

## **The Meeting**

**Julie Walden**

The corridor didn't usually seem this long, although she'd been told to head to Matron's office, a first, and she had no idea what awaited her. Lorraine Barber had worked at the hospital almost two years, she was in her early thirties when she qualified, having spent a number of years working in education. She was a kind woman, far too old for her years. Underneath her pleasant and caring nature seemed a sadness. Her dark hair was tied up in a bun and her light blue uniform smart and tidy. The door to the staircase that led to the offices wasn't far, it was directly above ward thirteen. In her head Lorraine was thinking that could be a bad sign, she was being sent to see Matron above the unluckiest number.

The hospital was a nice place to work. The building was dated but she admired the plain yet warm coloured walls. A few paintings hung on one side of the corridor but had been surrounded by signs that directed you to counselling, exercise classes or campaigns about not smoking. She passed the sluice as the door opened, and a student nurse appeared from inside quickly scurrying off with a bedpan and Lorraine was hit with various smells from inside the room. She picked up her pace a bit, keen to get back to the normal smell of hospital soap and disinfectant. As she approached the stairwell she thought of her fiancé. Charles Shepherd was a fine man who cared for her deeply. He'd supported her decision to change career and even agreed to postpone their wedding whilst she attended University. How would she explain to him that she'd been dismissed or disciplined? Of course, this was assumptions for why she'd been summoned to 'Her Majesty', the name all nurses gave to Matron although never to her face. She pushed through the doors and started to climb the stairs.

It was obvious she'd entered the area to senior staff as her eyes were suddenly met with beautiful paintings and papered walls. Fresh flowers were on the windowsill and the

whole stairwell smelt like she'd stepped into a meadow. The wall to her left was dedicated entirely to the senior staff. Photos with paragraphs underneath telling the reader who they were. Even their hobbies were listed, perhaps to make these stern looking seem gentler. Then she spotted 'her majesty'. Lorraine cringed as she noted what Mrs Veronica Honeyduke, the hospital Matron, considered to be her hobby – taxidermy. Images of dead stuffed cats, rats and squirrels filled her mind. Lorraine skimmed the rest of the paragraph quickly and picked up a few more details.

“Never married..... breeds cats..... shot putt champion for the county...wow!”

Wishing she'd not read any of it, as Matron now seemed extra scary, she hurried up the last few steps and headed towards the desk in front of her and gave her name. Miss Kindle, the secretary, offered Lorraine a cup of tea and ushered her to the waiting area. It wasn't long before the door in front of Lorraine opened and a voice called her inside.

Matron's office was just as cosy as the stairwell that led to it.

“Good morning Nurse Barber, please take a seat”. The voice was familiar. It was Sister Reeves; she'd been a mentor to Lorraine when she was a student. Lorraine Smiled and sat down. She noted another lady in the room that she'd not met before. Matron introduced everyone to each other, and it seemed the new face was Doctor Catherine Harrison, a Vascular Neurologist. In simpler terms, she specialised in strokes. On the table in front of her lay five folders, all looked the same. “We're expecting another,” Lorraine thought and at that moment Miss Kindle joined them, carrying a large tray of tea and biscuits.

“Fabulous. Now grab yourself a folder and we'll begin. Miss Kindle will take the minutes of the meeting.” And at that very moment Miss Kindle opened her notebook and checked her pen was working. Everyone opened their folders at the same time, yet only Lorraine seemed surprised at the contents. She looked up as Sister Reeves explained why the meeting had been arranged. “The hospital has been given funding to build a stroke unit.

Doctor Harrison here will be running it and I've been accepted as the ward manager. There will be two wards and a rehabilitation area. I'm going to need staff of course, and I'd like you to consider the role of Junior Sister. You'd oversee one of the wards and have your own staff. In your short time here, and through your student days, you've shown nothing but dedication, patience and a thirst for knowledge. You are an extremely knowledgeable and skilled nurse Lorraine and I sincerely hope you'll give this serious consideration". Lorraine couldn't find any words, totally stunned by the proposal. Having assumed she'd been summoned for something dreadful, instead she was now facing a promotion. When Lorraine started at the hospital, she'd been allocated Cardiology. It was a lovely ward and she enjoyed the work, but it wouldn't have been her first choice of speciality. And now she was being offered a new role and, in her hands, lay the contract and building plans and ideas. It was exciting. After all she'd been through, someone still saw her potential.

"I'll take the job" she said smiling.