New Life

by skylark3

Summary

Roxanna collapses at work. Henrik fears the worst and is shaken by the outcome.

Notes

I am not a medical person so sorry if there are any glaring errors, apart from the obvious!
Henrik was in the middle of giving a presentation to the Board when there was a knock on the door of the meeting room. A disgruntled Henrik looked up to see who it was, annoyed that the interruption had stalled his flow. The concerned face of Sacha popped his head around the door. “Sorry, Henrik…Mr Hanssen,” his surroundings dawning on him. “Can I have a word please? It is extremely important.” Giving his apologies to the Board Henrik stepped out of the room. “Sacha, what it is?” Henrik, slightly annoyed. “It’s Roxanna. Now don’t panic, she is fine now but she collapsed earlier in surgery and is on AAU being checked over by Serena.” Henrik’s heart started to pound in his chest, and despite Sacha’s reassurance he was starting to panic. “Right…let me just let the Board know and I’ll come straight down.” He returned to the Board room, gave a quick apology, stating that he had to attend some urgent medical situation, grabbed his phone from the table and rushed from the room leaving the rest of his papers and laptop.

As he sprinted down the hospital corridors to AAU Sacha raced to keep up with him. “Is she conscious?” asked Henrik. “Yes I believe so, she is sat up and talking by all accounts,” Sacha replied, a little out of breath. A thousand thoughts crossed through Henrik’s mind as he felt anxiety rush through his body; he rubbed his left thumb against the underside of his wedding ring, now firmly embedded on his finger. Is this something left over from John? Am I going to lose her all over again? Anger at the thought of John seeped in. John, long gone, but still hurting them from his grave.

Henrik barged through the doors of AAU, and without any of his usual formalities and politeness asked, “Where is she?” Donna Jackson leapt from her chair noting his presence. “We’ve put her in a side room, I’ll show you through to her.” She said, quickly moving round the front of the desk and guiding him over to room. She closed the door leaving them alone.

Henrik walked in to see Roxanna sitting up on the edge of the bed, still in her theatre blues. She looked pale but not as bad as he was expecting, which relieved him. “My darling,” he said rushing over to the bed and taking hold of her. She hugged him back. “Henrik, I’m fine.” He let go of her and grabbed the chart at end of the bed, ever the doctor. “What tests is Serena running? Did you bang your head? Has she ordered a CT scan?” He returned the folder and took out his torch from his inside jacket pocket and tilted her head so he could examine her eyes. “Any headaches?”

“Henrik, leave me alone!” She said, holding her hand up to the bright light he was trying to shine in her eyes and then batting his arm out of the way. “Serena has done all this; she’s taken bloods and we are just awaiting the results. I just fainted. I think I’m just tired. It’s been a busy few months, what with the honeymoon, returning to work and selling my house.” A pang of guilt leapt into Henrik’s stomach; he shouldn’t have made her stay up late last night reading through his presentation for the board.

“I’m sorry, I should have been looking out for you better. You didn’t eat much for breakfast either. I should have made sure you did.” He grabbed her hand again, looking down at the two rings on her finger. Instinctively, he lent in to hug her again. “I can’t lose you, Roxanna,” he whispered into her hair. She closed her eyes. She understood his concern, she would be the same if it was him but she knew she felt fine. “I thought maybe it was related to what John…..,” Henrik started. “Henrik. Enough. Please! You know I don’t like talking about it.” There was an edge of annoyance and frustration to her voice now. “I’m a neurosurgeon. I would know if it was something serious; I really think I’m fine. I feel a lot better now. In fact, I need to find out what happened to my poor patient I was operating on.” She released herself from his arms and stood up, grabbing her pass from the bedside table and clipping it back on to her trousers.
“You’re not going anywhere until we know what the problem is.” Henrik said forcefully, standing in her way. “Henrik, please, I don’t’ want to argue with you. I’ll speak with Serena, I’m sure she won’t mind. I’ll come straight back once I’ve been up to the ward”, she responded, trying to swerve around him. “Roxanna…please…,” he pleaded.

Just then the door opened and Serena stepped inside clutching a tablet and shut the door behind her. “Ah, Roxanna. Henrik…” she had an uneasy expression across her face. Henrik noticed this, his anxiety rising in his chest again, “what is it?” he demanded, the words falling out his mouth, reading the concern in her face. “I’ve just had your blood results back Roxanna….err, you might want to sit down for this.”

Roxanna’s eyes glared at Serena, a worried look now spreading across her face; she was sure she felt fine. “Just tell me, Serena. Let me see…”she said, reaching for the tablet. Reluctantly Serena passed it to her. “We’ve…err, had the blood results back and it would appear Roxanna that there are high levels of hCG in your blood, which would….err…indicate that you are….pregnant.” Serena let that last word hang in the air for a minute, silence filling the room. “Is that a possibility……?” she continued.

Roxanna stood holding the tablet in both hands, staring at the results in front of her, double checking what she was seeing. “No,” she stuttered. “It’s not possible…..I’m nearly 50. I’ve started the menopause.” She stepped back, glad to feel the chair hit the back of her legs as she dropped down into it, not removing her eyes from the screen.

Henrik removed the tablet from her hands. “This can’t be right….have you got the results mixed up?” this directed at Serena, whilst he also stared at the screen searching for answers. “I’ve doubled checked it myself. I really have. I even went down to the lab because I was unsure at first too. But…it would seem that it is ….correct….” Serena trailed off.

“No!” gasped Roxanna, her hand leaping up to her mouth, staring at the floor. “I think I’ll leave you two alone for a while. Just to let this sink in”. Serena retrieved the tablet from Henrik’s hand. He let it slip without any resistance, sinking into a seated position on the bed, also staring at the floor. Neither responded to Serena so she left, closing the door behind her.

“Henrik…..” gasped Roxanna.

“I…I…don’t know what to say…” he trailed off. “I thought you said you’d taken care of it! The implant…I don’t see how…”

“I, I, don’t understand either…” she said thinking, her mind trying to rewind to when she got the implant. She couldn’t recall. Henrik’s words sunk in, I thought you’d taken care of it. “Right….so it all my fault is it!” she snapped, standing up now. “You are a doctor Henrik, bloody hell, it takes two to tango!” The shock had now turned into anger. Anger at her own stupid fault. She couldn’t remember when she had got implant; she was a doctor, how could she not have realised!

“I’ve got to go” she said, the urge to run away from the situation flooding over her as she fled out of the door. He looked up, just in time to see a flash of blue scrubs rush out of the door. “Roxanna…” he shouted after her, but he was fixed to the spot, unable to move.
Eight Weeks

Chapter Summary

Henrik and Roxanna discuss their news.

Later that day Henrik went to her office as usual to drive her home. She looked up from her work briefly, "just give me a second to finish this and I'll be ready". "Roxanna, we really should talk..."

"Not here Henrik. Later." He nodded knowing she was right.

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At home, they went about their usual routine, making dinner together, laying the table; busying themselves. They were quieter than usual however, more subdued, an air of apprehension between them. Neither wanted to start the conversation about today’s revelation, despite the fact that both could think about nothing else. Henrik purposely avoided putting a bottle of red on the table like he usually would and instead filled a jug with water.

Both ate without any enjoyment. Roxanna in particular pushed the food around her plate, placing the knife and fork together on the plate when she could eat no more. It was Roxanna who spoke first. "Serena caught up with me this afternoon," she started, "she did an ultrasound, just to check there was nothing more sinister going on. There wasn’t, just a pregnancy." “Oh”, he responded, taken aback and disappointed that she had not told him earlier about the ultrasound. Roxanna caught this in his reaction and felt a pang of guilt. "I’m sorry I didn’t tell you at the time, I just didn’t feel like I could speak about it. I just needed time to process it. I'm eight weeks." She said the latter quietly, almost embarrassed, unsure of his reaction.

"Right," Henrik replied, folding his napkin too many times. She waited, hoping he would say something else but he didn’t. A silence hung between them until she broke it. "There is still time to do something about it if we want," she said tentatively. Henrik swallowed the water in his mouth and put his glass down, taking time to think about what she had just said. "Do we want to? Do you?" He said looking at the table, finding it difficult to make eye contact. She leant back in her chair, throwing her napkin on the table. "I don't know what I want in all honesty. I can't believe we are even having this conversation. Not for one minute did I believe this was going to happen. I don't even know if it’s possible at my age." She thought for a moment, correcting herself, "well obviously it is, but you know, carrying it to full term".

"According to the most recent studies it is entirely possible but it doesn't come without risks. Big risks to both mother and child." She found it endearing that he had already undertaken research. Typical Henrik. Always had his finger on the pulse. "Hmm...Risks I'm not sure I want to take," she replied. He looked at her now, and she knew he was thinking the same. She reached over and took his hand. "We've waited too long to get to this," she said stroking his hand and brushing her thumb over his ring. "I'm not sure I want to do anything to jeopardize it." He responded by leaning over and gently kissing her lips; she pressed her lips to his, holding them there until he made the decision to pull away.

"What else did Serena say?" He enquired, his hands returning to the napkin. "Not much, what can you say? I think she was as embarrassed as I was. She gave me some iron tablets and folic acid, said
she would refer me to Obstetrics.” “Ah, the formidable Ms Fanshawe”, Henrik sighed a crease forming across his forehead. They both chuckled at Henrik’s quip. “Yes. That’s what I thought. The whole hospital will know if she knows.” “I hope you swore Serena to secrecy”, he responded, reminded of how fast things get around. “I trust Serena, Henrik. I didn’t want to insult her professionalism”. “Hmm”, he agreed, having no doubt she would tell Bernie.

