

DC Beth Chamberlain shouldered the door to her locker closed, pulled on her jacket and heaved a weary sigh. She was about to start the last shift of her tour and it couldn't have come sooner. She never minded working into the night on the Homicide and Major Incident Team, especially when there was a new case running; the work was generally fast moving in those dark hours. This was different. The county detective night car was on hand to take initial action on the serious jobs of the evening: rapes, murders, robberies. All the detectives in the area covered the night car on a rota basis, which meant she was required to do her stint only two or three times a year. It was a twelve-hour run, tough on the body clock and, to top it off, the last few nights had been sluggish at best.

'Bet you a fiver we'll have hit the drive-through by midnight,' a voice piped up behind her.

'I reckon we can last until 1 a.m.'

'You're on.'

Beth turned and gave her colleague an awkward nod. Tonight, she was crewed up with her homicide sergeant, Nick Geary. While she didn't wish crime on the innocent residents of Northamptonshire, she also didn't relish the idea of a night parked up in a layby, desperately trying to make light conversation with someone she'd broken off a relationship with a little over month earlier.

They checked their pepper spray then fastened their belts. Nick pressed his phone to his ear, logging them on to duty. Beth pushed her stab vest into her holdall and wrestled with the zip, cursing the health and safety regulations requiring them to take all their protective equipment with them in the night car. She stood, tied back her dark curls into a loose half ponytail and watched her colleague's face tighten. She shifted from foot to foot as the call lingered, straining to hear his side of the conversation.

Finally, he lowered the phone and slipped it into his pocket. 'You win. Looks like we've already got the first job,' he said, grabbing his bag and moving off.

She hauled up her own bag and followed him as he trotted down the back stairs. 'What is it?'

'Major incident in Bridge Street, Rothwell.' They'd reached the door now. He grimaced at the rain outside, lifting a hood over his short dark hair. 'Possible suspicious death.'