



1

ENOUGH!

The words CONFIDENTIAL SURVEY caught my attention. I picked up the paper and read: *A Survey to Justify Why Men Do Not Want to Work with Policewomen*. I loved the LAPD. But I sure didn't love the way they treated the women on the force. Were things about to get worse?

I looked around the LAPD squad room, where I worked as a detective investigating forgery, but no one was paying attention to me. I gazed again at the paper I held. It was from the chief's office, complete with an authenticated signature. For years, I had protested the fact that no new women officers were being hired, and that a substantial number of female sworn officers had already been re-assigned to desk jobs. Now it seemed that management was setting up a justification to eliminate women from the job altogether.

Surely, the chief had more brains than to try to circulate something as bizarre as this survey, but nobody else would dare take that kind of action without his knowledge. I couldn't let this go unchallenged. I would have to flush it out into the open, which meant confronting the chief. I couldn't do that alone. He would crucify me.

I convinced the president of the Los Angeles Policewomen's Association to ask the chief to explain the blatantly anti-female survey to his female officers. Surprisingly, he agreed to meet with us on January 10, 1971.

“It’s been brought to my attention that the men do not want to work with women,” he announced after taking the stage in the police auditorium in front of about one hundred of us. “The survey confirms this allegation.”

The fact that he didn’t deny the survey seemed to confirm what we had suspected all along. He’d had a hand in the survey from the beginning.

“As you know,” he continued, “I’m in the process of re-evaluating the entire structure of the police department.”

He proceeded to explain that he planned to reduce the number of women officers from some one hundred eighty down to no more than twelve. Perhaps female reserve officers could be used for those situations where the handling of a female required a woman to be present, he hypothesized.

My God! I could feel my blood pressure rise. I gripped the arms of my seat and tightened my lips to keep from saying anything.

He whispered a few words to Deputy Chief Dale Speck, who stood beside him, and then turned back to us. “And, ladies, if you have questions, I’ll answer what I can.”

I could feel the shared anger as I heard the women mutter.

“The bastard!”

“How dare he?”

“What can we do?”

I could also sense how scared they were to challenge the chief. Unable to stand it any longer, I rose to be recognized. “Chief Davis,” I said.

He peered out from under his hand, shading his eyes. “Fanchon. That you, Fanchon?”

“Yes, sir.”

“I was a little nervous,” he said. “I thought you’d never speak up.” He and Speck laughed.

“Sir, I find it difficult to believe what I’ve heard from you today. Do you mean to tell me and the rest of these women who have been screened, trained, and worked as police officers that we’re not qualified? There’s Sergeant Leola Vess with her master’s degree in psychology. Sergeant Marie Thomas with her law degree. Sergeant Jerry Lambert with her bio-scientific degree. Sergeant Marjorie Cramer who speaks, reads, and writes seven foreign languages fluently. That’s just to name a few. Myself with a major’s military commission. All the women have graduated from the police academy. And you’re standing here, telling us that we can’t be assigned to police responsibilities?”

He nodded. “I knew you’d get my meaning. I believe street detail is beneath the dignity of a woman. You have no business playing cops like the men.”

“That’s your opinion, sir. Every corporation in this city would gladly recruit this caliber of women to work for them. We’re one hundred and eighty educated, intelligent women capable of far more than we’ve been allowed to demonstrate.” I sat down.

“The idea of a woman becoming a lieutenant is ridiculous,” he countered. “You know you can’t handle the pressures of the job.” He stepped away from the podium to the edge of the stage. “You know what I mean. You have your little monthlies and go through the change of life.”

Our little monthlies! Was he kidding? He had actually just said out loud that a woman's period was reason enough to deny her advancement?

Davis' insulting comments shocked the other policewomen as much as me. He had become so cocksure of himself since the city council had passed his recent reorganization ordinance that he couldn't resist boasting about his intentions to phase most of us off the department. He clearly felt there wasn't a damned thing I or anybody could do to stop him.

Not since marching in unison with a battalion of WACs (Women's Army Corps) at Fort Des Moines in the '40s had I felt more in step with my fellow female officers. The department's refusal to let us promote had been as irrational as it was infuriating. And now this.

I stared at the chief and clenched my teeth. I wouldn't let him get away with eliminating women from the job just because of our sex.

You don't know it, Chief, I thought, but war has just been declared between us. I'll not be your pawn. A queen checkmates a king.

He had already established his position, but by raising a stink, I could take his chessmen. I would appear at every commission and council hearing I could when the subject of policewomen was on their agendas. He would come to know I was not afraid to fight.

Determination is fine, but strategy wins the war. I figured if I were going to step into the waters, I would stand a better chance if I found highly positioned women to back me. I knew just who I needed to approach. Through my work in the bunco-forgery division, I had gotten the opportunity to deal with Judge Joan Dempsey Klein, an appeals judge who would become California's senior presiding justice, in court. A woman judge on our side would add clout to my mission.

Judge Klein was as smart as she was down to earth. “Just a minute,” she had once remarked when a policeman was on the stand. “Are you wearing a black shoe and a brown shoe?” That just tickled me. I figured she would take my call, and I was right.

“I have a matter to discuss with you,” I said. “I’d like an appointment.”

“Fine,” she answered. “Let’s go to lunch.”

Over burgers at the Hamburger Hamlet, I explained the pattern of discrimination that the women on the LAPD, myself included, had been subjected to. As a pioneer in the legal arena and one of the few women on the bench, she, too, had battled to push her way into a male-dominated profession. Along the way, she had met, in her words, a huge headwind of opposition. So she understood all too well what we women on the LAPD were up against. She didn’t mince words.

“Sue the bastards, Fanchon,” she said. “You women have been waiting years for the chief to bestow rank. It will never happen. They have no intention of elevating women. You’ll have to fight for equality or accept what you’ve always been given—token positions.”

That was assuming we stayed on the force at all since the chief wanted to get rid of us. Someone had to have enough guts to take this fight to the courts. I wondered whether that someone would be me.



2

JUMPING INTO POLICE WORK

I knew nothing about the Los Angeles Police Department in 1947 when I began the civil service written, oral, physical agility, and physical examinations, each designed to weed out candidates. At age twenty-six, after a successful five-year Army career, which included serving in World War II and being promoted to captain, I had left to get married. The happy union—my second—lasted just six months.

I could have been sucked into that vortex of self-pity, but that's just not the type of person I am. Instead, I sat up in bed one morning, threw the covers off, and bounced out of bed as I recounted my blessings. How lucky that I had my sister Jean's love, support, and hospitality. My high school diploma would be worth something. And surely the rank of captain wouldn't be ignored. Change my attitude, and I would change my life. I would take what I had accomplished and find a job.

Eventually, I relocated to Los Angeles after landing a temporary three-month contract as a county deputy sheriff overseeing women inmates in one of the local jails. But I wanted fieldwork, and the LAPD was offering downtown beat assignments and higher pay. Besides, being a cop just felt right to me. In middle school, I was a hall guard. I joined the Army after high school and became a captain. It was as if this kind of work was in my blood.

All the LAPD had to do was show me how to perform. I stood up straight and grinned. *We'll clean up Main Street*, I thought. *I can*

take care of myself. I felt my formed muscle underneath my shirt sleeve. *If I have to, I can fight dirty.*



I could already see myself in LAPD blues, having passed the written examination, when I learned the physical agility test to be held at the police academy required scaling a six-foot wall. Not even in the WAC officer's class did I have to do more than twenty mandatory push-ups. But this was the vaunted LAPD pre-hire physical agility test, which would dramatically cut the list of female applicants.

