of the stairs, eyes closed. The child's bicycle, the child's writing on the calendar - 'My birthday'. Oh no, please God, no, H prayed.

The smell of the blood no longer registered as H walked leaden-footed to the second closed door and opened it without knocking. The door opened almost immediately on to a child's bed. To his joy and relief, there was no sign of the child, although the bed had obviously been slept in. Reaching round the door, H found the light switch and illuminated the room. It was little more than a box room. It contained just the bed and on the walls a David Cassidy poster and an identical calendar to the one on the stairwell. This one, too, had yesterday's date circled and some Chinese lettering alongside it.

H stepped backwards out of the room and was about to switch off the light when he saw the pool creeping slowly from under the bed, spreading inexorably towards him across the pale lino floor, like a growing virus. H gasped out loud. He jumped back out of the room, dropped to his knees and shone his Maglite under the bed. The beam hit the small figure immediately. A little girl of about six, her pyjamas stained red, deep stab and slash wounds clearly visible around her head and torso, her hands cut to shreds as she had tried to fend off the attack. She was lying on her side, her eyes wide open, her vacant pupils bearing witness to her horrific last few moments of life as she sought sanctuary under her bed before she was slaughtered there. Click-click went the mah-jong tiles downstairs.

Barely able to breathe, H fled down the stairs and on to the walkway where he stood, arms braced against the handrail, head bowed, and wept. He wept tears of anguish and rage and horror. A veteran of numerous suicides and road traffic accidents and even a murder, he had been terrified by what he had just seen and now he cried like a small child woken by a bad dream. From the restaurant below he heard raised voices again and mah-jong tiles clicking. It was a sound that would haunt H for the rest of his life.

'H, you OK?' called Jim from the service road.

By way of reply, H raised a hand. Give me a moment.

Puzzled, Jim looked down at the prostrate man. 'You're in deep shit, son, by the looks of things. What you done?'

'Fuck you.'

Jim twisted and ground again and looked in disgust at the telltale tramlines on the emaciated arm he held locked. Probably that fucking heroin that was starting to flood into the town, he mused, before really pushing hard, causing the man to cry out in pain.

H had recovered himself by the time he rejoined Jim but his eyes were still red

and watery. Even in the dark Jim could see his colleague was distressed.

'H, what the fuck's happened?'

'Two dead up there, woman and a little girl. Cut to fucking pieces,' said H flatly. He was staring blankly at the man on the ground. 'A little girl,' he repeated, still hearing the mah-jong tiles in his head.

'You cunt,' shouted Jim, twisting the man's arm until he was sure it would break and stamping on his head. From the ground, the man spat blood from his mouth, looked up at the Brothers and smiled, his dilated pupils sparkling.

'Fuck you.'

H moved purposefully towards him, fists clenched, the image of the little girl's terrified face frozen in death etched on his mind.

Jim put a restraining hand against his chest. 'Leave him, H, leave him,' he said quietly. 'He's well fucked. Last thing we need now is to have to explain why he's been hammered to a pulp. Give me a hand to roll him over and let's get him searched. You want to call this in?'

H looked up at his mate, his eyes beginning to fill again.

'Yeah, OK,' he said eventually. 'There's a little girl up there, Jim.'

'I know,' replied Jim, himself the father of two young daughters and keenly aware of how H doted on his own infant child. He was also aware that for the last year H had been haunted by a cot death he had gone to alone, involving a child the same age as his own. Jim was worried that this incident was one too many for H; he seemed very close to losing the plot. No matter how hard-boiled coppers thought they were, anything involving children had the potential to strip the armour away and render them as vulnerable and helpless as everyone else.

'Get yourself sorted out, H,' he continued. 'Take some deep breaths and take your time, have a walk along the back of the shops and check the cottons while you're at it.'

H nodded and stumbled away along the dark service road, shining his Maglite into the deserted shop backyards, seeing nothing but the dead child's face, still hearing the mah-jong tiles and the raised, excited Chinese voices. He returned to Jim and the man on the ground, dropped into the passenger seat of Yankee One and picked up the microphone. He took some more deep breaths as he waited for other main set radio traffic to clear before he transmitted.

'Delta Hotel, this is Bravo Two Yankee One, active message.' An active message was one down from a 10/1 call for urgent assistance and had a similar effect. Other vehicles' crews would stay off air while the message was transmitted. An active message from a Handstead crew, particularly Yankee One, the busiest area car in the county, usually heralded problems.