"Do you feel okay now, my darling?" He asked stroking her face with the back of his hand. "Yes. I'm fine. Stop worrying. I'll take the iron tablets and I'll be fine". "Roxanna. I will never stop worrying about you. You need to get used to this now we are married." "And I love you for it Henrik." This time, she kissed him.

"It's too late to talk about this anymore. Let's clear up and go to bed.” She said getting up and collecting the plates. He stood up after her and took hold of her arm gently, a serious tone to his voice. "Roxanna, this won't go away. We will need to make a decision." "I know Henrik. But not tonight. It's all been too much for today. I'm tired." He took the plates from her, "you go up. I'll clear this away." "Thank you. Love you," she smiled.
Nine Weeks

Chapter Summary

Roxanna and Henrik have a big decision to make.

One week later:

Henrik was pacing up and down the hallway, the front door was open and the car engine was running. He was waiting for Roxanna who was currently vomiting in the downstairs bathroom. An almost identical scene had been playing out each morning for the past three days. "Are you okay?" he shouted through the door to her. The toilet flushed and she came out, wiping the back of her hand across her mouth.

"Can you stop asking me that every five minutes Henrik? It's starting to get really irritating," she snapped, grabbing her bag and heading to the car. "Fine", he whispered under his breath, following her out and locking the front door.

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He carefully manoeuvred the car into his car parking space and pulled the hand break on and turned the engine off.

"Your appointment is at 4pm, so I'll meet you at the car at 3.15pm, okay". He said, staring out of the windscreen straight ahead at the brick wall, but reaching across to squeeze her hand.

She didn't reply, just stared out of the passenger window watching the throng of people going in out of the hospital. Her non-response was not lost on him; "We are doing the right thing you know. It's for the best all round, darling," he said softly. "I know," she sighed, still not looking at him, fighting to stop a tear falling down her cheek.

He released her hand, noting the digits on the clock changing. "Right, let’s get on," he said undoing his seat belt and getting out of the car. It wasn't until he had shut his door with a thud that she pulled herself together and got out.

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They sat in the waiting room next to each other, Henrik's hand upon hers. She had been quiet the whole journey. She was playing out different arguments, different scenarios in her head; did she want to keep it? Was a termination the right thing to do? She kept thinking of the tiny black dot, the tiny heartbeat, she had seen on the ultrasound scan on that first day. She swore she could feel that heartbeat in her stomach sometimes, even though she knew it wasn’t medically possible at this early stage. She could feel it attached to her physically and it was starting to become attached to her heart as well. She had to keep telling herself to stop it; to stop making this into a fairy tale because it wasn’t.
Deep down she knew they were making the right decision. They were too old to have a baby, both of them were. It wasn't fair on the child; they were nearer retirement than anything else, the possibility of either one of them dying early, leaving a child without a parent, it wasn't fair. There were the risks to her health too, she couldn't bear the thought of Henrik being left alone. Henrik who had been alone for most of his life. She knew the gap she filled; how much he needed her just to get through the day. She couldn't do it to him. She had to take into account his wishes as well. He had spoken about his anxieties of being a father again; of making the same mistakes he believed he had done with Fredrik. She knew this wouldn't happen. She knew, that with her support he would make a wonderful father. If this had been 15 years ago, even 10, maybe, but she had to face facts, it wasn't. They were both fast approaching 50, it just wasn't meant to be.

"Mrs Hanssen?" She had heard the voice but didn't register that they were talking to her. It was only when Henrik nudged her elbow, did she realise. They both stood up and followed the voice into an office. They sat down on the soft chairs as directed whilst the very nice, very understanding, very young, female doctor went through the paperwork with them. "Okay, so, if you just wait here a few minutes I'll send the nurse through to get you when we are ready." "Thank you," Roxanna replied.

When she had left, she watched Henrik get up and walk over to the window. He hadn't said a word during the consultation, he had allowed Roxanna to do all the talking. He turned around to look at her intently, "I don't think you should do this," he said clearly and firmly. "What...?" she gasped, taken aback, looking up at him, searching his face for answers. She was unsure if she had heard him correctly.

"I'm sorry Roxanna, I think I've pushed you in to this. I don't think you really want to do this and I'm not sure I want you to do it either." He continued. "But I thought we had discussed all this? Agreed that it wasn't right, that it wasn't fair on the baby or on us?" She couldn't understand why he was changing his mind now.

He came over to her and knelt in front of her, gently holding her by the arms, "Roxanna, we have spent thirty years trying to save people, to keep people alive, day in, day out, and now here we are, ready to end a life, a life we have created together. I thought it was the right thing to do but I'm not so sure now. There has been enough loss for us in recent years and for whatever reason, a miracle of science, a miracle of God, this has happened to us and I wonder if we should just see where it takes us? I've seen the way you've been this last week, diligently taking the vitamins, touching your stomach when you think no one is watching. I know you. I know you would love to have a child." She blushed at his comments because he was right, she had dared to think about what having a child, their child, would be like. "I believe you are agreeing to this termination for me and that's not right."

"But what about the risks? We've spoken this all through Henrik?" She responded, trying to fathom why he had waited until now to say these things. "I would never let you do anything that I thought would hurt you. Take you away from me. You know I wouldn't. I almost lost you and I am not going to let that happen again. I love you and I will take the very best care of you and I'll get you the best medical care." He held her face in his hands; "I'm sorry if I'm confusing you but I didn't think it was right if I didn't tell you how I feel. It's your decision Roxanna, of course it is. I will love you and take care of you whatever the decision you make."

There was a knock at the door and a nurse came in, "Are you ready Mrs Hanssen?" She asked. Henrik stood up and sat back in the chair. Roxanna looked at the nurse and then to Henrik. "Err, I think....I think we would like a bit more time if you don't mind?" Roxanna stuttered. "Yes okay, no problem. I'll pop back in a few minutes. Take as much time as you want," said the nurse leaving them alone once again.

What he had said was all true and she respected him for his bravery. He had said what she had been
unable to say. She reached for his hand. "Ok, maybe this does need a bit more thought. I never realised you felt like this. Why didn't you say sooner? I thought you were the one who didn't want to have it and that it was just me who had doubts?"

"It's only now that it's hit me. Being here, I suppose just made it all real." He removed his glasses, wiped a tear from his eye then replaced them.

Roxanna sat in silence for some time thinking over what he had just said. Eventually she said, "okay Henrik….Let's go home."

"Are you are sure?" he faltered, turning to look at her. "I have never heard you speak so passionately about anything in the entire time I've known you Henrik. I'm scared. I'm scared about this whole situation. I don't know what to expect or what the outcome will be but if you are by my side then I know it will be okay." Now she caressed his face, "let's go home Henrik. The three of us." He let out a gasp as her words took his breath away. He leant over and kissed her then pulled back to look at her. "I love you very much," he whispered.

"I know. I love you too," she smiled, rubbing her nose against his. They then engulfed each other in an embrace, holding on to each other, never wanting to let go.
Twelve Weeks

Chapter Summary

Henrik and Roxanna attend the 12 week scan.

"Are you sure you don't want to do this at a private clinic?" Henrik whispered, skulking down in his seat trying to avoid the gaze of two inquisitive midwives as they strolled past. They were sat in the corridor of the Obstetrics unit waiting for their 12 week scan.

"If anyone asks we are here to consult on a patient." Roxanna responded, calmly. "Did you know Ms Fanshawe is a renowned expert in the field of geriatric mothers?" She enquired, whilst looking up at the array of breast feeding related leaflets on the wall.

“Well I suppose I should know as CEO but it does seem to have passed me by.”

"We were lucky she was free. Apparently she is very in demand," Roxanna commented.

"Hmm" he responded, indifferent.

“Well, Serena commends her highly. I think they know each other quite well”. "Yes I believe they do spend quite a bit of time together when Bernie is away." he replied, never one to elaborate on other people’s personal matters.

"Geriatric..." she mused "Didn't think I would be bestowed with that label quite so soon," letting out a sigh, a despondent smile forming on her face.

Henrik reached over and squeezed her hand and smiled, "You will always be 19 to me my darling. The clever, beautiful, mesmerizing Roxanna Macmillan, dancing the night away to Sandy Denny.” She let out a small, embarrassed laugh, her eyes smiling and squeezed his hand back; "Henrik...you big softy!" He glanced back at her blushing cheeks, thinking to himself that she looked like the bashful girl that he first fell in love with and in that moment he loved her even more than he thought possible.

“Anyway, the term is ‘Mother of Advanced Maternal Age’ these days, so you have nothing to worry about." He said, hoping to make her feel better. “Is it? I didn’t know that. You are well informed Henrik. Well, I suppose that is slightly better.”

Seeing a group of F1s approaching he let go of her hand quickly. She stood up and walked over to the noticeboard, studying it but not really taking much notice. There was a silence between them now and he sensed a change in her mood. He got up and walked over to her, leaning against the wall so he could look at her. "Are you nervous?" He asked softly. She looked up at him and he could see the answer etched across her face. "A little," she smiled. He gave her a look as if to say it’s okay and she knew what he meant even without words.

"Roxanna? Henrik?" The unmistakable voice of the Ms Fleur Fanshawe summoned them into a consulting room.

"Well, I can't say I wasn't a little surprised when I saw your name on the list Roxanna," Fleur said raising her eyebrows as they all sat down. "Yes, well it was a bit if a surprise to us too, replied
Roxanna, self-conscious and looking over at Henrik for reassurance. He gave her a little smile. "I see," continued Fleur.

Public displays of affection, especially at work, were not Henrik’s thing but he recognised that today Roxanna needed him. Needed him to be her husband and not her colleague, so despite Fleur’s presence and despite himself, he leant over and took hold of Roxanna’s hand, sensing how nervous she was.