I knew I would do well in the shooting portion of the trial. When I was eight and living in California's isolated Tehachapi Mountains, my dad had taught me to shoot so I could protect myself from snakes. Oh, yes, I could accurately hit my prey. But I was less confident about the rest of the test.

I needed to practice. So I headed out to the police academy in Elysian Park. I wasn't prepared for the scenic view as I drove under the filigreed black-iron police academy sign. The early morning sun rose through the eucalyptus treetops that hugged the sloping ravine. Then I saw the six-foot wall standing by itself on the athletic field across the road from the academy building. I froze. I wasn't about to find out if I could get over it in plain view, especially since I hadn't engaged in that type of physical activity since climbing live oak trees as a seven-year-old.

I returned well after hours a few days later, determined to learn how to get over that wall. No luck. For the next three weeks, I spent many moonlit hours trying to figure out the technique of running, jumping, and vaulting over the wall. Night after night, I went home battered and bruised, but I persisted. Then, just forty-eight hours before the scheduled test, having watched how the men used leverage, I found the rhythm and coordination that put me over that infernal wall. It was a miracle how easy it was. After

several more flyovers, I landed on my feet. I couldn't control the victory yell that erupted. I was ready.

It wasn't easy waiting my turn as I watched one woman after another struggle to pull their hanging bodies over the top and fail. "On your mark," the timer barked. "Get ready, go." My gym shoes dug into the dirt path as I ran. I timed my lead. My feet slammed the wall waist-high, as my hands grabbed the top. I used my momentum to swing my big butt, which felt like it weighed a hundred pounds, up and over. I had beaten the wall, the one significant elimination for most failed applicants! I landed in a crouch and took off through a maze of flat tires, pumping my knees and hoping I wouldn't fall on my rear end. Thankfully, running the tires, which hadn't shown up until today, proved less challenging than mastering the technique of vaulting the wall. I completed the test at a full-speed run around the oval field. A thumbs-up from the male officer sent my spirits soaring. Now I just had to get through my orals, having already passed the written portion.

To help prepare for the oral and written exams, at the first of the year I had enrolled in the University of Southern California's criminal law class on penal code. On the last day of the semester, I raced to class, anxious to learn how I had fared on the final test. At five o'clock, the downtown, second-floor classroom felt like a sauna. As the only woman, I chose to sit in the rear behind twenty male police officers. Our instructor from the Los Angeles Police Department leaned against the blackboard with his hands in his pockets. When he pushed away from the wall, his tweed jacket flapped open, showing his .38 detective special and the badge on his belt. *Where would I wear a gun?* I wondered. Under my armpits, I would run into trouble with a thirty-eight-inch bust. Around my waist, it would be bulky in women's clothing.

He looked around the room at each of us. When his black eyes reached mine, I looked away. "The final exam was a surprise, gentlemen. The lady in this class takes the honors."

My hands flew to my mouth—he was talking about me.

Every head turned to stare. “Excuse me, gentlemen,” the handsome instructor said. “I need to have a word with Fanchon. It’ll only take a few seconds.”

After a whole semester, I had finally caught his attention, but I couldn’t imagine what he wanted to talk to me about. He bent over until his lips were close to my ear. A whiff of sweet-smelling aftershave sent a thrill up my back.

“Would you mind leaving early?” he whispered, his voice raspy as usual.

That thrill in my back vanished as I shut my notebook and reached for my purse. He touched my arm and moved to look directly into my eyes. “I’m not used to a woman in my class,” he said. “On the last day of a semester, I tell off-color jokes. It helps the men loosen up, especially if they’re disappointed.”

He straightened and turned from me. I gathered my belongings and was pulling the door shut when I heard, “There goes another Dickless Tracy.” The men roared with laughter. What a bastard! Angry but undaunted, I tucked away the put-down for future ammunition and focused on qualifying to become a cadet at the police academy. I knew I would have to place in the upper 10 percent to qualify.

When the letter with the city seal arrived several weeks after my oral exam, I poured a scotch and soda, sat on the couch, and tore it open. I whooped when I saw the words *You are directed to report to the police academy on May 17th, 1948, at 8:00 a.m.* Thank God.

I had struggled to make this happen. Three months of experience as a county jailer had convinced me I didn’t want to be a turnkey on the thirteenth floor of the women’s jail at the Hall of Justice. Recently divorced, I was emotionally depleted, broke, and terrified

that I couldn't take care of myself. With this call to report to the Los Angeles Police Academy, I could change my life.



On May 17, 1948, two days after my 27th birthday, the bright morning with blue skies matched my optimism. I strode up the winding road in Elysian Park, passed male trustees from the city jail cleaning the street gutters, and entered the police academy through the brick gates. The grounds spread out on both sides of the arroyo nestled in a pocket of the foothills. Despite my high heels, I swung my shoulders as I walked, a habit I had retained from marching in the Army. I turned right to pass the small-arms firing range with its black silhouetted targets held at the ready, passed under the tree-covered walkway that bordered the Olympic-size swimming pool, and joined other women candidates gathered in the shade of the gymnasium. Across the road on the elevated oval athletic field, male recruits in gray sweats did push-ups. Further to the east and out of sight, I heard the rapid-fire of another combat range.

Waiting with the other candidates, I caught my first glimpse of Sergeant Mary Galton as she hurried from the gymnasium. Despite the heat, she wore a small, white hat over her short blonde hair. She moved with ease in her blue and white seersucker suit. Her white-gloved hand clasped a clipboard to her bosom. She stopped next to me and didn't smile as she waited for quiet. Her flushed face couldn't hide the aging lines of an older woman. "Ladies, quiet, please!" Her high-pitched voice made me flinch. If she had been in the Army, she would have been required to drop down an octave. "There'll be no more talking," she said. "Listen to directions. Ask questions."

"How can I ask questions if I can't talk?" I blurted.

Her steel-blue eyes cut through me. My blood iced. She held her gaze, and then her eyes swept my body from head to toe. “Your name?” she snapped, her pencil poised to write.

From years of military discipline, I snapped to attention, rendered a stiff military salute, and bellowed, “Prichard, ma’am” (my married name at the time). My military response startled me, as well as the other candidates.

In a loud voice, she said, “Smart alecks are washed out. Do as you’re told.”

I lowered my voice. “Yes, ma’am.” Red-faced, I silently vowed I would mind my tongue.

She escorted us to the corner classroom, over the Revolver Club offices on the second floor of the vast gymnasium, where we were seated alphabetically. Galton adjusted her glasses, wrote her name on the blackboard, and waited for us to quiet.

“I’m your six-week academy supervisor. Take the badge on your desk and pin it over your heart. Wear it every day. If you lose it, you’ll be washed out.”

The oblong shield covered the palm of my hand and felt surprisingly heavy. At the top of this emblem of power, in blue letters, the word *Policewoman*, made a crescent over the image of City Hall embossed in gold. The number eighty-six at the bottom, slang for being kicked out, made me smile.

“You’re the second class of women to receive academy training,” Sergeant Galton said. “You’re making history as the first class to be trained on the gun range. You’ll be the first to graduate in full dress uniform and walk a beat.” She paused. “It won’t be easy, ladies. What you do and how you perform will be closely monitored. The

men will be watching you. And, I might add, they'll be waiting for you to fail.

“Buy your handcuffs and revolvers downstairs. I'll tell you where to purchase your uniforms. The police credit union will advance you a loan of \$350 to cover your initial costs. And ladies, bad debts are cause for immediate termination even after your twelve months of probation.”