The main Force control room operator instructed Yankee One to go with their message.

'Delta Hotel, we're at the rear of the parade of shops in bishops Gate, Hotel Alpha. We have found a woman and young child dead in a house above the shops. We need CID and Scenes of Crime here on the hurry up and a supervisory officer. We have a male detained. This is a major crime scene and we'll need extra resources down here to manage it, please. Show one arrested for murder and en route to Hotel Alpha once we've got some help here.'

There was a long, stunned silence, with only static breaking (h rough, as the control room staff and other crews on the same channel digested what they had heard.

'Understood, Yankee One,' the operator finally said. Behind her in the large open-plan control room her inspector and sergeant began making urgent phone calls to get a major investigation under way. 'Any other Hotel Alpha units can assist Yankee One at the rear of the Bishops Gate shops, please?'

The main set radio exploded in a cacophony of noise as the world and his wife offered to make their way; even two traffic units volunteered to leave the deserted motorway they were aimlessly driving north and south along. The operator asked for some radio discipline and eventually dispatched Bravo Two One and Bravo Two Two to the scene, ruining the traffic officers' night by bringing them into Horse's Arse to cover the ground while the local units did some real police work.

As the main channel went into meltdown, H climbed out of Yankee One and rejoined Jim who was still busy trying to dislocate the man's arm.

All right if I have him, Jim?'

All yours, H. Just keeping him warm for you.'

H bent down into the face of the grimacing junkie. 'You are under arrest on suspicion of murder, you cunt. You don't have to say anything unless you wish to do so but whatever you do say will be rolled up and stuffed up your arse,' he hissed.

The man opened his eyes and H saw the evil and danger in his glistening, madly dilated pupils.

'Fuck the pair of you,' he screamed. 'You'll fucking regret this, I promise,' and then he spat a large bloody glob of phlegm on to H's shirt. In a flash H launched a sledgehammer punch into the man's jaw, which collapsed him back on to the ground unconscious.

'Shot,' enthused Jim and released the arm, which dropped limply alongside its owner. 'Come on, H, let's get him searched, cuffed and ready to go.'

The Brothers rolled him on to his back and immediately noticed the handle of a large knife sticking out of the top of his grubby trousers. They glanced at each other before Jim eased it out of its hiding place with a biro and on to the ground. The Brothers looked down at a nine-inch bloodstained Bowie hunting knife. Bloodstained didn't really do it justice; it was covered along its length, handle and scabbard with fresh, dark blood.

Neither spoke for a moment. H had seen the effect that knife had had on two human beings and was desperately trying not to visualise the blade plunging into an eye socket or slashing a young child to ribbons.

'Jesus Christ,' he said quietly, hanging his head, and Jim put a comforting hand on his shoulder.

'Come on, mate, we've got work to do. Pat him down, turn the cunt over and cuff him. I've got a couple of evidence bags in the boot, I'm sure one of them's big enough for this.' He left H to finish the search and returned with a large clear plastic bag a few moments later.

The prisoner was now on his front, hands firmly handcuffed behind his back. The cuffs had been ratcheted tight, the gleaming steel teeth digging deep into the flesh around his wrists, the hands already turning blue.

'Those on tight enough?' he asked.

'Probably not,' replied H, kneeling down and forcing them an extra notch tighter with great difficulty. The unconscious man was beginning to come round and once he had, he began to scream from the pain in his wrists.

'You fucking bastards, loosen them off, they're fucking agony.'

'Comes with the territory, arsehole,' said Jim simply. He and H hauled him to his feet and frogmarched him to Yankee One. Jim opened one of the back doors, placed a hand behind the man's head and said, 'Mind your head,' before slamming him hard into the door frame. The man collapsed against the side of the vehicle, blood streaming from a gash across his forehead.

The Brothers again pulled him to his feet and manhandled him into the footwell behind the two front seats. He was trussed like a pig and going nowhere. H remained by the door while Jim returned to the Bowie knife which he carefully placed into the evidence bag and then into the front passenger document pouch.

He and H looked at each other silently and breathed deeply.

'Fucking great result, H,' Jim said finally. 'One in for a double murder.'

'There's a little girl up there, mate. I can't get excited about this, sorry.'

'I know, I know, that's not what I meant. Fucking horrific job but we've cleared it up straight away. There's not going to be weeks of investigations and inquiries, or appeals for witnesses or those fucking stupid photo fit pictures that could be anyone. Mate, we've got the cunt that did it - you and me. This was always going to happen - I'm a firm believer in fate. That woman and little girl were due today, that was their deal, but the result is that we got the bastard as he left. H, you've got to find the positives in this mess, otherwise you're going to lose it.'