"And I’m assuming that you want to proceed with the pregnancy?" Fleur went on. Roxanna looked over at Henrik again and they both nodded. “Of course,” said Henrik, slightly annoyed with the question, partly because it was Fleur doing the asking and partly because of the guilt he felt over originally suggesting a termination.

He had never directly worked with Fleur but had heard from others that she was a larger than life character, always the centre of the celebrations at Albie’s; someone who was not backwards in coming forward. So different to Henrik’s way of being that he doubted they would get along. Nevertheless, if she was good at her job that was all that mattered.

"Okay. Well, Roxanna if you climb on to the bed we will see what is going on in there." Roxanna sat on the bed and lifted her blouse and adjusted her skirt to allow Fleur access to her still flat stomach. She leant back and looked up at the tiles on the ceiling, not yet ready to look at the screen next to her. Henrik stood beside her, placing his hand on hers. She flinched at the cold jelly on her stomach and the instrument sliding across her abdomen.

"Ok, so there we have a good, strong heartbeat." Said Fleur, eyes fixed on the screen. Roxanna let out a gasp of relief and dared herself to look at the screen.

"There is the head, and a leg, and there is a little arm waving at us," Fleur said whilst pointing out the fuzzy images on the screen with her spare hand. Roxanna blinked away the tears welling up in her eyes and strained her head to look at the image not wanting to miss a moment.

Henrik too was mesmerized by the image. He took in the shape of the head, the dark areas showing the eye sockets, a small nose protruding from the face and the outline of a pair of perfectly formed lips. He had never seen anything more wondrous in his life and he let out a breath, realising he had been holding it the whole time. He clasped Roxanna’s hand, glancing over to her to see a tear rolling down her cheek.

"Right, so all the measurements look as expected," said Fleur, as much relieved as the expectant parents. "It's certainly a lively little thing" she continued as they all watched it tumble around on the screen. They all let out a small laugh, a sense of relief filling the room. "I've taken some images, so you can take them away, but you will need to cough up a tenner Henrik, if that’s ok with you?" Fleur quipped, feeling more confident in front of her esteemed patients.

"Certainly, Ms Fanshawe," he replied a smirk forming across his face.

Roxanna wiped the jelly from her stomach with the paper towel Fleur had handed her and stood up to rearrange her clothes whilst Fleur stepped outside the room to retrieve the photos. Henrik took the opportunity of them being alone to hold her in his arms and kissed her on the forehead. She sank into him, glad of his support. They stood apart when they heard Fleur coming back into the room and returned to their seats. Roxanna clutched the photos Fleur had given her.

“Ok so everything looked in order on the scan which is good news. However Roxanna, I have to be honest with you”, a more serious tone to her voice. "To conceive naturally at your age is very rare. You will of course appreciate that because of your age you are immediately a high risk case. The
risks to both you and baby are high. I'm sure you have researched this extensively for yourselves but I wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't explain them all to you." Roxanna nodded politely as Fleur talked them through the possible outcomes and risks. It was difficult to listen to for both of them, especially after just seeing the perfect image on the screen.

"You will need to take very good care of yourself, Roxanna. Get lots of rest, do not over do things and eat well. I have to stress that it is still very early days. We will of course be monitoring you very closely. And Henrik, you need to make sure you look after her as well.”

"Of course" he nodded.

Out in the corridor Roxanna looked up and beamed at Henrik, excitement twinkling in her eyes. Henrik smiled down back at her. He took hold of her hands and despite their surroundings and the hubbub of patients and staff around them, he bent his head to kiss her fully on the lips. Roxanna taken aback by this unusual public display of affection hesitated at first but managed to kiss him back. “Let’s go and have lunch in my office,” he suggested. She nodded, still smiling. As they both walked to his office side by side, he reached out and caught her hand and they stayed like this, holding hands, until they reached their destination.

Safely ensconced in his office, they ate their packed lunch and spilled over the black and white scan photos allowing themselves, just for a moment, to revel in the excitement that the prospect of a new life brings.
Henrik and Roxanna get ready for work.

Henrik sat relaxing on their bed, his feet up and his legs crossed leaning against the headboard. He was dressed in his grey suit trousers, a light blue shirt open at the collar and he was drinking his morning coffee. The autumn sun shone through the bedroom window and warmed the place where he was sitting.

These days his eagerness to get into work as early as possible like he used to was losing its appeal. Now Roxanna was here home had much more of a pull on him. Some days he wished they didn't have to go to work and that they could just close the curtains, block out the world and concentrate on loving one another.

Never before had Henrik’s focus on work shifted so much. Evenings were now made up of cosy dinners and cuddles on the sofa. Weekends were spent doing things that would be usual for other people but unusual for Henrik; shopping, trips to art galleries, coffee shops and deli’s; country walks with pub lunches, and dare he believe it but watching television on a Saturday night. Strictly was Roxanna’s current favourite but they had been through a raft of box sets too; he thought half of it was nonsense but kept it to himself for her sake. He drew the line however at eating their dinner on the sofa like she had wanted to so a new television set had been bought for the kitchen diner.

Roxanna had provided him with a life he had never known before; one in which even the mundane tasks were enjoyable because it was a task done together. She had also taught him that it was okay to relax, not to be so uptight, but he was still working on that.

Having said that, the name Henrik Hanssen was synonymous with hard work, diligence and duty so he would never let any of it slip too much. Henrik's more relaxed approach to work still exceeded most people’s hardest efforts. He would always be grateful to that hospital for giving him a life; giving him a reason to live when little else did. Now though, he had two things to live for and they were not exclusively linked to the hospital. Though he no longer had his faith, he would be forever grateful to whoever or whatever had bestowed those things upon him, this late in life.

The faint sound of the Today programme was humming from the bedside radio and he dipped in and out of listening to it as his thoughts allowed. It was competing though with the patter of running water coming from the open door of the ensuite where Roxanna was taking a shower. He watched her through the glass screen, her eyes closed, massaging the shampoo into her hair. His eyes followed the flow of the bubbles cascading down her body and then rested on the burgeoning bump that was her stomach. His heart swelled with love and pride for this amazing creature he could call his wife.

Henrik had never really felt contentment until the day Roxanna had said, "I do". A vision of loveliness in a royal blue fitted dress; matching blue eyes twinkling as she beamed at him.

Contentment, however came in fits and starts interspersed with the worries of life: the dull ache of grief over Fredrik was always there in the background but had flared up again recently with the prospect of another child in his life; he hadn’t spoken to Roxanna about this though. The constant worries about Roxanna's health after John and now of course the pregnancy. It all cast dark shadows,
threatening to drag him down again. But just now, during those precious few moments of a weekday morning watching the love of his life, he found that contentment had returned again. He wished he could bottle it up, to savour anytime he liked.

Roxanna disappeared from his view now for a short while as she stepped out of the shower. She returned moments later, walking through to the bedroom wrapped in her white dressing gown, drying her hair with a towel. She noticed him sat on the bed smiling at her as if he knew something she didn’t. Flinging the towel over the back of a chair, a look of intrigue on her face she asked, "Why are you looking at me like that?" "No reason." He responded as he continued to smile, enjoying the scene in front of him. "I’ve made you coffee, it’s on your bedside table." He advised. "Thank you, darling." She responded, taking it back to the dressing table. He watched her as she sat and applied moisturiser and then make up to her delicate features; first a layer of foundation, a little brown eye liner, mascara to her lashes and a hint of blusher against each cheek bone, not too much, but just enough to enhance her elfin features. Now the hair; already dry she applied some styling lotion to her finger tips and swept her hands through the front of her blonde fringe, brushing it off her face.

She took another gulp of the coffee and took off the dressing gown draping it across the end of the bed and pulled on her underwear. He had noticed that in the last few weeks that as well as her stomach, her breasts had also started to swell and this morning they were starting to spill over the top of the once neat fitting bra. Not that he had any complaints about this.

She headed over to the wardrobe bringing out a signature black pencil skirt and stepped into it fighting to pull it up to her waist. She struggled to do up the zip, willing the two pieces of fabric to meet in the middle. She let out a sigh of exasperation. "It’s no good Henrik, I’m gonna have to buy some new clothes. Nothing seems to fit anymore!" She complained, screwing up her nose, a frown appearing across her forehead as she glanced at him through the reflection in the full length mirror. He got up and walked up behind her, nuzzling into her neck and placing his hands on the bump which had escaped over the top of the skirt. He kissed her neck then looked at her through the reflection in the full length mirror. "You are very beautiful though," he smiled. She looked back at him thinking. "Well that may be so, but I don’t think it will do to go into work wearing a skirt that I can't even zip up!" Sighing, she broke away from his grasp, pulled the skirt off and dropped it on the floor. She plodded back to the wardrobe to find an elasticated summer skirt. "Oh well, it will have to do. I'll just have to change into scrubs when we get there."

Henrik hung up the discarded skirt back in the wardrobe and returned the wet towel to its rail in the ensuite as Roxanna continued to dress adding one of her more oversize blouses to complete the look.

"We will probably have to start telling people soon. I’m not going to be able to keep this a secret for much longer!" She said smoothing her hands down the bump. "Anyway, I think the rumour mill has already started. I noticed Essie’s eyes checking me over me the other day after theatre. I left pretty quickly afterwards to avoid any discussion. I felt a bit bad really, you know with Essie having the hysterectomy." She sat on the bed and finished her coffee.

Henrik sat next to her placing his arm around her waist. "I’m sure Essie will be understanding. She is the last person who would begrudge you this happiness." He said kissing the side of her head. "You’re right though about telling people. As much as I’d love to live in a bubble with you, in our own little world, I have to accept that there are others out there who take an interest. "We are very lucky to have our Holby friends," she smiled. "We are indeed." He agreed, taking a moment to think of about those whom he held dear.