Everything she said ended with the threat of being sacked. Without a word, just a nod, Galton picked up her papers from the rostrum and left. Just then, the male recruits thundered up the stairs, running double-time past our classroom, and the same lieutenant who had taught the preparatory class I had taken before my exams stepped through the door. I hadn't realized he taught here.

He looked at his notes. “You, you,” he shouted as he pointed to two women in the front row. “Take your belongings and report to Sergeant Galton in her office.”

A tall, lithe woman with a mannish haircut and a smaller woman next to her eased from their chairs. They bumped into each other and hurried out the door. The lieutenant followed them with his eyes and then turned to face us. “They didn't last long,” he said. “That's the last of those queer bitches!”

I was aghast. Those women hadn't done anything wrong. Besides, how did the department know those women were gay? Was *I* tainted because I had been in the military?

The lieutenant hooked his thumbs in his pockets and smiled. “Some of you will be gone by graduation,” he said. “Half of you will be terminated by the end of the year. Face it, ladies. You broads will never be the cops that men are.”

I could barely breathe; my internal pressure gauge was sitting on red. How dare he talk to us like that? At 5'9" with a robust and healthy body, I could hold my own on the LAPD or the street. I wanted to explode, but I didn't dare open my mouth, or I would be the next wash-out. Galton had done me a favor by disciplining me in front of the other cadets. I would not get a second chance if I made a mistake. But he sure wasn't making it easy for me to keep quiet.

"It's a man's world, ladies," he continued as he leaned on the lectern and pointed his finger at us. "You dames are more trouble than you're worth. You belong at home."

Almost five decades later, a secretive, all-male "club" within the LAPD, formed in the 1980s but still operating under the same bias, would be exposed. The mission of Men Against Women (MAW) as it was known to some or White Anglo Saxon Police (WASP) as it was known to others: To harass and drive from the force women officers and other minority group officers, and to intimidate male officers who fraternized with their non-white male counterparts.

While I had no way of knowing how entrenched this bigoted attitude was on the LAPD, the lieutenant had made it clear that we women weren't exactly welcome here. I looked away. I knew he was trying to bait us, but I wasn't biting.



3

DOING A MAN'S JOB

Despite the negative reception, I knew I could withstand the pressure and hack it no matter what anyone thought. I could be tough. I had survived the raw wilderness of the Tehachapi Mountains during the Depression and lived in the Eastside of Los Angeles. No one intimidated me. I would hold onto my badge no matter what.

I couldn't wait to perform all the duties of a police officer. I had no love for indoor tasks, a sentiment that would be reinforced after working in the Lincoln Heights Jail, located across the Los Angeles River, during a subsequent part of this probationary period. *The more police action I can become involved in, the happier I'll be*, I thought.

When Sergeant Leola Vess appeared in the roll call room of Georgia Street juvenile division, ten teams of uniformed policewomen put out their cigarettes and waited for her to begin. Tall and slim with short, dark hair, bright lipstick, and matching nail polish, Vess wore a gray sharkskin suit and complementary small veiled hat. A square, black police purse hung from her shoulder, her gloves tucked under the flap. Her high heels tapped lightly on the bare wooden floors as she moved to the front. She picked up the clipboard and waited for total attention, then called each name and flashed a smile of approval as she inspected our grooming. Next, she named the beat patrol and partner assignments.

Vess had been the first woman ever promoted to sergeant in the LAPD, and I studied her every move. Her quiet, no-nonsense talk projected a professional polish I envied. “Before you leave for your beats,” she said, “the lieutenant who oversees street patrol has ordered you to keep your guns holstered. I’m to remind you that you’re not out there to clean up Main Street. You’re to concentrate on missing juveniles and curfew violators. No headlines, ladies. Stay out of trouble.”

Vess’s admonition cooled my exuberance. Her orders were clear. Female teams were to refrain from becoming involved with adult arrests. I resented the LAPD’s limitations on my scope of duty merely because I was a woman. I would also quickly come to resent how we were treated—not on the street, but in the department. While some of the male officers were gentlemen, most made it clear they didn’t want women muscling in on their turf. It not only got raunchy, but it also got nasty.

Even so, I was in heaven. I was a cop walking a beat. I was young and idealistic, and I was saving the City of Los Angeles. At least that’s what I thought at the time.

I had drawn Mickey Dunbar as my partner. A smaller woman than I, with brown hair that curled around her hat, she was an ex-WAVE (a World War II-era division of the U.S. Navy) from the East Coast. We had been assigned a beat on Main, between First and Ninth Streets, in downtown Los Angeles. Although our duties were usually limited to flushing out missing juveniles in a bus station or hauling a teenage curfew violator out of one of the seedy, all-night theaters in that neighborhood, few nights passed without some action.

Between five and ten o’clock at night, Sixth and Main Street’s bustling transportation terminals spewed passengers from streetcars and buses. As they waited to make cross-town connections, they shared the sidewalks with derelicts. I would watch the

homeless, with bottles of cheap wine in brown, crumpled bags clutched to their chests, find refuge in grimy alley corners behind the burlesque theater.

Garish neon signs lit the outsides of bars and peep shows with their bawdy posters of naked women, while the foul air from inside wafted to the street. The residue of vomit, urine, and semen was never cleaned off the floors in these places, so I dreaded having to enter in response to a police call. While I couldn't see the accumulated slime in the darkness, I would feel my pumps slipping in it.

Aside from the heat, there was nothing special going on the evening Dunbar and I stopped for our coffee break at an open hot dog stand next to an alley. My brass buttons and my badge were the only items not affected by the steamy temperatures. Everything else was wet, wrinkled, or melting. Sweat seeped from under my hat. My white shirt and black tie wilted beneath my navy blue uniform jacket. My blue serge skirt felt so hot that I wanted to hike it up past my knees. It didn't help that my police purse containing eight pounds of gun, ammo, and handcuffs dug into my shoulder.

My partner and I eased onto wooden stools and kicked off our high heels at the open counter. Dunbar's exhaustion showed on her heart-shaped face. She lit a cigarette, inhaled a long, relaxing drag, closed her eyes, and slowly exhaled. I could never inhale without choking, so I blew smoke rings instead. As we sipped our coffee, the noise of the street quieted. Only the voice of a newspaper vendor roaring, "Extra! Extra! Getcha red-hot news" could be heard.

"Feels great to sit," Dunbar said. "I'll be glad when tonight ends. My feet hurt. God, look at them. Swollen. I wonder who dreamed up walking a beat in high heels."

"Remember to be ladies first and cops second," I parroted. "It's stupid. Who cares if we're ladies if we get the job done?"

I finished my coffee and applied fresh lipstick. “You ready to go?” I asked. It was time to get back to the beat. Suddenly I realized how silent the street had become. Even the newspaper vendor had stopped yelling. I sensed something was about to happen. I turned to my partner. “Mickey—”

Simultaneously, we heard the report of gunfire and a bullet ricochet off the brick wall over our heads. We threw ourselves down on the gritty sidewalk. The fry cook yelled, “Oh my God!” and disappeared behind the stand.

Footsteps pounded toward us as I tried to get into my policewoman’s purse. During the fall, however, I had smashed the clasp on the flap, so I couldn’t pull my gun free.

I could see Dunbar’s legs in front of me. “You okay, Dunbar?” I asked and was mightily relieved when I saw her legs move.

“I’m scared, Prichard.”