H nodded silently. He knew Jim was right and knew he had seen sights in Ulster that would chill the blood. He was dead right about seeking some good from the bloodbath he had seen.

'I know, Jim, I just need to get my head round it. I'll be fine once we've got this cunt away from here and in a cell.'

They waited in silence for a couple of minutes before the two local beat vehicles, Bravo Two One and Two Two careered into the service road behind them, blue

lights spinning, engines raced to breaking point. Two One was crewed by PCs Sean 'Psycho' Pearce and Alan 'Pizza Petty', while Two Two contained the Scottish duo of Ally Stewart and Andy 'The Mong Fucker'

Malcolm. The four of them hurried to Yankee One and looked at the pale faces of the Brothers and the bloodied body in the back of the area car.

'Fucking hell, boys, you OK?' asked Psycho. 'What the fuck have you got here?'

'That house up there,' said H, indicating the still open and illuminated door up on the first floor. 'There's a Chinese woman dead on a bed and a little girl in the room next to it. It's a fucking mess, blood and shit everywhere. We need to lock down the scene and wait for CID and Scenes of Crime.'

'No one else in the house?' asked Pizza, glancing up at the lit doorway.

'No, but I've got a horrible feeling the rest of the family are in the restaurant downstairs. Someone's going to have to deal with them quickly.'

'I'll do it,' said Pizza, keen not to have to witness the carnage in the house. He was still coming to terms with the demons that plagued him nightly. Fifteen months earlier he had stood alongside a colleague, Dave 'Bovril' Baines, as he was shot and killed in a dingy flat on the Grant Flowers estate by a female member of the local gang, the Park Royal mafia. She had then blown her own brains out and Pizza was still having nightmares about it. To his colleagues, however, he was something special because he had survived an event most of them would never have to experience. He had survived the ultimate test and no one had ever questioned whether he could have done more, or indeed anything, to save his colleague. He had simply survived, which was enough for them. In fact, he had been directly responsible for bringing about the downfall of the Park Royal mafia. Earlier on the day of Bovril's murder he had recovered a bag of bloodstained clothing from garages underneath the Grant Flowers flats. That clothing was subsequently linked to fifteen of the mafia, confirming their involvement in a vicious attack on a pub landlord. Pizza had given evidence at Manchester Crown Court that condemned the mafia to long gaol sentences, including one for attempted murder. He was something of a star amongst his peers as a consequence, and also for his undoubted expertise in pulling off outrageous stunts on prisoners held in the cells at Horses Arse. Overnight drunks regularly left custody with their heads half shaved, heels removed from a shoe, clothing changed, one side-burn removed, half a moustache shaved or sporting red marker pen slogans on their foreheads. His skill in shaving heads had led to any bad haircut being known around the nick as a 'Middleton' in tribute to the shaving he had given to the appalling son of Chief Superintendent 'Mengele' Middleton of neighbouring C Division. Now, though, he tried to avoid the blood and gore that Handstead generated; even dealing with the family of a murdered woman and child was preferable.

He walked round to the front of the shops, peered through the misted window of the Chinese restaurant and then knocked loudly on it, causing the click-clicking of the mah-jong tiles to cease.

The group of PCs at the rear of the shops were soon joined by Sergeant Andy Collins and two night duty CID officers, DCs Bob Clarke and John Hockley.

'You two OK?' asked Collins of the Brothers.

'Fine,' replied Jim. 'Captured this bastard running away as we came round the back.'

Collins and the detectives peered into the rear of Yankee One for a sight of the double murderer.

'Fuck me, it's Eddie Cheatle,' exclaimed Bob Clarke.

'You know him?' asked Collins.

'Oh yes, very well. John and I bagged him two or three months ago for a couple of burglaries on the Grove estate. Nasty little junkie; always pumping his arms full of shit so he screws houses to support his habit. One of the new Park Royal mafia, such as they are now. How'd he kill them?'

'This,' replied Jim simply, lifting the evidence bag and showing the group the enormous, bloody Bowie knife. John Hockley whistled.

'Fuck me,' he said quietly. 'Where are the bodies, boys?'

'Up there,' said H, pointing again to the open door on the balcony. 'Woman on a bed in the first room at the top of the stairs, little girl under the bed in the next room.'

'Under the bed?'