"Right." He said, standing up. "Can I get you any breakfast before we leave?" "Ugh," she replied
sticking her tongue out, “I’m not sure I can handle anything this early,” thinking about the sickness that was bound to make an appearance any time soon. "I probably shouldn't have even had that coffee."

"You do need to eat you know". He warned.

"Ok...well butter me a bagel and I’ll eat it in the car on the way."

"Roxanna! Not in the car!" sighing and shaking his head. "Well don't get crumbs all over will you?" He said stomping off downstairs.

She chuckled to herself, and followed him, smoothing out the bed covers and hanging up her dressing gown before she went.
Chapter Summary

Henrik and Roxanna share their news.

When they arrived at the hospital Roxanna headed straight to the locker room to change out of her ill matched skirt and blouse and into a set of scrubs. She let out a sigh of relief as she unleashed the skirt, promising herself she would go shopping this weekend for new clothes. She was feeling good she noted, no sickness so far today. The bagel must have done the trick, despite the disapproving looks she received from Henrik every time she took a bite. He was going to get a shock with a baby in the house she thought to herself; she gathered that babies could create quite a lot of mess. Poor darling Henrik, how was he going to cope?

Shutting her locker she heard the door and swung round to see Essie coming in. "Morning Roxanna" Essie smiled. "Oh, morning Essie." "I didn’t think you were in theatre this morning?" Essie frowned. "Has something come up?" "What? Err, no I’m not in theatre today." "Oh, I just thought....the scrubs?" Essie gesturing towards Roxanna’s get-up. "Yeah..." responded Roxanna, understanding Essie’s point and realising this was the moment. "Actually Essie, have you got a minute...for a chat?"
"Yeah sure.” She said smiling, slipping her bag from her shoulder and sitting down on the bench. Roxanna shifted on her feet looking awkward, not sure where to sit. Eventually she decided to take the bench opposite. "Is everything ok?" Essie enquired, noting her friend’s uneasy body language. "Essie, you have been a really good friend to Henrik and I over the last few months. You looked after me so well when I was recovering and have been a great support to me since I’ve returned to work. Actually, apart from Henrik, you probably know me better than most people these days."

It was true. After the accident, after John, Essie had nursed Roxanna almost single handily on a daily basis, attending to all her physical needs and plugging the gaps emotionally when Henrik was not able to be there. Roxanna knew that part of Essie's dedication was fuelled by guilt; she had seen it on Essie's face each day and it reminded Roxanna of how she had responded to Ollie. When she was strong enough Roxanna had taken Essie aside to address it with her. It had opened the flood gates for Essie as she spoke, through tears, about the guilt and shame she felt over being drawn in and fooled by John. About how sorry she was and how she didn’t think she couldn’t shake of this curse that had been bestowed upon her by her family’s past. Roxanna of course told her not to be so hard upon herself. Roxanna held no grudge with Essie. She knew John had fooled them all. If anything, the situation had brought the two women closer together and Roxanna truly believed she had found a good friend in Essie.

"So, I, err, we, wanted you to be the first to know Essie that I am, err... pregnant". "I know Roxanna", beamed Essie leaning forward and touching the other woman’s knee. "Oh" Roxanna replied not really expecting that response. "Roxanna, you only need to look at you to know what's going on. You're blooming!" Roxanna felt herself blush and gave a self-conscious smile. "I’m so pleased for you both," Essie said, standing up and leaning forward to give Roxanna a hug. Roxanna reached up from her seated position to reciprocate the hug. Essie sat next to Roxanna now.
"I’m sorry Essie. I didn’t want to upset you, you know, with the…”
"Roxanna. Stop.” Essie interrupted, knowing what her friend was referring to. “I’m delighted for the both of you. You and Henrik deserve all the happiness. Just please let me be the doting aunt!"
Roxanna beamed back. "Of course!"
Roxanna now leant over and hugged Essie. Essie closed her eyes and blinked away a tear. She was delighted for her friends, how could she not be after all they had been through. She couldn't deny however the pang of grief in the pit of her stomach for her own situation; but she was learning to live with this. Anyway she had prepared herself for this moment. She had suspected Roxanna’s news for a while. Not only had she noticed Roxanna’s changing figure but also Henrik’s increasing attentiveness in public to his wife of late, seemingly oblivious to those around him. Very unlike Henrik. It was lovely to see.

"Thanks for being so understanding. It wasn’t planned you know, it just kind of happened." Explained a sheepish Roxanna.
"Well it was obviously meant to be then wasn’t it," smiled Essie. "So tell me all about it.”

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"Hey have you heard the news?" asked Fletch Senior, casually leaning against the nurse’s station on Darwin.
"What’s that then?" asked Fletch, sat at the desk, head in the computer.
"The Big Man. Hanssen. His missus is in the club."
"What Roxanna? Exclaimed Fletch. "No, you’ve got that wrong. They're too old for all that malarkey. And anyway shouldn’t you be getting on with your job? I’ve got Mr Potter in bay 3 waiting to be taken for his scan.
"I’m not wrong. I’m telling you, I heard that Essie and Sacha going on about it in theatre earlier.”
Jac and Frieda came over to the desk, "why are you still here Steven?” barked Jac. "I need my patient taking for his scan now!"
"Have you two heard about this? Roxanna pregnant?" Asked Fletch of the two women.
"Oh please! Haven’t you got better things to do than make up ridiculous stories! Now get Mr Potter out of here!"
"It’s true” protested Fletch Senior. "Essie and Sacha know all about it.”
"So you’re telling me that Hanssen and Roxanna are having a baby? What is it IVF or something?"
"Well if it’s not IVF the Big Man must be firing on all cylinders to knock one out at his age.”
Laughed Fletch Senior.
"Oh… My...God. I think I’m going to be sick" said Frieda, fingers down throat. "I don’t know what is worse, the thought of Hanssen having sex or Roxanna pregnant at her age? I can’t think about it." Frieda responded as she marched off down the corridor.
"Anyway Hanssen’s younger than you!” Quipped Fletch to his dad.
"Is he? Mind you, she’s not bad looking is she, old Foxy Rox?” Mused Fletch Senior. Jac cut him off. "Ms Macmillan is a respected brain surgeon, who could run rings around you. Now stop being so disrespectful and get back to your work before I decide to report you for sexual misconduct! Whatever is going on it is not our concern." Knowing he had pushed his luck, Steven flew his hands up surrender style and headed off to bay 3.
"Well if it is true," said Fletch, "they are going to be knackered! Imagine, sleepless nights, dirty nappies, tantrums. I wouldn’t want to go back to all that again would you?"
"What's wrong with you grandad, you not got the stamina?" Jac smirked as she headed out of the ward
"Hey, where you going?” Fletch shouted after her.
"I need to consult on a patient with Mr Levy" she responded. Fletch knew full well why she was going.

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Jac was not usually one to chase after idle gossip but if it involved Henrik she was interested. There was an unspoken understanding between Henrik and Jac, one of mutual admiration and respect. They might not always see eye to eye but when it came down to it they would always have each other’s back. They had been through a lot together, knew a lot about each other that helped to enable this understanding between them.


“Is it true?” she asked.

“Is what true?” Sacha gave her vacant look.

“Hanssen and Roxanna?”

Sacha looked beyond her, failing to answer her. She followed his gaze eventually spinning round to find Henrik looming above her.

“Ms Naylor. Can I help you?”

“Ah, Henrik. I’m just wondering if the rumours that are going around about you and Roxanna are true?” she asked confidently.

Henrik pursed his lips and thought for a moment. “Yes, Roxanna and I are expecting a baby if that is what you are referring to?”

“Well,” Jac smiled, eyes widening. “Congratulations,” she said as she extended a handshake to him which he returned.

“I mean it Henrik,” she said looking him in the eye. “We have known each other for a long time, seen a lot together, so I appreciate what this will mean to you”.

“Thank you,” he replied a slight upturn to his mouth.

“Congratulations”, joined in Sacha. “It’s fantastic news, well done Henrik”. He moved in to shake his hand, then to Henrik’s surprise leant in for a hug, almost knocking him off his feet.

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"So, do we know the details? How far is she? Was it planned? Is that why she fainted in here a few months ago. Oh gosh it is, isn’t it?” Asked Donna, excitedly jumping up and down in front of Serena.

"Ok Donna! Sighed Serena slightly amused by Donna’s excitement. “Yes I believe Roxanna is expecting and that the news is now official but I’m not at liberty to divulge any further details. In fact I’m expecting Roxanna any minute now for a consult so you can ask her yourself.”

"What, she’s coming here? Oh I’ll be too embarrassed to look at her!” Donna squealed bring her hands up to cover her mouth.

As if on cue, Roxanna came through the doors and to Donna’s absolute glee was followed by no other than Mr Hanssen.

Donna rushed up to Roxanna and hugged her, "eek, I’m so excited, congratulations to the both of you!” She turned to hug Henrik but, noting the scowl on his face she thought better off it and awkwardly took a step back.

"How are you feeling, when is it due? Oh look at your bump!”

"Err, I’m fine thanks. But it is early days so you know...we are trying to keep it low key." Roxanna said quietly in stark contrast to Donna’s display.

"Of course, sorry! If you need anything, any baby clothes I’ve probably got loads in Ric’s loft from the girls?"

"Thank you but that won’t be necessary..." Henrik started. Roxanna cut him off, "Thanks Donna. That’s so kind of you,” she smiled. “Now Serena. I’m here about your patient..."

"Yes Roxanna of course. This way...."

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Later that day as they sank into the car seats Roxanna sighed, "Take me home Henrik, I’m all congratulated out."
"Of course. How does a warm bath and a foot massage sound?"
"Like bliss. Now let’s go".