I gave up on the purse and flipped back onto my stomach. A rough-looking bearded man gasping for breath stormed out of the dark alley. As he cut around us, a small gun in hand, I clawed the cement to move toward him and kicked my leg out. Restricted by my standard-issue, navy blue skirt and required girdle, I missed tripping him. He bolted into a bar two doors away.

Dunbar staggered to her feet. “What the hell ya trying to do?” she screamed. “Get us killed?”

“Calm down,” I said, surprised she thought I would put us at risk. “If I’d caught his ankle, I’d have bashed his head in with my purse. We would have nailed him cold.”

I was shaken but also humiliated. We were on probation, but we were cops, and people were counting on us to protect them. I

spotted a Gamewell box. In the days before cell phones or even police radios, we used the Gamewell phones, installed on nearly every block in downtown L.A., to communicate with headquarters.

Before I got to the Gamewell, an undercover agent whom we all called Jake burst from the dark alley.

“Where is that son-of-a-bitch?” he yelled, waving his .38 revolver.

I pointed, and he ran into the bar.

I yanked the flap of my purse. It broke loose, and I pulled out my gun and started for the bar. Dunbar grabbed my arm. “For God’s sake, Prichard. We can’t go in there.”

I shook off her hand. “Jake’s by himself. He needs help.”

Before I could move, screeching sirens came from every direction. Three squad cars, red lights flashing, skidded to a halt in front of the bar. Plainclothes cops broke cover and came running with their badges hung on their shirts and their weapons drawn. Five shots exploded inside the bar.

“Watch it!” I shouted as Dunbar and I ducked into a recessed storefront. “We could get creamed by our own troops.”

The men dropped to the ground, sheltering themselves behind parked cars. Police cars blocked traffic as people began to crowd around. Suddenly, the suspect reeled, glassy-eyed, out of the entrance of the bar. He stopped, fell backward, and smacked his head on the sidewalk. His arms flopped, his body jerked, and he lay quiet. Blood oozed from his black hair into a dark pool.

Oh, my God! I thought. *What could have been worth dying like that?*

Next, Jake staggered out of the bar, still clasping his revolver. Blood soaked the shoulder of his plaid shirt, and his left arm hung limp. He weaved, straddle-legged, a few steps down the sidewalk and then fainted. An enormous, Black street person grabbed him as he fell and gently lowered him to the ground.

Dunbar tugged at my sleeve. “Prichard, I feel sick.”

“Take a couple of deep breaths; it will pass. I don’t feel so hot, either. We’ll ring in as soon as the street clears; the lieutenant will want to know. I feel awful that we couldn’t do anything.”

“Yeah,” she said. “And Sergeant Vess won’t be happy with us. Look at our uniforms.” She brushed at her skirt again. “We’d better get them cleaned up before she sees us.”

“We’d better get our facts down,” I said. “They’ll want a written report before we go home. And, Dunbar, you can leave out that I finally freed my weapon.”

I felt useless standing on the sidelines as the ambulance arrived. I watched as Jake was lifted onto a stretcher. He had lost a lot of blood; in his pallor, he looked almost dead. As for the suspect, the medics covered his body with a sheet.

In the crowd behind me, I heard someone say, “Goddamn cops! Wasted another one.” The words cut through me. At our June graduation only months before, I had shot five bullets through the heart of the target silhouette. If I had been able to use my gun this time, maybe things would have turned out differently. But as it was, one man was dead, and a cop was seriously wounded.

Despite being conspicuous in our uniforms, the policemen on the scene ignored Dunbar and me. I was a cop, but, I realized with a jolt, I might as well have been one of the crowd.

At roll call the following evening, the lieutenant complimented us on taking care of ourselves and not becoming involved. I couldn't get over the quandary the shooting had helped crystallize. I had chosen to dedicate my life—my energy, my intelligence, my passion, and, most of all, my spirit—to a career I hoped would find me giving my best to help people in the worst moments of their lives. But because I was a woman, I wasn't allowed to do my job.



Walking the beat settled into a routine that was occasionally spiked by special assignments with male detectives. That was right where I wanted to be—in the middle of the action. I had no desire to be assigned to police desk work. I wanted to be a sleuth. The only problem was that aside from one policewoman chemist who was an expert on the intoxication field test, the choices for women officers largely boiled down to juveniles, jail, and desk work. The military had been a more level playing field than this.

I knew early on that the policewomen who fared the best were the ones who kept their mouths shut, did their jobs—even if that meant being stuck at a typewriter for eight hours—and went home. But I wasn't about to be that passive. Undaunted by overwhelming odds against promotion for women, I was determined to try for sergeant. I wouldn't be eligible until the summer of 1952, which meant I had four years to prepare for the written and oral examinations. My research indicated that most captains and those of higher rank in the LAPD were educated in police administration, a subject foreign to me. Aware that I would need more schooling to qualify for advancement, I signed up for the next available class.

In preparation for the first day, I purchased the text and studied the first chapter. References to budget and management concepts immediately challenged me. Already feeling insecure, I made my way to the classroom, which was filled with men. I slid into an empty seat in the front row and opened my notebook. Our

instructor stood to make his opening remarks. He reminded me of my dad. His intense dark eyes stared at me.

“What are you doing in my class?” he asked with not a trace of a smile.

Embarrassed, I looked around. Was he talking to me? The men whispered. When I pointed to myself, questioningly, the lieutenant nodded.

“This is police administration, isn’t it, sir?” I asked, thinking I was in the wrong class.

No one made a sound. After staring at me, his voice finally boomed, “Who okayed your admission to my class?”

I sat straighter and replied, “My money was accepted, sir.”

“It’s my policy, miss, to interview all new students before registration. You don’t belong here.”

I sprang out of my chair. “Sir, there was no mention of your policy when I enrolled.”

He walked to the blackboard and wrote his name, his back to me. “I suggest, miss, that it would be to your advantage to drop this class.”

“I was told there were openings. I’d like to stay.”

The room grew so quiet that I could hear myself breathing. I tensed as the lieutenant returned to his desk and sat down. He fiddled with a pencil for a moment and then threw it down on the desk and stood up. “If you insist on staying, young lady, I don’t see how you can be graded higher than an F!”

Face flushed and hands shaking, I picked up my books, took a deep breath, and squared my shoulders. I had to clench my jaw to keep my eyes dry, especially when the men began to stamp their feet in unison as I walked the ten or fifteen steps to the door. As the door slammed shut behind me, I heard them jeering. I was furious.

It was no use fighting to stay. I had to accept the humiliation. The instructor held so much influence in the department, all he needed to do was put out the word that I was a troublemaker, and I would never pass another oral. I couldn't even talk about what happened since that would brand me as emotional.

There had to be another way. In the meantime, however, my career at the LAPD wasn't exactly progressing as planned. Instead of the action I craved, I had been assigned to work vacation relief back at the Lincoln Heights Jail—a thankless, unchallenging job. Off duty, I became active with Police Post 381 of the American Legion, hoping to establish friendships with some of the men who were also military vets.

In July, I left for two weeks of military reserve training with the Women's Army Corps Center at Fort Lee, Virginia. I returned with a promotion to the 399th Military Police Battalion as an administrative officer. I was in high spirits.

Militarily, I outranked a majority of the LAPD male reservists. On the job, however, I was kept humble. After my stint at the Lincoln Heights Jail, I moved to the juvenile desk at Georgia Street Receiving Hospital, which lacked air-conditioning despite temperatures often rising into the high eighties. Since there was no centralized police station, most of the officers who worked downtown L.A. were located on the third floor of the brick building, one of the first built in the area. Our street-level office, however, sat right next to the covered ambulance drive-thru, so emergency sirens shrieked twenty-four hours a day as people in the city called for medical help.