'Yeah. Looks like she crawled under there when he was busy next door with the woman. Bastard slashed her to pieces under the bed. There's fucking blood everywhere.'

'Next of kin about?'

'Not in the house but the rest of the family are probably in the Chinese restaurant downstairs. Pizza's gone round to try and find them.'

'Excellent. Andy, we'll need to put one of your guys on the door to secure the place and a couple of others to start knocking on doors. We've got Scenes of Crime on the way and Control are turning the DCI and DI out of bed. We'll get the Patrol Group here later today for the searches and house-to-house, OK?'

Collins nodded his understanding and dispatched Psycho to guard the front door while Ally and Malcy began knocking on doors in an attempt to find witnesses.

'Take this bastard back to Horse's Arse,' said Collins, turning back to the Brothers. 'Make sure Sergeant Jones gets all his clothing off him and gets a doctor to see him, OK?'

The Brothers nodded.

'Sure those cuffs are tight enough?' continued Collins. Without waiting for an answer he reached down to the prisoner and with one enormous, ham-like hand crunched both cuffs tighter another two notches, causing the glistening, gory steel teeth to dig even deeper into the wrist flesh. As Cheatle screamed louder, Collins slammed the back door shut. He smiled at the pale, grim-faced Brothers.

'Good job, boys, I'm proud of you. Off you go.'

The Brothers nodded again with the briefest of smiles, got back into Yankee One and drove slowly away from the source of another dream that would haunt H. Jim

had assumed driving duties and H laid his head back against the headrest and closed his eyes, the better to ignore the screaming from the footwell behind him. It was a mistake. With nothing else to concentrate on, his mind filled with an image of the little girl and his head with the click, click, click of mah-jong tiles.

Chapter Two

PC Bob 'Ooh Yah' Young and his partner Alfie had been parked up on the hard shoulder of the motorway for the last hour and a half and Alfie was getting very restless.

'Calm down, you big smelly bastard,' said Young as he absentmindedly twiddled and twirled at his pride and joy handlebar moustache which he kept trimmed well below Force guidelines. It was very much in keeping with his vision of himself as a porn star. Coupled with his tinted aviator-style spectacles, the skinny little dog cop revelled in his full nickname of 'Ooh Yah Pumpen Harder', but sadly the reality was that his love life was as empty as his bank account. Married to a dour, drab school teacher who hated him, Young's only real friend was the repulsive Alfie who, Young noted sourly, had his knob out again, with a huge dewdrop making its steady, elasticated way down to the cloth seat covers. Their vehicle stank exclusively of Alfie whose personal hygiene and habits left a great deal to be desired.

'Fucking hell, Alfie,' shouted Young, getting quickly out of the vehicle and jogging round to the passenger side. 'Get the fuck out and stretch your legs, go and have a piss or something.'

Young pulled the door open and stood to one side as the shaggy-haired devil child bounded out, briefly fixed Young with his beady copper eyes and bared his teeth at him.

'Behave yourself,' shouted Young as he watched the enormous dog clear the open-slatted wooden fence alongside the hard shoulder and disappear at a gallop into the darkened parkland. Resting his forearms on the fence and shaking his head, Young prayed that Alfie didn't come across any wildlife, but with a bit of luck perhaps a gypsy out poaching. Previously Alfie had returned from a similar comfort break with a small minkjack deer clamped between his jaws which Young had only retrieved after a fearful fight.

Young and Alfie were an extraordinary double act who were rarely seen one without the other. Indeed, Alfie had been granted social membership of Young's cricket club where Young turned out as regularly as he could as an enthusiastic member of the second eleven. During matches, Alfie would be tethered to a tree at the far end of the ground out of harm's way until at close of play he would accompany Young into the clubhouse where the bar manager kept him topped up with the slops from the drip trays.

Young and Alfie never queued for long, space always being made for the small bison with mean little eyes that began to roll in their sockets when he got pissed. He had been suspended for a fortnight by the Social Committee after he'd got on to his hind legs

and attempted to savage a barman who'd declined to serve him. There were club members prepared to swear they'd heard Alfie mutter aggressively, 'You looking at my bird?' as he and Young propped up the bar, brothers in arms drowning their sorrows, unloved by any but the other. Though they would never dare mention it, some of the members harboured serious concerns about the nature of their relationship. It was not unusual to find Young asleep in a chair after a heavy session, with Alfie on his lap, knob out as usual, similarly hammered, almost completely obscuring Young and both snoring loudly. But the club members had a soft spot for the monster, especially after he'd disembowelled the irritating poodle that belonged to their effeminate scorer. The poodle's demise had taken place between innings one beautiful afternoon, on about a good length on the pitch. Thereafter club bowlers, instead of being encouraged to bowl line and length, were always entreated to give a batsman an Alfie'.