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Back in the safety of their bedroom they lay on the bed together, Roxanna at the head end, Henrik at the foot of the bed massaging her feet as promised. Roxanna, flush from the warmth of the bath sat with her dressing gown slightly agape. He glanced up at her, she was glowing; angelic-like he thought, in her white dressing gown, the blondeness of her hair acting like a halo in the soft light of the room. She smelt of blossom from the bubbles. His attention returned to the job in hand as his fingers pounded the ball of her foot.

"So you don’t fancy Donna’s old baby clothes then?" She smirked. His eyes moved from her foot to her face. "I think we can do better than that, don’t you?" he said reaching over to the bedside table for the bottle of Bio Oil. "She was just being kind you know Henrik."
"I know," he sighed reflecting on his hasty response. "I mean don't people have enough work to do without gossiping about us all day long?" He tipped the oil into his hands and rubbed his palms together, shuffling closer to Roxanna. He pushed her dressing gown aside to reveal her naked body underneath. He then placed his hands on her bump and started to gently massage the oil into her fair skin, feeling the hardness that a pregnant stomach brings.
"You are well loved in the hospital Henrik. People are pleased for you. For us. But I agree it did get a bit much. Hopefully tomorrow something else will grab their attention."
He leant over and kissed her. She kissed him back, a slow lingering kiss. Suddenly, without warning her lips jumped away from his and her hands flew to her stomach, "Henrik!" He reeled back, startled at her actions. Before he could interpret their meaning she said, "I think I just felt a kick. Here feel." She grabbed his hand to where she had first felt the tiny flutter inside her. They both sat waiting, eyes fixed on her stomach. "There! Did you feel it?" She said excitedly, delighting in the feeling of life inside her. He wasn’t sure if he could feel anything, “maybe”, he murmured into her breasts as he rested his head on her chest, hand still on the bump. “I’m sure it was a kick,” she said reaching for the baby book on the bedside table. "I’m sure it was darling." He said smiling before reaching forward and placing a kiss on her oily stomach.
"Okay everyone. Get ready to close up." Roxanna had been in surgery for what seemed like hours. Her feet and her back were killing her. Both she and Henrik had been called in to the hospital early to help respond to a multi vehicle RTA on the motorway involving six cars and an articulated lorry. It hadn’t been pleasant; there were several patients with significant head injuries and a particularly nasty spinal case. Henrik hadn’t been happy about Roxanna coming in early but she had insisted, aware that she was one of the few available neurosurgeons. Guy Self, now Head of Neurology was away on a two day conference so wasn’t around to help out. She had been happy to give up her role as Head of Department after almost being killed by John. Her recovery had taken a long time and she accepted that it wasn't fair to keep the post vacant. She owed her life to Guy anyway, so despite what she had heard about his past, she was happy to let him take over.

She'd almost finished stitching the patients head back together and was looking forward to a sit down, a bit of lunch and a cup of Henrik’s green tea that he insisted she start drinking instead of the builder’s tea she loved. She might even see if Henrik wanted to join her if he wasn’t too busy. She felt the familiar flutter of the baby kicking her beneath the operating gown and she smiled to herself underneath her mask.

Surgery completed, she headed back to the locker room where she changed into her clothes. She stretched her back and sat down on the bench swirling her hands around the bump. She sent a quick text message to Henrik suggesting she come up to his office for lunch and headed for the Ladies. The baby must be sat on her bladder she thought because this was the umpteenth wee she'd had this morning. In the cubicle she wiped, and glancing down saw a streak of blood. She let out a whimper and wiped again with more paper to see how much blood there was. It wasn’t gushing from her but there was enough to get her worried. A thousand thoughts rushed through her brain as she decided what she should do. She flushed the toilet and quickly washed her hands. She returned to her locker and texted Henrik: I'm bleeding. Going straight to Obstetrics.

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"How is everything now Ms Campbell?" Henrik enquired as he followed Serena into her office. "Yes, well, we are just about catching up," she sighed sitting down at her desk. "I don't need too many days like today", she went on. "A big glass of Shiraz is in order tonight, I think."

"Well done. This hospital works best when everyone pulls together." Henrik complimented. He was glad his natural flare for leadership had not been lost during his most recent hiatus from the post of CEO.
"Poor Roxanna must be tired. I think she must have got the lion’s share of the workload." Serena commented.
"Mm" he agreed, thinking. "I’m meeting her for lunch so I think I’ll suggest she goes home this afternoon, although she probably won’t listen."
"Isn’t it funny that you ended up with someone who is even more stubborn than you!" Serena smirked. Henrik smiled back accepting the point she was making.
"I think it was that particular character trait that ensured she stayed with us, so I’ll be forever grateful for it." He paused, acknowledging Serena’s nod of agreement. "Anyway, I’ll leave AAU in your capable hands Serena. Page me if you need anything".
"Thanks Henrik" she said leaning back and closing her eyes.

He left and shut the door behind him. As he headed down the corridor he felt his phone vibrate in his trouser pocket.

He took it out and glanced at the screen, the corners of his mouth turning upwards when he saw Roxanna’s name. He read her message, the smile disappearing. He came to a halt and turned around jogging towards the lift.

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Roxanna walked tentatively down the corridors to Obstetrics worried that the slightest movement might cause the baby harm. She kept glancing down at her legs to check if there was blood dripping but she couldn’t see any, although she thought it felt moist between her legs. She was trying desperately to hold her emotions together, fighting the tears that were welling up in her eyes. She didn’t want to attract any attention. She just wanted to get to her intended destination without interruption.

When she reached the reception desk, she waited for her turn patiently until the receptionist looked at her. "Hi," Roxanna started quietly. "Roxanna Macmillan, I’m 23 weeks and I’ve noticed I’m spotting blood. I’m under the care of Ms Fanshawe."
"Ok my love. Just take a seat and I’ll get someone to see you straight away." The receptionist said, standing up and speaking to a nearby midwife.

Roxanna was beckoned through to an examination room where she explained what had happened. The midwife examined her; "Well there doesn’t look to be too much blood and it appears to have stopped. I’m just going to hook you up to the monitor so we can see if we can hear baby’s heartbeat."

There was a knock at the door and Henrik rushed in and over to the bed where Roxanna was sat. He wrapped his arm around her shoulder. "What’s going on?" He asked quietly kissing the top of her head.

As Roxanna explained the midwife attached the monitor around Roxanna’s stomach. The couple waited, for a response from the machine. After a few minutes it came: the steady 'burbum' of a heartbeat. The black lines of the graph spilling out of the machine, evidence of what they could hear. Both let out a sigh of relief.

"So, Ms Fanshawe is on her way. I’m going to leave you hooked up to this whilst I go and update your notes and then I’ll be straight back, ok?" The midwife explained with a compassionate smile.
"Thank you" replied Henrik.

As soon as she had left the tears released from Roxanna’s eyes. Henrik held her tight, feeling her body shake with the emotion. "I’m sorry Henrik," she spluttered, only just audible.
"Hey come on, it’s ok. Its ok my darling". He soothed, pulling her even closer, her head fitting under his chin. "Listen, there is a heartbeat and the bleeding has stopped hasn’t it?" He said trying to reassure her the best he could. She nodded her head in response unable to talk.

They stayed like for a while until Fleur Fanshawe entered heading straight over to the machine and examining the graph. Roxanna regained her composure at the presence of another professional.
"Ok Roxanna I’ve been updated. The bleeding has stopped so that’s good and it’s seems baby is quite settled in there. I want to do an ultrasound just to check the placenta and as a precautionary measure we will you an injection of steroids to strengthen baby’s lungs in case it does decide to make an appearance. You've felt movement haven’t you?" Roxanna nodded again. "Good and have you experienced any pain? Anything like a contraction?"
"No, nothing like that. Do you think there is a chance it might come early?" she enquired, fear rising in her throat.
"Well it’s a possibility, especially given your age but there are no current signs of any contracting. We will know better after the ultrasound."

****

Later that day Roxanna found herself in a side room on the ante natal ward. Henrik had stepped outside to make some work calls but returned and sat on the chair next to the bed. Roxanna was lying on her side on the bed facing him. "Do I really need to spend the night here?" She questioned, although she already knew the answer.
"You heard what Ms Fanshawe said; she wants to keep you in overnight for observation and hopefully you can come home tomorrow."
"But I’ll sleep much better in my own bed, next to you." She reached out for his hand and their fingers entwined.
He smiled at her, "I'll stay until you fall asleep".
She sighed with reluctance knowing she was going to lose this battle.
He looked away from her now and let go of her hand. "I should never have let you come into work so early this morning, you should never have been in theatre all those hours."
"Henrik, it’s ok. It’s not your fault. It’s no one’s fault, it’s just one of those things."

He sat up straight. "Well I’ve spoken to Guy and he is going to take on all of your cases until I can draft in a locum. You need complete rest until the birth. You heard what Ms Fanshawe said about the placenta."

"Wait a minute…” she said, gradually taking in his words, “you've spoken to Guy about my work without discussing it with me first?” she uttered, now pulling herself into a seated position, incredulous at his words.
"Yes. It’s all taken care of. He is on his way back from the conference now."
"Hang on a minute. I’m not ready to stop working just yet. And I don’t think that was Fleur’s words either. She said it’s quite common to have a low lying placenta and it doesn’t mean I need complete bed rest!"

"Roxanna, I'm not having this. You are not working anymore and that is that." Henrik stood up now.

"I can't believe you've done this. Henrik, you might be my husband but you are not my keeper! You had no right talking to Guy about my work behind my back." She turned away from him now so he couldn’t see her face and folded her arms.

He stood there looking at her, his lips pursed. “Right, fine. I’ll leave you to it then.” He said turning on his heels and leaving the room.