In the middle of a siren blast, I answered the phone and was directed to report immediately to our watch commander. As I approached his office, I hoped this meant I was needed on a field assignment. Anything would be better than working that stifling hot desk.

We shook hands and sat. He cleared his throat as he fumbled with papers. "I see, Prichard, that you have completed probation."

I nodded.

He bent over to tie his shoe. "I understand that you have signed up with the active Army Reserves."

"Yes, sir. I signed up the same time as ninety-nine other policemen did." The lieutenant was so busy avoiding eye contact that I began to feel uncomfortable. Why was he interested in my military service, especially since, by law, he would have to honor it?

He raised his head. "You understand, of course, that when an employee is gone, it causes deployment problems?"

"No, sir! That is not my responsibility, sir. Volunteer military duty is covered by federal law. What I know is that when an employee is gone for any reason, the divisional commander resolves the absence." I was indignant, and it showed. "Do you have any complaints, sir, about my police work?"

"No, no, no, Prichard. You're doing fine. Do you plan to remain in the Army Reserves?"

His sudden question seemed inappropriate, but I answered, "Yes, sir." I watched him stiffen and realized he certainly wasn't going to talk to me about working another detail.

"I'd like to ask you, Prichard, about the women in the military. Are you aware of their reputation for homosexuality?"

There it was, that shadow that had caused me sleepless nights. Because I had served in the military, my sexuality was being questioned. At the time, I didn't recognize my proclivity toward homosexuality. I had dated only men, two of whom I had married. It would take me years to come to terms with my sexuality, which I buried more successfully than some and would question yet again years later. Still, instinctively, I knew I had to be cautious. I had already witnessed how ruthless the men could be to those women they judged to be queer.

I would later figure out that the system itself was rigged against officers deemed to be lesbians. Even those who passed the written exam in the upper 90 percent got failed on the oral. The administration just used the system against them, which was the way it was designed. Standard operating procedure. They only elevated the ones they wanted.

As I thought about the two women candidates terminated at the academy, I recalled an interview I'd had with Sergeant Sydney Ball while still on probation. I had known I could be fired for almost any reason. So I felt anxious even before knocking on Sergeant Ball's door. I tucked in my shirt, cinched up my black belt, and made sure the oversize jail keys were securely fastened to my waist. I was ready.

Her small office at the south end of the fifth floor, equipped with a sink, a mirror, screened-off commode, and a rack to hang clothes, had no windows. Two straight-backed chairs with a small table in between sat close to the wall. The dim light made the area feel shabby. Sergeant Ball stood 5'2", and I towered over her. I wondered how she had qualified for the LAPD. Her sing-song voice commanded, "Sit down, my dear. This won't take long." She didn't look at me. Instead, she opened a compact and applied powder as she spoke. "You'll be on the next transfer. I must write your final probation report and need to discuss your walk."

“My walk?” I asked. “What’s the matter with my walk?”

Not lowering the compact, she looked into its mirror and exclaimed, “Oh, my dear! You do know that you stride like a man?”

I couldn’t believe what I had just heard. My walk. Good God. Was that all she could find to criticize? How could I help how I walked? Maybe I could take smaller steps. “Am I going to be washed out for the way I walk?”

She lowered the compact to look at me. “We women have to be so careful, Prichard. You know how cruel men are. They’re much worse than women.”

“Sergeant, I don’t understand. What do the men have to do with my walk?”

She looked back into the compact and traced one eyebrow with her finger. “I’m required to discuss with you any adverse comments. Homosexuality.”

I cut her off. “What does my walk have to do with that?” I took a small notebook and pencil from my shirt pocket and began to write. I needed to get the facts concerning this interview on paper. I noted that so far, there had been no accusation.

Ball snapped shut her compact. She stood up and smoothed her skirt, then leaned toward me, trying to see what I had written. Her voice was sharp as she asked, “What are you doing, Prichard?”

“I thought it might be wise to document this conversation.”

“That will be all, Prichard. Return to your duties.”

I had received no further comments about my gait, but the encounter had been so unnerving that I had actually tried to walk differently.

Now, as I sat in his office, the watch commander was using the same tactic as Ball had—the inference of homosexuality. At this point, I still hadn't figured out that merely being a qualified, divorced woman with Army experience—the only woman on the department with that background—would make me a target for all those ugly, queer rumors. I just knew I was being dogged by a perception that at the time was patently untrue. But hell's fuzzy! I sure wasn't about to go to bed with any of those men who didn't accept me just to prove my heterosexuality.

My pulse raced as apprehension built.

"Lieutenant, I would appreciate it if you would turn around and face me," I said. "I do not want any misunderstanding between us."

He returned to his desk and sat down.

With my hands clasped in my lap, I leaned forward. "I'm aware, Lieutenant, of rumors about queers in the military," I said uneasily. "To tell you the truth, sir, I don't have a clue what they're all about. I do know that I'm tired of departmental innuendo and of being singled out for interviews on the subject under one pretext or another. So I'm going to ask you straight out. Are you implying that because I'm a captain in the Army Reserves, I'm suspected of being queer?"

He sputtered, "Oh no, no, no. Not you. But the department is concerned that your affiliation with the military will affect the policewomen's good name."

I sat on the edge of my chair, fighting to understand. “That, sir, is ugly! My affiliation with the military reflects only honorable service without a blemish on my reputation.”

He blushed and stammered again. “You know how people talk, Prichard. Management would like to avoid any unpleasantness by having you drop out of the Army Reserves.”

Whoa! To hell with management! For starters, as a newly divorced woman who had to support herself, I needed the extra \$100 I would receive from Army Reserve training. More importantly, if I let management strong-arm me into quitting, I would lose my self-respect. Nothing was worth that.

I had to make a stand. “Lieutenant, if you have any information about me other than the management’s paranoid attitude toward my being a woman associated with the military, I need to know, and right now. I’m proud of my honorable military service. As much as I’ve been investigated by the LAPD before hiring on, I’m appalled that I’m now expected to resign from the Army Reserves because of a rumor.” I glared at him.

“Now, now, Prichard. The higher-ups merely wanted me to ask if you would consider their request. You know what I mean, for the good of the department.”

I swallowed hard. I hadn’t fully recovered from not being allowed to enroll in a class just because I was a woman. Now, the LAPD didn’t approve of women in the military. That wasn’t my problem. I had fallen in love with the Army during my first year of service, due in no small part to the fact that I managed to qualify for officer candidate school even though I only had a high school diploma. I had trained five companies of women in a single year. I had made captain by watching the men and following their example. Even though I had to resign to get married, I had remained in the reserves to stay in touch with the Army. I wasn’t about to relinquish that now.

"I have no desire to discredit the department or myself, sir. But I do not agree with you that I must resign from the Army Reserves to protect the reputation of LAPD female officers."

He moved to the window. "You won't reconsider your answer?"

"Sir, I don't know what this is all about, but I'd like to ask whether the same request has been made of the ninety-nine men who signed up for the Army Reserves the same day I did."

He whirled around and blustered, "I thought I made it clear. Women have more problems than men."

"Oh, yes. You made it quite clear that if I were a man, we wouldn't be having this interview. Lieutenant, I will gladly resign from the Army Reserve when the same demand is made of the men."

"It's your decision, Prichard. Before you leave, I must remind you, I can't promise how long you will work street patrol."