Young turned back to the mayhem on the motorway that had caused him and Alfie to get stuck. They had been making their way north to Handstead in case they could help out at the scene of the double murder when the traffic ahead of them had ground to a halt. Young had driven Delta One slowly along the hard shoulder until they found the cause of the delay. Stationary across both lanes of the motorway was a white Datsun 100A Cherry, complete with the obligatory orange petrol stain around the filler cap. Its hysterical female driver was running about like a Christmas Eve turkey, occasionally pointing at the elderly man jammed beneath the rear wheels. A quick check by Young confirmed the unfortunate man was as dead as a doornail. He had been badly carved up by the car. Young called for the cavalry, and the grumpy Black Rats who'd been very reluctantly patrolling Handstead raced to the scene of the fatal road traffic accident where they could close the road for hours and irritate the fuck out of everyone.

Eighty-year-old Stanley Murray was a classic example of the National Health Service's neglect of the elderly and mentally ill.

He was supposed to be safely tucked up in Handstead Hospital's psychiatric wing, known locally as Fuckwit Farm, but had been allowed to stroll out of his secure ward ten hours earlier, wearing only his thin dressing gown. His absence from the ward had not been noticed, and the sad, deranged old man had wandered the two miles from the hospital and down the exit ramp on to the motorway and into the path of Doreen Knight's Datsun. She had been busy trying to find something decent on the car radio when at the last second she had seen Stanley standing in the middle of the road with his dressing gown pulled apart, having a piss. She hit him full on at eighty miles an hour and felt and saw the car jump as he disappeared under the front wheels and then jam against the rear ones, where he stayed, being torn along the tarmac for a further fifty yards. Stanley died instantly but messily, as he probably would have had he remained on his ward, and Doreen went to pieces as badly as he had done under her car.

The Black Rats worked at their usual snail's pace and even at this late hour had created a five-mile tailback northbound and a couple of miles southbound, with ghoulish passers-by slowing to enjoy someone else's misfortune.

'Can't we start moving this lot down the hard shoulder?' complained Young to one of the traffic cops.

'Not a chance,' replied the Black Rat. 'Still waiting for a Deeper Accident

Investigation officer.'

'Fucking hell, what's to investigate? I've got cataracts and I can see what happened here. What the fuck is a DAI going to give you?' exploded Young.

Shaking his head at the dog cop's ignorance of all things traffic, the Rat turned on his heel to join the other kiddy fiddlers standing around the Datsun in their high-visibility jackets, discussing ways to keep the road closed until Christmas. So Young, a furious Scenes of Crime officer from the other side of the county who had a backlog of jobs that would make the Grim Reaper wilt, and two pale-faced undertakers twiddled their thumbs and waited. And waited. They waited until just after 5 a.m. when the traffic officers, living proof that arseholes could grow teeth, declared themselves satisfied that Doreen Knight was not a contract killer and gingerly pulled the Datsun clear of Stanley Murray's battered body.

About fucking time,' yelled Young from the adjacent field where he had been desperately looking for Alfie who had not been seen since he left Delta One. 'There you are, I told you, he's dead.'

Doreen Knight was now being led tearfully to one of the traffic cars parked on the hard shoulder.

'You cunt,' Young bellowed in frustration into the dark field, causing Doreen to break down completely at what she believed had been directed at her.

'It was an accident, I didn't see him,' she wailed as she was ushered into the back of a Range Rover.

Young was starting to get worried by Alfie's absence. Fuck only knows what he's doing, he fumed. He glanced back at the Black Rats gathered around Stanley's corpse while the simmering SOCO took his flashlight shots. Then the SOCO departed but the two undertakers were still not allowed near.

'Now what?' Young muttered. 'Now what?' he repeated more loudly after climbing back over the fence and joining the group.

'There's bits missing,' replied one of the traffic cops who couldn't wait to get home to bore his wife shitless with more tales of gore and disaster.

'What bits?' asked Young, looking down at Stanley who remained face down on the road, his dressing gown torn to shreds and his scrawny old arse resembling an elephant's knees.

'Left arm's gone for a start,' began the gore fanatic. 'Right ear, couple of toes off the left—'

'All right, all right. Fucking hell, you're not seriously going to start looking for them now, are you?'