Roxanna turned her head to watch him go. “Henrik, don’t…” she shouted after him. It was no good, he’d already gone. She let out a deep sigh and folded her arms. She didn’t want him leave.

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She was woken around eleven by a midwife coming in to take her obs. Still sleepy, she sat up to
allow the woman to do her job. She noticed her overnight bag on the chair. The midwife followed her gaze. "Mr Hanssen brought them in for you earlier whilst you were sleeping, he thought you'd be more comfortable in your own pyjamas."

Roxanna nodded politely. "You've got a good one there you know. We all love Mr Hanssen on this ward. Such a lovely man." The woman continued. Roxanna smiled. "Yes he does like to take care of me," she agreed, thinking back to the last time they had spoken. "Well, you are very lucky because they're not all like that."

"Thanks" said Roxanna.

She was left alone again, the midwife’s words laying heavy on her. Had she been too harsh? She was still mad with him for going behind her back, she knew that, but maybe he had a point. The baby was the most important thing and she couldn't bear it if her own actions had harmed it in anyway. She smoothed her hands over the bump as if the action would make sure it knew that.

But her work was all she knew. She had worked all her adult life. Apart from David, and now Henrik, it had been her life. It had been so hard to get herself well enough to return to work, both physically and mentally after John and she worried if she gave it all up now she would never get it back again. She had been given a second chance and wasn’t willing to let it go so easily. Maybe she was being selfish.

She unpacked her pyjamas, noting that Henrik had packed her favourite pair. She knew that was intentional on his part, Henrik was like that. Always taking the very best care, paying absolute attention to detail. After changing she climbed back into bed. Her heart was heavy with the thought of Henrik, the disappointment and shame in his puppy dog eyes every time she snapped at him; a bit like a child being told off by an adored parent. She found she was snapping at him a lot recently, more so since they had found out about the pregnancy. Hormones maybe, but she shouldn't make excuses for herself.

She had started to realise that it wasn’t easy living with Henrik. On the good days it was sublime, but she had found it hard to break into a man who had spent years living his own life, not having to consider anyone else’s feelings or wishes, someone not used to making decisions as a couple. Then there was the depression. He tried hard to hide this from her but she knew Henrik, she knew the signs. The days when he hardly uttered a word to her, retreating into his work, into his study. Over the last few weeks there seemed to be more of the bad days than the good. She closed her eyes willing the thoughts away. She thought of David; fun loving, care free David; of happy moments together, in a time gone by.

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Henrik sat alone. Alone in his study, nursing a glass of whiskey, his brow furrowed. Thoughts of losing the baby, losing Roxanna were heavy on his mind. Fredrik too and his mother. He could hear the lap of the waves all around him and he couldn’t stop himself from walking towards them like so many times before. The sounds of the waves resonated around his head telling him that he was not worthy of anything as enchanting as happiness.

****

He was at his desk early the next morning immersing himself in his work. Just before lunch he was disturbed by a knock on the door. He lifted his head up to see Roxanna. She looked tired. “Have you got a minute?”

“Yes. Of course” he said putting his pen down and standing up. He walked around to the front of his desk and leant against it.
“I’ve been discharged.” He nodded his head in response. “Good.”
“Thanks for the overnight bag by the way,” she smiled. “I thought you might have dropped by this morning? To the ward?”
“Sorry, I got weigh laid…” he gestured to his desk.
“It’s fine…” she said. She knew it was a bad day. “I just wanted to let you know. I’ve been to see Guy this morning. I’ve told him that I’ll reduce my hours. He has agreed to take on the most complex cases but I’ll keep the others. I can’t give up work completely Henrik. I’m sorry. But I do take your point that perhaps I should take things a bit slower.”
He nodded his head again and stepped forward to hold her and kissed her forehead. “Thank you,” he uttered into her hair. He pulled back from her. “I would offer to drive you home but I’ve got a meeting…”
“It’s fine Henrik. I’ll take a taxi.” She smiled and picked up her bag. “Henrik?” He looked up from behind his desk where he had returned to, “don’t work too late will you?”
“I’ll try not to Roxanna.” He said sitting down. She smiled back and nodded. She knew he would be late home.
It was Sunday morning and Roxanna had taken herself out for a walk to the park. She needed some air because the atmosphere at home was stifling.

She'd woken up to an empty bed and had found him in his study working; he'd probably been there since some unearthly hour. She'd offered him breakfast. He accepted the coffee but politely declined any food despite her offering to make his favourite oatmeal recipe.

She pushed her hands further into her coat pockets for warmth and listened to the sound of her boots crunching through the frosty leaves. She thought back to their disagreement the day before. She'd reminded him of the date of the ante natal class next week but he said he wouldn't attend. "Roxanna, we've both been doctors for nearly thirty years, if we can’t work out how to look after a small baby between us then there must be something wrong.” Roxanna was disappointed. She wanted to go and she wanted Henrik with her for support.

"Well I don’t know how to look after a baby. I’ve never even changed a nappy before or bathed a baby, have you?" She fired back. No, of course he'd never looked after a baby, he'd never given himself that chance. She had regretted her words later that night when she found him in the study, a glass of whisky in his hand, pouring over faded baby photos of Fredrik she never even knew he had. She'd held him as he sobbed into her shoulder.

She was getting to the point where she didn’t know what to do to help him anymore. This had been the worst she'd seen him in a long time. It was one thing supporting a friend with depression at arms-length, quite another living with it day in day out, watching the person you love become of shadow of themselves.

She had lived with David and his dementia of course but David had always had such a natural positivity about him. Even on the bad days his smile and child-like innocence was enough to pull her through. Poor darling David. But Henrik was a different character all together. The melancholy that surrounded him infiltrated every moment of their lives, every room, every action. With the baby to think about as well she was finding it exhausting.

Some days she felt like shouting at him: “you've just married the love of your life, you've got a baby on the way, you have a job you love, what more do you want!” Of course she would never say it because she knew it wasn’t as simple as that. It was complex, it was entwined with Henrik and his history; it was an illness.

She took a seat on a bench overlooking the children’s play area and watched the parents engage with their children; a dad pushing his son on the swing, a couple encouraging their daughter down the slide. That was going to be them soon.

She’d worked in hospitals long enough to see the damage that a parent’s mental illness could do to a child, Henrik being a prime example of this. Living with the uncertainty, not knowing from one day to the next the kind of atmosphere you would be waking up to, the feelings of rejection when the
most important person in your world was too caught up in their own misery to pay you the attention you craved. The feelings of guilt knowing that whatever you did it would never make things any better. She’d experienced it herself. She’d watched her father spiral into depression after her mother’s stroke; the stress of being his wife’s sole carer as well as looking after a teenage daughter. It had all been too much until finally he had made the heart breaking decision to put her mother into a residential unit.

It had been her paternal grandparents that had been her saving grace. They removed her from the situation when things got too dark. They had lavished her with affection and sweet treats; entertaining her with an endless supply of board games and puzzles. If it hadn’t been for them then she might have found herself like Henrik. But there would be no doting grandparents on hand for hugs and kisses for their baby. She and Henrik were the only family it would know.

As she sat there watching the children in the park she had this growing maternal urge to protect the tiny person growing inside her at all cost. Her child would not experience the traumas that she and Henrik had experienced as children, her child would never feel rejection or abandonment. She didn’t know how or what it would involve but she was determined that she would protect her child; that it would know every day single day that it was loved and cherished. She looked down at her hands and fiddled with her wedding ring. The coldness had made the ring loose and she slid it on and off her finger. She shivered as the wind whipped around her and she pulled her coat closer for extra warmth.

She stood up. It was time to move on.

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As she walked through the front door she was greeted with the aroma of roasting meat. To her surprise Henrik came through from the kitchen to meet her, tea towel in his hand.

"Henrik, you're cooking?" She said as she took of her coat off and hung it on the coat peg.

"Yes, well, I feel my appetite is returning and you need to keep your strength up."

"Good. I’m glad". She was genuinely relieved to see him engaging in something other than work. She went over to him and wrapped her arms around his waist and lent her head against the softness of his woollen jumper. He reciprocated by pulling her in close to him, tea towel still in his hand.

"I miss you" she whispered into his jumper, taking in his scent, cedar wood mixed with the roasted meat. She enjoyed the warmth radiating from him against her frozen body and she melted further into his arms.

"I’m trying my best Roxanna." He said kissing the top of her head.

"I know you are Henrik." There was a pause between them as they both closed their eyes, savouring the stillness of the moment.

"Will you help me?"

She didn’t respond straight away but gave herself time to think about her response. She swallowed to rid her throat of the emotion was that rising. Eventually she found the words.

"Always. I’ll always help you Henrik. I love you." She felt his arms tighten around her and the weight of his head on the top of hers.

"I love you too. More than you will ever know." She did know.
He pulled away from her and kissed her on the lips, feeling the cold tip of her nose brush against his.

"Come on then," he said, his large hand engulfing hers. He led her into the kitchen and sat her down at the kitchen table.

"So, do you want to peel the potatoes or the carrots?"

She looked up at him and let out a small laugh. It was a laugh of relief, of hope, of love.

"I’ll peel the carrots. But you need to make me a cup of tea."

"You mean a green tea?"

"No Henrik, I mean a strong builders tea."

He frowned at her, but his eyes were smiling.

"Right then Ms Macmillan," he said turning to put the kettle on. "Show me how good your knife skills are."

She smiled again. "Ok, you’re on!" She laughed.

After lunch he had challenged her to a game of chess. She let him win of course. She was happy. Her man was coming back to her. For now anyway.
Roxanna placed a cup of coffee next to the bed. "Henrik," She said softly, gently shaking his shoulder to rouse him from his sleep. He rolled over and looked up at her startled. She was never usually awake before him.