I fought the urge to slam the door on the way out. Thank goodness I was no longer on probation. But career or no career, I wasn't about to accept another humiliation or the arrogant power of the brass without a challenge. I didn't have to fear the police administration, I realized. If they could have sacked me, I knew I would already be gone. And although I didn't understand then how powerful management could be, they didn't realize how powerful I had become simply by standing firm.



On January 11, 1950, less than a month after the interview about the Army Reserve, I was transferred, without explanation, to work Lincoln Heights Jail full time. No one willingly worked the jail if they wanted to be promoted. The jail was the cemetery for police careers and was frequently used by the administration to discipline

officers who had fallen from grace. This was a disaster for my career. I watched the transfer teletype printout roll from the machine and realized I was in trouble. I couldn't talk as I turned to leave. If anybody believed for one moment that I would leave the Army Reserve now or settle for this jail position, they didn't know me.



4

THE CRADLE WILL ROCK

Five months later, the transfer from street patrol still stung, even though the LAPD soon stopped assigning women to street patrol on the pretext that it was too dangerous for them. No woman had been hurt or killed walking beats, and female officers had done a superior job of fulfilling their mandate. Preventing women from walking a beat or going out on patrol not only deprived women of that kind of active duty, it deprived them of many job opportunities that required precisely that kind of experience.

I began to quietly document how the women on the department, starting with myself, were routinely shunted aside. I quickly found that there were very few incentives for women in the LAPD. Qualified policewomen were never given top assignments, and only minimal advancement in rank was possible. In 1945, eight new sergeant positions had been created for women officers. The eight women who filled those positions weren't about to leave since women were banned from promoting above the rank of sergeant. So the rest of us would have to wait until those eight retired or died. Although the institutional limits on women's advancement meant that women officers' talents and training were often wasted, few had challenged the inequity.

In the LAPD, a secret was no longer a secret once shared, so I kept my research to myself and focused on learning how to perform as a police officer since the LAPD wasn't anything like the Army. Despite the long odds, I had no problem sticking tough and waiting for change. I had never been a quitter. By all that was holy, I would

stay to rise in rank. Unfortunately, my instincts didn't always coincide with the LAPD way of doing business.

I had settled in and come to enjoy working the women's fifth floor. The busy day watch included booking and processing prisoners and escorting them to and from court. I often felt, "There, but for the grace of God, go I." I would look at the women grouped in different tank holdings separated by bars—misdemeanor or felony crimes—and cringe at the lack of privacy. I could not even imagine the loss of dignity.

About four months after my return to jail duty, I was walking down the middle aisle of the jail one morning and stopped to check on the detainees awaiting arraignment. In the windowless holding tank, lit only by dim overhead lights, women dressed in ratty civilian clothes sat on the bare concrete floor or paced.

"Hey, Officer," an inmate with a cigarette hanging from her mouth yelled. "When do we get the fucking hell out of here for court?" Dirty blond hair covered red-blurry eyes that barely focused on me.

"Watch your mouth, miss!" I responded. "The court officer will be here soon. Enjoy your smoke." I knew the judge would levy time to be served. I felt sorry for her and the rest who had been pulled into jail. Once they sobered up, that nasty behavior almost always dropped away. Unfortunately, after doing short time, they would dive right back into the bottle.

Officer Roberta Reddick, a gorgeous Black policewoman, came up behind me and whispered, "Watch it, Prichard."

"Good grief! What did I do?"

"The sergeants have a tizzy about fraternizing. So have as little conversation as possible with the prisoners, then move on. And

don't get soft in the head about their plight in life. Bars separate them from us for real reasons."

I nodded my head and went back to the booking area. Wiry Officer Edna Disney was finishing paperwork for downstairs processing. She scooted around the desk, lit a cigarette, and blew a perfect smoke ring, "Tell me, Prichard. What did you do to come back to us?"

I smiled. "The lieutenant dumped me into the jail because I wouldn't leave the Army Reserve. I'm mad about it, but I'm not going to resign my commission. I don't see how he can get away with this."

"Would you share what you just told me at the Policewomen's Association tonight? There's a meeting downstairs after work tonight to vote for a new board of directors."

It took me a moment to sort out her request. I knew that many other policewomen on the LAPD were unhappy about the limitations imposed on their careers. I also knew that fear of retribution had silenced them. They didn't want to risk losing the assignments they held or their paychecks. For better or worse, however, I wasn't the kind of woman to hold her tongue.

"I'm not afraid to speak the truth," I said. "Sure. I'll talk. Love to."

Disney ran her fingers through her short brown hair. "I have to warn you, Prichard. There are women snitches among us who delight in reporting what we do to the chief's office. If our actions displease him, we are rated down in loyalty."

I knew that speaking out could translate to another shadow over my shoulder and more trouble for me. But that possibility sure wasn't going to silence me. The Los Angeles Policewomen's Association had been started in 1925—just fifteen years after the LAPD's first female officer, Alice Stebbins Wells, had been sworn in, and five years after the Nineteenth Amendment had granted women

the right to vote. The four women who had launched the association had fought for and won pay parity with the men. This was no time to fall short of the example they had set.

The association met in the jail's main-floor meeting room. I knew about half of the thirty-five women in attendance. As a new member, I wasn't familiar with the association politics or the undercurrents about a woman's place on the LAPD. But I was in no mood to placate anyone, so I didn't hold back.

I surprised even myself with my intensity and level of frustration. Some younger policewomen in the audience vigorously applauded and hooted for more, while the senior women whispered. From the looks on their faces, I realized that I had done the unthinkable. I had openly challenged the discrimination that held all our careers hostage.

As I sat there, I knew I would hear about my brashness. I had barely completed two years seniority and hadn't earned the respect given the more seasoned officers. So I was downright shocked when Disney stood and nominated me for 1950–51 president of the Los Angeles Policewomen's Association as a write-in candidate. I fussed with my purse, pulled my skirt down, and tried to remain calm. The policewomen from the jail whispered among themselves. I heard someone say, "We haven't a thing to lose. Let's do it."

I did not know that the outgoing president, Sergeant Kay Sheldon, was running for re-election. Sheldon unfolded her tall body from her seat, the tally in her hand. There was no emotion on her face as she announced, "Your next president is Officer Prichard."

I was stunned. I'd never been president of anything in my life. Besides, I was just a rookie. Still, it never occurred to me to refuse the office.

Most of the older women weren't happy. Sergeant Rose Pickerel, hired in the late twenties and the first woman ever to walk a beat in Los Angeles, stopped me as I headed out the door. "Who put you up to this, Prichard?" she asked.

"No one," I said. "I can think for myself."

"I underestimated you. If I ever run for political office, I'd like you for my campaign manager."



I spent the following summer training with the Army Reserve in Fort Ord. I wasn't so happy upon my return to take up my new position at the department's youth program staff offices. I had been a cop for more than two years, but once again, I had been moved to a job that bore little relation to the kind of policing I wanted to do.

The Deputy Auxiliary Police, known as the DAP program, offered activities for youngsters that ranged from organized sports and camping, to excursions to places like Catalina Island and Camp Valcrest, located in the Angeles National Forest. Although there were DAP branches citywide, I was stationed in the central office, located across the street from City Hall on the second floor of the old Central Police Station, where I functioned as an event coordinator. The position was fun and rewarding, especially when I visited various schools to see how I could better help those youngsters who tended to get in trouble with the law. That made me feel like I was a cop again. Still, the job was far from the investigative position I coveted.

I tortured myself over how to remedy the situation. My only hope was to do the best job possible. If I could make exceptional ratings in my job performance, I might be able to turn around my floundering career.