'We can hardly piss off without finding the big bits, can we? Look great later this morning, wouldn't it, some punter breaks down and finds a fucking arm by the road? Have a look for us, would you? Sooner we find something, sooner we can all go.'

Sighing heavily, Young trudged back to Delta One where he hauled out his

thousand candle-strength lamp which he kept charged into the cigarette lighter. He climbed back over the fence into the parkland, lit up the treeline over a hundred yards away and began to sweep the beam across the rolling grassland. Almost immediately he saw the evil glint of Alfie's eyes, sunk deep down in a large tuft of grass.

'Alfie,' he bellowed. 'Get the fuck over here. NOW.'

Very, very slowly, the eyes rose up in the dark like a pair of alien spacecraft and began to advance towards Young. In the powerful light Young could see Alfie was hunched down in his attack posture and, as he got closer, he could see he was carrying something in his huge slobbering jaws.

'What the fuck have you got there? Put it down and come here.'

The two glowing eyes dropped down as Alfie went to ground again.

'Right, that's fucking it,' bellowed Young, striding purposefully towards Alfie. 'I'm going to kick the shit out of you. What the fuck do you have?'

As he got to within ten feet of the dog, he stopped still in his tracks.

'Oh fuck,' he said quietly, looking anxiously over his shoulder towards the searchers on the motorway. 'Fucking hell, Alfie, where did you get that?' he asked more reasonably.

Now clearly visible in the brilliant lamplight was Stanley Murray's missing left arm, firmly clamped between Alfie's teeth and showing evidence of his attempts at a midnight snack.

'Put it down, for Christ's sake,' hissed Young, moving closer. Alfie growled menacingly and shuffled backwards on his haunches.

Young was in no mood for a deep and meaningful discussion with his partner.

'Leave,' he bellowed, stepping forward and lamping Alfie over the top of the head with a large stick he'd concealed behind his back. Alfie roared and leapt away, dropping Stanley's arm before he hunkered down in an adjacent clump of grass and sulked. Young shone his lamp along the length of the battered arm.

'Look at the state of it,' he yelled at Alfie who glared back at him. 'Where'd you find it?' Young picked up the arm by the hand. 'Come,' he commanded, and walked back towards the motorway, followed by Alfie in his stalking position, just waiting for an opportunity to grab his prize back.

'Don't even think about it, shithead,' called Young over his shoulder.

When they got back to the fence, Young dropped the arm into the grass and snapped the chain lead on to Alfie's check chain collar before helping him vault the fence and locking him securely away in his cage in the back of Delta One. Alfie knew he was in the shit because he was in his cage as opposed to the front seat where he was normally allowed to patrol. As he howled and protested, Young strolled nonchalantly back to where he had dropped the missing arm. The traffic cops were all busy searching the central reservation and not paying him any attention. Young was now standing not far from the Range Rover where Doreen Knight sat sobbing quietly. It was just too good an

opportunity. He tapped on the window to her left. Turning, she was greeted by the sight of Stanley Morgan's hand slowly waving across the glass in a wide streak of blood. She began to screech at the top of her voice and attempt to escape from the car.

'Look what I found,' Young announced happily to the traffic cops who had come over to see what Doreen was screaming about now. Triumphant he held aloft the missing arm. 'We can all go home now.'

'Where was it?' asked one of the Rats.

'Just behind the Range Rover.'

'Was it fuck,' exclaimed the driver of the vehicle as the other traffic cops looked accusingly at him.

'It was,' insisted Young. 'Just in the grass. You probably missed it in the dark,' he continued reasonably.

'Did I fuck miss it,' said the traffic cop. 'I checked, there was fuck all anywhere near the motor. Honestly, guys, I checked. There was nothing.'

Young had deposited the arm on the road and the traffic cops gathered round to offer their professional opinions.

'Definitely his, I suppose?' offered the gore merchant.

'How many fucking left arms do you suppose might be lying about?' asked the DAI who was not happy at being called out for a no-brainer like this. The other cop coloured up but didn't reply.

'It's a right mess,' continued the DAI, squatting down to view it more closely under the light of Young's lamp. 'What the fuck are those? Look like teeth marks.' He was poking the arm now with his finger and the signs of its encounter with Alfie were clearly visible. 'And that looks like slobber.' The DAI looked up suspiciously at Young who was doing his best to look nonchalant.