"What is it?" his voice hoarse from sleep. He sat up and retrieved his glasses from the bedside table and noticed that she was already dressed. He glanced at the clock radio, 5:00am. He thought it must be something to do with the baby.

"We’ve got a flight to catch. Get in the shower and get dressed."

"A flight? What? Where to?"

"Don’t ask any questions, just get up and get dressed. You've got half an hour." She turned and headed out of the room.

"Roxanna", he shouted after her but she was gone.

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He had done as he was told but throughout the taxi journey had continued to press her for details. He was finding the whole thing very uncomfortable. He felt anxious. He didn't like not knowing what was happening, where he was going. She'd even packed a bag for him which he didn't like at all; he needed to know he had all the correct belongings with him. He was a man who needed to be in control of himself and the situation and currently he felt neither. She had attempted to reassure him by telling him she had packed everything he needed but every time he pressed her for details of their destination she told him to shush, to try and relax. She held his hand in the back of the taxi and stroked the back of it with her thumb. This was something she did when she was trying to calm him, an unspoken gesture between them that usually worked but this morning it failed to achieve its aim.

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When they arrived at the airport terminal Roxanna gave him a reassuring smile and headed off in front of him for the check-in desk. Henrik followed looking for clues to their destination, Europe for sure. As they got closer to the desks he saw the familiar tones of blue and yellow on the advertising and felt a knot in his stomach, the feeling rising into his throat; he thought he was going to be sick. He forced it back down and shouted after her, "Roxanna!" She turned back to him knowing he had worked it out. She attempted to get her explanation straight in her head knowing he would need convincing.

"I’m not doing this. Sweden, I’m not going." He said shaking his head.

She took hold of his arm. “Please Henrik, bear with me."
Calmly he said, “I’m not going to Sweden. There is nothing there for me. My life is here. No. That it is it. I’m not going.” he pulled away from her grasp and walked away.

Roxanna sighed, tilting her head to one side and pushing her hands deeper into the pockets of her beige coat. She had expected this reaction so was prepared for it. She shouted after him not caring who was listening; in fact the more people listening the better.

“Well I’m going to Stockholm. If you’re happy for your pregnant wife to get on a plane and go to a city she’s never been to before then so be it, but I’m going.” This was out of character for her but she knew she would have to be drastic to get him to agree. She waited for his reaction. As predicted he stopped and turned around staring at her. She stared back, a hopeful expression spreading across her face.

"Really, Roxanna,” he said walking back over to her and taking her by the arm. "Public humiliation is not something I care for. Nor does it suit you. I do not appreciate it.” He responded sternly.
“Nevertheless” he went on. “Do I think you will go without me? Yes. Am I happy about this? No. So come on. Get the passports ready. I will go for one day, no more.”

"Fine," she said, "thank you. I appreciate this."

He looked down at her and pursed his lips. "I don’t know what this madness is all about but you are the only reason I am going. Don’t forget that." He placed his hand on her shoulders and kissed her forehead.

"I love you," she replied, "don’t you forget that." She held his hand and guided him to the queue that was now forming at the check-in desk.

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They arrived at Stockholm Arlanda airport on time and walked out of the arrivals terminal.

“I take it we are going to the city centre?” He enquired. She nodded in response, taking in her surroundings and he led her to the taxi rank. It was Henrik who spoke to the taxi driver giving him instructions for the city centre.

“Wait”, csaid Roxanna, searching in her handbag and taking out a scrunched up piece of paper. In the best Swedish accent she could manage she asked to be taken to a particular coffee house, the name of which was scrawled on the paper.

Henrik, looked at her in surprise, “Swedish? Since when?” he asked.

She smiled at him, “well if I’m going to be raising a child who is half Swede I thought I should start to learn the language.” He gave her small smile, touched by the sentiment. It was all he could muster though as he still felt completely uncomfortable with his surroundings.

In theory, this was home for him, but the reality was it had never been home. He looked at the familiar sights out of the window, neither liking nor disliking what he saw. Roxanna took it all in, marvelling at its beauty; its clean lines and old fashion tradition all rolled into one. A bit like Henrik really, she thought.

When they arrived at their destination Henrik got out of the taxi looking around him. He was familiar with this part of the city and with that particular coffee house. “Good choice”, he muttered.
“I thought we could have lunch,” she said guiding him inside. He ordered coffee and food for both them in Swedish. His accent made her smile, it always had done. She let him take charge now. She knew this would make him feel better.

They ate lunch and she thought he was starting to relax a bit now. He talked about Stockholm, about the galleries and museums he would frequent as a child, of how it looked and smelt at Christmas. He ordered dessert for her, a slice of appelkaka with vanilla custard; he said it was one of his favourites.

It was Roxanna who started to become apprehensive now. Seeing Henrik start to relax, enjoy himself even, she started to regret what was about to happen; what she had engineered. She glanced at her watch and found her eyes darting to the door every time she heard it open.

Henrik excused himself to use the gents. As he disappeared from sight the door of the coffee house opened and Roxanna watched as a woman of around the same age and same height as herself, hair also blonde but shoulder length, stood in the entrance searching the faces of the customers sat at each table. Roxanna took in a sharp breath and stood up, knowing that the woman was looking for her. She held up her hand awkwardly, as if to wave her over. Roxanna caught the woman’s eye, and the woman paused for a moment taking in Roxanna; pretty, elfin like with short cropped hair, something quietly individual about her. Not what she had expected. Her eyes fell to Roxanna's stomach, taking in the swelling under her blouse. Roxanna gave her a reassuring smile and the woman, summoning up all the strength in her body, made her way over to the table.

“Maja?” said Roxanna, extending her hand in greeting.

“Roxanna”, replied the woman, a slight lilt to her voice. She returned the handshake.

“Thank you for coming. Please, take a seat,” Roxanna offered. Maja accepted.

“Henrik’s just gone to the gents. Can I order you a drink?”

“Does he know about me being here?” asked Maja.

“No. No, he doesn’t.” Replied Roxanna, an apologetic tone to her voice.

“It’s probably for the best.” Maja replied, “He probably wouldn’t have come if he’d known. You did well getting him to enter the country”. Roxanna nodded in agreement.

Henrik dried his hands and returned to the seating area. He looked over to their table and noticed that Roxanna had been joined by someone but he could only see them from behind. He took it all in. The hair, the shape of the shoulders, a brief glimpse of the hands. He felt the sickness rising in his throat again, panic started to set in. He felt hot, his face started to flush and his palms were clammy. The gents was situated at the back of the coffee house so to escape he would have to walk past them. He didn’t have his coat, his wallet or his phone. His anxiety started to turn into annoyance. So this is why Roxanna had brought them here. The only way out was to go back into the gents; he hesitated and missed his opportunity because Roxanna came walking towards him.

“Henrik”, she said quietly. She could see the annoyance in his eyes as they bore into her own, attempting to find an answer to his unspoken question of what the hell was going on. Thinking it best not to explain she took hold of his hand and led him over to the table.

He stood and looked down at Maja. Seeing him she stood up. He looked older. Of course he did, he was older. But his face was haggard; pain and grief; that’s what it did to you, she knew it well. His hair was greying and was longer than the last time she had seen him.
Henrik looked back at Maja. She looked beautiful. He had always thought she was beautiful. Her skin was the perfect tone to match her natural dark blonde hair and her sapphire blue eyes had a sparkle to them that he had always found to be mesmerizing. But there was something missing from them now. The energy they used to radiate had gone and he knew exactly why.

“Maja,” he stuttered.

Neither had noticed Roxanna putting on her coat and gathering her things together. She touched Henrik’s arm, bringing him back to the moment.

“I’ll come back in an hour,” she said. He watched her as she walked away from them and disappeared out of the door. His feet were rooted to the floor, he felt like he was in shock. He turned to look at Maja who was sitting down. The motion shook him into action. He went over to the counter and ordered two coffees. When he returned with them she noticed that he had ordered the coffee just the way she liked it. He sat down and looked at her.

She spoke in Swedish. “I’m only here because Roxanna asked me to come.”

“Right. I didn’t know”, he uttered back in his mother tongue. He was at a complete loss as to what to say. He didn’t know why she was here, why he was here.

“I’m not here to offer you forgiveness for the way you treated Fredrik,” her voice was cold and it matched the look in her eyes. “All he ever wanted was for you to show him some attention. For you to recognize him as your son, to let him know that you were proud of him. It wouldn’t have taken much to please him but you couldn’t or wouldn’t offer him that. I’ll never be able to forgive you for that.” She looked away now to compose herself.

“But what I am here to say is that what Fredrik did, it wasn’t your fault. The man he killed, the people he injured. That was not your doing. Fredrik was a grown man who made his own choices. I miss my son every minute of every day but I’m not sure I can forgive him either for what he has done. Leaving his wife, leaving his son. He has done exactly what you did to me and what your father did to you and your mother and look where that has got us.”

Henrik sat back in his seat, it was an involuntary movement, as if he had been blown backwards by her words. Those parallels running through his life, so stark when pointed out like that.

She went on. “Roxanna told me about the baby”. He nodded. “You have the potential to be a good father Henrik. But only you can make that happen. You cannot let history repeat itself. This has to stop now. It has to stop for your baby with Roxanna. It has to stop for Oskar and I and his mother will make sure that happens.” Henrik winced at the name of his only grandchild. He looked down at the table and straightened his spoon. “How are they doing?” he asked.

“They are getting there.” She replied.

There was a pause, both of them looked around the coffee house to avoid each other’s gaze.

“I’m not sure what Roxanna has said to you but I have no intention of leaving Roxanna and the baby.” He said looking back down at his spoon and realigning it. He knew it was an insensitive thing to say to Maja in light of their history but he felt the need to say it out loud, if only to prove it to himself. The comment wasn’t lost on Maja either but she had accepted her fate years ago.