That would take a lot longer than I ever imagined. I was still in my pajamas on a Sunday morning when my doorbell rang. I peeked out the front window and saw a uniformed postman. I opened the door, and he handed me a special delivery letter from Sixth Army Headquarters. Although the letter was dated 14 February 1951, I knew it wasn't a Valentine's greeting from Uncle Sam.

I climbed back into bed, sipped my coffee, and looked at the envelope. I wondered what could be significant enough to warrant such a delivery. Finally, I opened the letter. The words *ACTIVE DUTY* made me gasp. Surely this couldn't mean what I thought it might. I read, "By direction of the President and the Secretary of Defense, examination 19 February 1951, Fort MacArthur."

My God. That was only two days away.

I had no way of knowing that my involuntary recall, which would trigger my departure from the LAPD in just eight weeks, would give me the fieldwork experience the LAPD seemed intent on denying me as well as all the other women on the department. I had no way of knowing that it would teach me firsthand about how to fight for my rights when they had been denied. Still, for whatever reason, I felt that this sudden and unexpected Army recall might just be a godsend.

PART II



5

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE

Why had the Army yanked me out of civilian life on such short notice? Perhaps it had something to do with the fact that I was now a police officer. For the first time in months, I felt as if my luck was changing. I avoided running a red light by hitting the brakes and sliding on the slick streetcar tracks and pulled into the vacant lot at First and Broadway, across the street from the police station.

Overworked police vehicles with broken windows, missing back seats and crunched fenders were parked in every direction. In one of the cars, I spotted a red lantern sitting on the floor of the front seat. While working morning watch patrol, I, too, had stolen one of the red lanterns set out at night by city street maintenance to warn motorists of dangerous road repairs. The city fathers didn't believe that police patrols required heaters in their cars, and I had needed to keep my feet warm.

I entered the Central Police Station's arched stone doorway. The broad, oak banister, worn smooth by thousands of hands, evoked feelings of touching the ghosts of previous generations. The condemned building would soon be gone, along with all the other old structures from First to Sixth Streets, and I wanted to remember my part in its life. But that was the past, and I definitely needed to focus on the immediate future, no matter how uncertain.

During a sleepless night, I had considered not opting for the military. But that would have also entailed resigning my Army officer's commission, and I just could not give up what I had worked so

hard to achieve. My absence would delay the possibility of promotion at the LAPD, but while on military leave of absence, my job was protected by federal and state law. The time of military service would not be deducted from my LAPD pension. By obeying the Army, I would preserve—and hopefully advance—both careers.

I entered the small squad room on the second floor and moved toward the watch commander's glass-enclosed corner office. I had walked in a police officer, I realized, and would walk out an active army captain headed for another military tour of duty. I waited for Lieutenant Koenig, my immediate supervisor, to complete a telephone conversation while the rest of the staff, curious about why I needed to see the lieutenant alone, peered in at us. I respected Koenig and felt comfortable working for him, so I had to stifle a twinge of regret at the thought of leaving. When his conversation was over, he indicated for me to sit down.

“You’re not going to like what I have to say,” he said. “The citywide schedule for summer camp must be completed a month earlier than we thought. I want—”

I interrupted. “Excuse me, Lieutenant. Before we talk about the job, I have something else to discuss.”

I handed him a copy of my military orders. “These came in the mail—special delivery. I don’t know what it’s all about.”

He read the orders. “I don’t understand. Does this mean you’re back in the army?” He handed back the papers.

“I think so, sir. I must report to Fort MacArthur in San Pedro for a physical on Wednesday.”

“The least you could have done, Fanchon, was to give us advance notice. You know, it takes time to fill a vacancy.”

My voice tightened. "I'm telling you, sir, as soon as I could. I didn't know until yesterday, Sunday. You weren't at work."

"You mean to tell me you're being recalled to active duty for, let's see ... my God, three years, without your prior knowledge?"

"I'm shocked, Lieutenant. Nobody contacted me. I haven't had time to investigate why this has happened."

"When do you leave?"

"I don't know. If I pass the physical exam, I imagine orders will be cut within a few weeks."

He frowned and waved his hand in dismissal. I returned to my desk and phoned around the Army Reserve, trying to find someone who could tell me about this recall. Not a single source was willing to enlighten me. Was this some kind of super-secret operation?

Once it became known on the department that I was being recalled to the Army, the tone of my life there changed abruptly. I wasn't quite an outsider, but I was being ignored and even prevented from participating in work plans. I might just as well have stayed home. I spent my time finishing up at the schools I had been working with and relinquishing the responsibility of my assignments as well as the offices I held with the Policewomen's Association and the American Legion. But I knew in my heart I would be back. I would have unfinished business with the LAPD until my badge read "Detective Sergeant."

After thirty-four topsy-turvy months, most of which I spent heading up a criminal investigation in Japan, I returned to the LAPD. During my time away, I had earned the rank of major and been certified as an investigator, a particular distinction since only five women in the United States had been chosen for this role. Surely, since I was no longer a rookie and had training as well as field

and leadership experience that exceeded many of the male officers', they would give me a chance to work a bona fide police assignment. The most prestigious and powerful positions for my current rank were in the detective's bureau. Now qualified, that was where I hoped to be assigned.

As much as I deserved the promotion, I knew it would be a slog. But I was ready for the fight. In the last months of my involuntary recall, I had been set up by Army intelligence to take the fall for the very incidents I had been brought back to investigate. The Army brass certainly hadn't expected me to rebel or do whatever I had to in order to prove my innocence. I guess they didn't know me. And the LAPD had no way of knowing that I had come back much better prepared to fight for myself and challenge the department's discrimination than I had been when I left.



Despite the training and experience I had received, I feared my Army accomplishments as a criminal investigator would not be acknowledged, and that I would simply be assigned to the DAP youth program or the fifth floor of the women's jail at Lincoln Heights. As I entered the police department personnel office, the captain behind the desk frowned and motioned for me to join him. Through the window, I could see the pot-bellied trucks pouring concrete into forms for the new freeway system.

When California had been admitted to the Union in 1850, the City of Los Angeles was home to 1,610 people, with a bar on every corner and 400 gambling halls. There were no paved roads, and the City did little to make life livable for humans or horses. A hundred years later, the physical look of Los Angeles was now changing daily, with ribbons of concrete strips slowly rolling out a wide road system in all directions from the main interchange south of Elysian Park. Across Los Angeles Street from City Hall, a new police building that would centralize under a single roof the police

department, which had been scattered throughout downtown and the Eastside, now rose toward completion.

I handed over copies of my military orders returning me to civilian status along with a short resume of my investigative accomplishments. The captain quickly scanned the file.

“The only opening right now is on the fifth floor of Lincoln Heights Jail,” he said. “Take it or resign.”

Jail matron. They were offering custodial duty again. Nothing had changed. I had graduated from the Army criminal investigation school, qualified for top-secret military clearance, and received an assignment as the Assistant Chief of the Sixth Army Criminal Investigation Division (CID). But all my accomplishments in the Army didn't mean a thing with the LAPD. It was as if the more qualified I became, the more trouble I represented.

When I spoke, I managed to sound calm. “Captain, I'd like my Army documents placed in my 201 file. In the Army, I acquired valuable investigative training both in school and during field-work. Surely the department could use my talents to better advantage than the jail.”

“What you did in the military has nothing to do with the Los Angeles Police Department.”

“Doesn't my three years of field experience in investigation qualify me for consideration for detectives?”