'Foxes maybe?' chimed in the dim gore merchant.

The DAI glanced at the other traffic cops who all hung their heads in shame at his stupidity, their body language distancing themselves from him.

'Where did you say you found it?' asked the DAL. He looked up to where Young had been standing but there was now a gap there. 'Where'd you find it?' he shouted as Delta One roared into life.

'Can't stop, got a job,' called Young, snapping up an Advanced Driver salute. Alfie was bellowing in frustration in the back, causing the van to rock violently. The DAI motioned to try and stop Young but wisely moved to one side as he roared past.

'Hedgehogs or badgers perhaps?' offered the brain donor in the white-topped cap, looking down at the battered arm.

Chapter Three

Handstead New Town, situated fifteen miles north of Manchester, was a simmering pile of contradictions and paradoxes. A settlement had stood at its site since the Bronze Ages and had merited a mention in the Domesday Book, and its rolling parklands had attracted the attention of the Tudor monarchs who had built a superb country manor outside the town. The place simply oozed character and history. It had remained untouched by the Industrial Revolution - not for old Handstead the pits and slag heaps or bellowing chimneys that blighted most of the north. It remained a silent and untouched oasis. Then in the late 1950s the malignant eye of Manchester City Council fell on the area. Aided and abetted by cretinous town planners, Handstead became a dumping ground for all of Manchester's undesirables who were housed in looming tower blocks and soulless estates that sprang up around the new town like poisonous mushrooms in a woodland glade. Employment came to the area in the 1960s with the arrival of the burgeoning petro-chemical industry which saw a ready supply of labour on its doorstep. For a brief period the new town prospered as the old one disappeared under the concrete spread, like a car being sucked into a swamp. Unable to stop themselves, though, the locals once too often bit the hand that fed them with a series of unwarranted wildcat strikes and lengthy industrial disputes. The petro-chemical boys simply pulled down the shutters and disappeared across the North Sea where their petro-dollars were more appreciated.

Handstead died on its feet overnight. Soon it was a depressing wilderness of windswept, shuttered, graffiti-scarred shopping precincts, haunted by groups of feral, disaffected, unemployable locals whose sole source of income other than state benefits was crime. The proportion of criminals living and operating around Handstead was probably greater than anywhere else in the north of the country. Handstead villains preyed on each other for the most part but they were not averse to travelling to find plunder and soon the town had the unwanted reputation as being the arsehole of the world. Indeed, if the world had an arsehole, then the new town would be its piles.

What a shithole like Handstead needed from the county's police was a firm hand and a clear idea of what they were looking to achieve there - like keeping the lid on. What it got was a depressing nick that functioned as a sort of Devil's Island penal colony. Handstead was where police officers ended up if they had really fucked up somewhere else - or were stunningly unlucky when postings were being dished out on appointment. It was on a par with being born with an eye in the middle of your forehead and ginger hair. Handstead teemed with an extraordinary collection of misfits, alcoholics, psychopaths, sociopaths, delinquents, sexual deviants, criminal masterminds and violent renegades. The local residents were a similarly unsavoury bunch and the two opposing sides fought a constant battle to hold sway in the town.

Of all the estates in the town, the septic boil, the anal wart, the blocked anal gland, was the Park Royal. Its elegant name was a classic misnomer - the Park Royal was a cesspit that the local police only ventured on to in vehicles and always paired up. It was hard to pinpoint when or why the antagonism had developed; it had just always been there, the inevitable consequence of having all the wrong sort of people in the wrong place at the wrong time. Or at the right time, depending on your point of view, because some of the cops, like the Brothers, once they had settled in, loved it there. Anything

went — there were no rules. What went on in Handstead in policing terms was unique by any standards. Strokes were pulled, corners cut and deals struck that would never have happened elsewhere because other parties would never have tolerated it. But Handstead was a one-off, where for a few years the law of the jungle prevailed.

By 1977 the town was in a real mess. Violent and lawless things had come to boiling point the previous year with the murder of one of the local cops by a member of the Park Royal mafia. A number of associated but unexplained deaths of mafia members had lanced the boil somewhat, but the end of the mafia as a serious entity had come about the previous summer. Sercan Ozdemir, an ambitious Turkish career criminal, had identified the mafia as a ready source of muscle as it recovered from the loss of its original hierarchy. What he could not have known was that the local Detective Chief Inspector, Dan Harrison, had infiltrated the new mafia and knew exactly what he was up to. On Ozdemir's behalf Harrison had facilitated an armed raid by the mafia at a gunsmiths that left three of the mafia shot dead by waiting police officers and Ozdemir's balls in Harrison's firm grasp. Since the shootings, the town had been very firmly under the control of the local police who currently had the leadership they had been crying out for. DCI Harrison, an unscrupulous but dedicated and determined detective, was aided and abetted every step of the way by his uniform counterpart, Chief Inspector Pete Stephenson, whose penchant for leading from the front had included being amongst the team who had shot the mafia. They were both born to police Handstead and were in their element there.

Sercan Ozdemir was getting seriously pissed off. Since his team of wannabe criminal masterminds had been wasted in the Tamworth gun shop, DCI Harrison had been tugging his chain at every opportunity. Ozdemir knew he had a few loose ends and wrinkles to iron out before he could relax, but locating them was proving extremely difficult. As he saw it, the big itch in the small of his back was the sole survivor of the Tamworth massacre, Brian Jones, the getaway driver and Handstead CID's informant. The other potential problem was Simon Edwardes, a bent solicitor who represented a lot of the Park Royal mafia and supplemented his income by working for DCI Harrison.

In the run-up to the massacre, Edwardes had been instructed by Sercan Ozdemir to take a message into Strangeways Prison that ultimately led to the death of a mafia leader. Edwardes had been persuaded by DCI Harrison to upgrade the original message and as far as the Turkish murderers in the prison were aware, Ozdemir had ordered the hit. Ozdemir harboured serious misgivings about Edwardes' loyalty and had begun to explore ways to test him. The scale of his betrayal to Harrison rankled more than the potential threat to his life from his crime family should they ever find out about his bit of freelancing. An arrogant man, Ozdemir could not see past the fact that he had lost face with his immediate associates and what remained of the Park Royal mafia. A serious career criminal would have put it down to experience and moved on. But not Ozdemir, who now vowed to find and kill Jones and find out about Edwardes before he did anything else. But where the fuck was Jones? He had not been seen since the hot June morning in 1976 when he gunned a rented Rover away from the front of the gun shop. In

the immediate aftermath of the massacre, DCI Harrison had visited Ozdemir and let him know that he knew everything and then he removed Brian Jones from circulation.

DCI Harrison couldn't have been happier if Raquel Welch had jammed her bearded clam on to his face holding a glass of his favourite Bushmills. He had Ozdemir where he wanted him, which was on a very short leash. But ever the devious bastard, Harrison was not content simply to control and reduce crime on his division by keeping his foot in the back of Ozdemir's neck. He was planning to use his advantage one day to remove Ozdemir from the equation altogether.

Chapter Four

June 1976

The Rover that Handstead CID had thoughtfully hired to enable Brian Jones to take the mafia team to their deaths at the Tamworth gun shop had been raced close to destruction. As the windows of the shop disintegrated under the lead storm unleashed on the unfortunate trio of robbers inside, Jones had screeched away with little thought for his accomplices. To be fair to him, it was obvious to any rational observer that little could have survived the fusillade. As he raced the car back to the Handstead railway sidings for the prearranged meeting with his CID handlers, Jones alternated between bouts of screaming abuse about the ambush and rib-cracking sobs of fright and relief at his escape. It had dawned on him, too late, that he had been used by the CID as a Judas sheep, obligingly leading his three accomplices to their slaughter. He tried to console himself with the thought that he had tried to persuade two of them to pull the plug on the job, and the third, Pat Allen, was a cunt and no loss at all. But his thirty-watt light bulb brain had also worked out that as the sole survivor he was also the obvious grass, not only to his mafia leaders, Briggs and Travers, but to Sercan Ozdemir who had set the whole thing up. With his thumping heart in his throat and his head still ringing from the gunfire, he raced to his meeting with his only salvation - the bastards from CID.

During the ten-minute journey he constantly checked his rear-view mirror in case the police were following him away but to his immense relief the quiet country road behind him appeared deserted. DCs Bob Clarke and John Benson were waiting in the shade at the very back of the sidings as the Rover careered into the yard. There was a pause before Jones spotted the detectives leaning against their unmarked Ford Escort and he raced over to them, skidding the vehicle to a halt in a choking cloud of hot dust. Switching off, he climbed out of the car, slammed the door and stood staring at Clarke and Benson who had not moved. The only sound was the ticking and banging from the white-hot engine of the car.

'You bastards,' hissed Jones eventually. 'You fucking bastards. They've all been fucking shot and you knew it was coming.'