“Things have changed since you were recalled,” he said. “Only sergeants are assigned to the bureau. Report to the captain at the jail on Monday. You'll need a uniform. You can pick up your badge, buttons, hat piece, and ID card on your way out.” His phone rang, and he turned away, dismissing me with a wave. The interview was over.

I couldn't push for anything better. Take it or resign. That's what the captain had said. The department still condemned my involvement with the military and would refuse to consider me for any police work until I resigned my commission. They could go plumb to hell. I had worked my hardest to rise in the ranks and become a commanding officer in the Army. I had never been to college, so that Army diploma was like gold in my book. No way would I consider resigning my commission.

Full of rebellion, I left his office. I couldn't do a damn thing, and he knew it. I was halfway to retirement and couldn't blow it right now. I didn't have to like it, but I could take whatever they could dish out. I could bide my time. Nothing stayed the same, and in the meantime, I could improve my chances for a promotion.

Returning to jail duty did nothing to stimulate my morale or my pride about being a policewoman, and working the morning shift, which started at midnight and ended at 8 a.m., challenged my health. My feet were already ruined from walking street patrol in high heels; walking the concrete floors in the jail just added to my misery. I fretted about the indoor confinement and wondered whether I would spend the rest of my career there.

I should have had more faith. Two months later, I was transferred out of the jail position. The orders came, and I was expected to jump. I was informed that I would now be the female coordinator of the DAPS in San Pedro. I didn't particularly want to go back to the Deputy Auxiliary Police. Still, it would get me out of the jail and move me closer to recapturing the faded dream of police work, even if it did involve doing activities with hundreds of teens.

For the next several years, marriage to Shannon Dexter Blake, a Phil Silvers lookalike whom I met on a blind date, and the birth of our son Kelly Clinton two years later, preempted much of my work focus. Returning to my job three months after Kelly's birth in 1958, however, left me less than thrilled since I found myself

working that fifth floor again. My feet hadn't healed from surgery before Blake Junior had been born and working on concrete floors in the jail made them swell. By the end of watch, I could barely drive home. Eventually, I paid \$200 to have custom police pumps made that wouldn't cripple me.

I wanted out almost as badly as the criminals I guarded. Looking for advice about where to find a new assignment, I spoke with Deputy Chief Richard Simon. It happened that he was looking for a female replacement in the public information division (PID). That sounded good to me, especially since the stability of a day-time shift would help now that I was a new mother. He wrote the blessed order for my transfer then and there, ensuring my escape from the Lincoln Heights Jail.

When the transfer list came out, I sallied into the PID and smiled when I saw a lieutenant I knew from when I had walked a beat sitting at his desk next to the captain's office. He bent over his paperwork. I waited until he looked up.

"What brings you here?" he asked.

"You mean you haven't been told?"

"Told what?"

"Deputy Chief Simon transferred me in. It will be on the teletype transfer today."

"Are you sure?"

That didn't sound good. *How could he not know I would be starting today?*

While that all quickly worked itself out, I wasn't sure how happy I was about my new assignment. Ironically, my duties

included giving tours to groups of forty or less. My poor feet. How would I tolerate walking through six floors of the jail as well as all the various divisions and bureaus including scientific investigation, administration, fingerprint classification, records, and identification?

My stay at public information would not be happy. Up to this point in my life, I had suffered subtle discrimination. But after taking a position with the PID, the discrimination became flagrant and undeniable. Captain Ray Plant and Lieutenant William Wagner refused to accept me. No matter how well I performed, no matter how many letters of commendation I received from the public, they never acknowledged my work or gave me any encouragement.

In addition, it soon became obvious that my efforts to speak up on behalf of the department's policewomen weren't appreciated either. After I had been in the public information division for six months, I received the worst efficiency rating of my career to that point.

"Of course you know any 50-percent rating requires that I explain it to you," said Lieutenant Wagner, who would wind up being promoted to deputy chief a few years later. "There's nothing personal about this."

Famous last words. It was definitely personal. And I wouldn't be able to do a thing to change it.

"Sign here," he said, pushing the paperwork across his desk.

I scanned the page. I couldn't believe I had four 50-percent ratings. I clenched my jaw and fought back the desire to tell him to go to hell. Only one rating, the one for physical fitness, came anywhere near the truth. "What's this about initiative?" I asked. He wouldn't look at me. "I've never been short on taking charge. How have I qualified for such a rating?"

He stood up. "You come to work every day, but you haven't grasped the essence of your assignment."

"I don't accept that as a reasonable explanation," I said. "And here's another. 'The force to carry out with energy and resolution that which is believed to be reasonable, right, or duty.' You rated me down by 50 percent on that item. How have I failed? Even though you haven't given me a chance, I've always carried out my assignments with energy and resolution."

He put his hands in his pockets and walked to the window. With his back to me, he said, "You haven't measured up."

"That's the first I've heard about it. On this one, 'common sense.' I want to know the specifics. On what have you based your findings?"

I could see he had not expected my questions. He squirmed in his chair. "Ratings are only an administrative tool," he said. "You'll probably do better next time."

"I did better this time! Don't you think it would be more honorable to tell me that I'm not wanted in this division?" I shot back.

"Ratings don't mean a thing," Wagner said. "All you have to do is sign."

I stepped back from his desk. "I don't believe it. You're making it impossible for me to get a transfer or a promotion. No captain in his right mind would want to accept anyone with a rating as odious as this one. These are terrible percentages and I have no way to rebut their falsity."

"That's my judgment of your performance."

"If you were so dissatisfied with my work, why didn't you say something before this?"

“I’ve completed my interview with you,” he said. “You’re required by departmental rules to sign this. At once.”

I bent over his desk and picked up the pen. My hand shook as I wrote my name. “I hope you sleep well tonight, Lieutenant,” I said. “I’ve signed this pack of lies only because you ordered me to.”

I’m sure my division heads had figured that this efficiency rating would destroy my chances for a decent promotion or transfer and would drive me from the department. Instead, the treatment fanned the flame of rebellion in my heart even further. Even if it took years, I resolved, I would change the second-class citizenship foisted on LAPD women.

I took my copy, straightened, and headed for the business office division (BOD) located at the main entrance of the police building. I had heard that thirteen new slots for policewomen, five at BOD, would replace veteran policemen for the first time in the history of the department. I wanted to be one of those more than ever.

Captain Robbie Robertson met me at the door of his small office. His captain’s bars flashed from his collars, and he had enough white service stripes on his left uniform sleeve to signal that he could retire.

“Robbie,” I sputtered. “I’m so angry I could chew bullets, spit them out, and hit a target at ten feet. Look at this!” I handed him a copy of my rating.

He took it and motioned for me to be seated. After he had read it, he looked up. “They’re wrong,” he said. “Dead wrong. I’ve watched you conduct tours.”

“I appreciate your support,” I said. “Would that rating negate my applying for one of your new spots?”

“Hell no, Fanchon. You’d be my first choice.”

“But what about that rating?”

“Not good, but not fatal. Put alongside your others, and it would be obvious that it’s biased.”

“Then, would there be a job for me here?”

“Hang in there. You’ll be transferred next month. Here,” Robbie said, handing me the rating. “Keep this and consult it at least four times a year. Let it be a reminder to not wait until they rate you. Check with your supervisor so you won’t be surprised. If you’ve done something that displeases your supervisor, clear it up before it becomes a problem.”

A month later, as I watched the teletype machine at detective headquarters, I saw my name appear, followed by “Trfd fr PID to BOD.” My morale soared. I chuckled as I thought about leaving PID the same way I had arrived—without their approval.