“I don’t think for one minute you will leave Roxanna and the baby. Roxanna doesn’t think that either but she is concerned about your ability to emotionally connect. Just by being there does not mean you are there for them. It’s the emotional side of you that it most important. That child needs to know
that no matter what you will love it, care for it, and be proud of it. You cannot let your own emotional difficulties, your own trauma get in the way of that. The past is the past Henrik. Nothing can ever undo what has been done. We just need to accept it and move forward. You have been given an opportunity here Henrik and you need to grab it with both hands.” He gulped and looked across the table at her. She wasn’t sure if she could see a tear in his eye but she had seen his lip tremble.

She stood up now and he followed her with his eyes. She looked down at him, into those eyes she knew so well.

“I wish I had known about Roxanna thirty years ago.”

Henrik looked down, those familiar feelings of guilt washing over him. She noticed this.

“Henrik. If I had known about Roxanna back then I might have encouraged you to go for it with her, instead of letting someone else beat you to it and missing out on a lifetime of love. Perhaps everything would have worked out differently if Roxanna had been by your side.” She let out a breath and looked towards the door. “Well, you have her now. Don’t spoil it.”

He turned towards her, stood up and took hold of her hand, “Thank you Maja.” He said looking into her eyes.

“Goodbye Henrik.” She said releasing her hand from his and walking out of the coffee house.

He slumped back into his seat and closed his eyes, thinking about their conversation. He must have stayed like that for about twenty minutes. He opened his eyes when he felt the soft touch of flesh upon his hand. Roxanna. She sat across the table from him.

“Are you mad with me?” she asked tentatively.

He looked at her and then looked away, considering his response. He turned to look at her again.

“Mad with you for loving me? For loving our baby? No, I’m not mad with you.”

She closed her eyes briefly and let out a sigh of relief and reached across the table and took hold of his hand. “I’m sorry Henrik. I know it was underhand of me but I just want you to be better. We want you, we need you,” she said, resting her hands on the bump.

“Come on, let’s get out of here,” he smiled, “let me show you this beautiful city.”

She smiled at him and nodded her head in agreement.

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She had booked them into a hotel for the night and the evening was spent strolling along Strandvägen, then dinner before they headed back to their hotel for bed. He made love to her that night. Soft, sensuous love making, losing himself in the curves of her pregnant body.

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After breakfast they checked out of the hotel and Henrik hailed a taxi for them. He said he wanted to show her something. Their return flights were booked for later in the afternoon so there was plenty
of time. The taxi pulled up in the oldest part of town, they stepped out and she followed him up to a building with a large wooden door. She looked at the set of buzzers on the wall and noted the top one said Hanssen in faded ink.

“My apartment”, he said following her gaze. “I haven’t been here for years. It’s probably a bit damp now.”

She turned to him, “I didn’t know you still had your apartment. I remember you talking about it years ago but I thought maybe you’d sold it.”

“No. Never really got round to selling it. Do you want to have a look?” He said, half smiling, knowing what her answer would be.

“Yes of course.” She beamed.

He turned the key in the door and pushed it open. She looked up at the cavernous entrance hall and the spiral stair case in the centre rising up to a domed ceiling.

“Yes, I’m afraid the stairs are a bit of a bind. There is a lift but I wouldn’t trust it.”

“Come on then”, she said, leading the way. They continued up to the top floor. He opened the door and let her through. It was like stepping back in time, she thought. It was dark and she could smell the damp and taste the dust on her tongue. Henrik went over the window and pulled back one of the heavy shutters, letting the daylight slice through the room lighting it up as if a light had been switched on. She was overwhelmed by the size of the place, the height of the ceilings. It was like a palace. Heavy white sheets were draped over various items of furniture. She walked through the rooms and it was only when he opened another shutter that she saw the mural on the wall and the names Henrik and Maja painted there. She stood to admire it.

“Such a long time ago,” he uttered. He walked up to Roxanna and put an arm around her shoulder. She turned into him.

“This apartment would make a great renovation project’, she said raising her eyebrows. “A nice little city bolt-hole, Henrik!”

He smiled to himself. “Don’t get carried away Roxanna. I knew there was a reason I hadn’t mentioned this place to you!” He looked down at her and kissed her, a long slow kiss.

They were interrupted by her phone ringing. She pulled away from him and fumbled in her bag for the device.

“Hello?” she answered. “Oh hi there.” She listened to the caller, whilst looking at Henrik. “Well,” she responded. “I think we could manage that. Right, yes, I’m sure Henrik will know where that is. Okay. Well we will see you in half an hour. Thanks, bye.”

Henrik looked at her inquisitively. “What was that?”

“It was Maja. She wondered if you wanted to see Oskar? She said they will be at a park in the city centre.”

“But what about his mother, Sara?” He faltered, thinking back to his last conversation he had had with Sara when she had forbidden him to ever see Oskar again.

“Apparently she is okay with it.”
There was a pause. “Henrik?” she asked waiting for his response.

“If Sara is okay with it, then yes, yes, let’s go.” The corners of his mouth turning upwards.

She gave him the details of the park and they left the apartment, Henrik shutting the door with a thud.

Roxanna knew they would be back one day.
Thirty-two weeks

Chapter Summary

Henrik & Roxanna share lunch and start to make plans.

Henrik’s tall figure marched through the door of his office, a scowl upon his face. He was still seething from an unsatisfactory board meeting he had just attended where he had had to assert his authority against some ill-advised, non-medical board member. He closed the door and sharply spun on his heels but was soon stopped in his tracks by the vision of his beautiful wife’s smiling face looking up at him from her seat on the sofa. He let out a deep sigh and the scowl quickly melted into a gentle smile.

“Roxanna, what are you doing here?” He said as he walked over to his desk and carefully placed the files down that he had been carrying.

“I was in the city centre doing a bit if shopping so I thought I’d drop by and surprise you with something nice for lunch,” she said as she gestured to the bread, cheese, olives and salad laid out on the coffee table in front of her.

“Darling, that’s very kind of you but the whole point of you working part time is so that you can rest, you should be at home with your feet up.” He came and sat down on the sofa next to her. “Not that it isn’t nice to see you!” He added as he lent over and pressed his lips to hers. She kissed him back and then popped a plump green olive into his mouth which he gladly accepted.

“Henrik I can’t stay cooped up at home all day long,” she protested. “I need to get out. Anyway I’ve been looking at prams.” She said excitedly, a broad grin spreading across her face then taking an olive and popping it into her own mouth.

“Oh,” He replied as he tore off a chunk of bread and spreading a thick layer of butter on to it before passing it over to her.

“Yes. I thought it was time we started to think about the practical side of things. I’m thirty-two weeks and the pregnancy seems to be progressing well. After our appointment with Fleur last week and the reassurance that the placenta has moved I started to think that maybe we should at least get some of the basics.”

He nodded at her and swallowed the piece of bread he had been chewing. “I think you are right. We do need to think of the practicalities of it all.”

“Good.” She said, eyeing him. “I’m glad you agree. I thought maybe you would still think it was too soon.”

Up until now they had both refrained from thinking too much about the baby’s requirements beyond the birth; they were both acutely aware that it could be taken away from them as quickly as it had been bestowed up them; particularly in light of their recent scare and the ever present threat of Roxanna’s age. The general consensus had been to take each day at a time. Neither of them were what you would describe as natural optimists.
“Well as you know Roxanna, I am not one to get carried away but I do like to be organised so I don’t think it would harm to have the essentials in place.”

Roxanna flashed him a smile, “would you like to see what I have bought?” she asked, her eyes twinkling.

Henrik, pursed his lips but the glint in his eyes could not hide his excitement. “Very well,” he replied.

Roxanna lent over and pulled out an expensive paper gift bag from beside the arm of the sofa.

“I saw it and I couldn’t resist,” she said taking out a tiny white baby-grow with broderie anglaise detail. A growing smile across her face, she held it up for him to see whilst studying his face for a reaction. He was not giving too much away; he maintained his staid composure but she thought she’d heard a small gasp escape from his mouth.

After a moment he took the garment from her and studied it in greater detail. “It’s so small,” he said eventually. He leant over and gently laid the item out on the swell of her stomach, paying careful attention to smooth out any creases with his hand and then when he was done he rested the palm of his hand on top of it. She watched him in amazement throughout this whole performance and brought her own hand up to cover his own.

“It’s beautiful darling,” he said, the corners of his mouth turning upwards. After a few moments he said, “did you ever think we would be in this situation Roxanna?”

“Not for one moment Henrik,” she said shaking her head. “And certainly not at this stage in our lives.” She let out a small laugh and Henrik joined her as he relaxed into his seat, his hand still on her stomach. Roxanna lent back and rested against his shoulder.

“Come to think of it there was a time, at university, when I did wonder what it might be like to have a baby with you Henrik.”

He turned in his seat to look at her, his eyes widening at her comments, “Did you? I didn’t know….”

“Well, why would you? I was hardly likely to tell you back then was I?”

“Well are you going to tell me now?” He said studying her intently. “What it might have been like, hmm?”

They had spoken about their feelings for one another at university on occasions over the past two years as their relationship had developed but she had never revealed this part of it before and he was somewhat surprised she hadn’t considering their current situation.

“Nothing much to tell really. Just one of those whimsical moments that I imagine all young girls have when they like a boy. I suppose it would have been around the time Maja had given birth and, well that’s probably what put the idea in my head.” She wished she hadn’t said anything now; they had been enjoying such a lovely moment and now here she was skirting around the thorny subject of Fredrik.

She gave his hand a squeeze, “It was a long time ago, and well, it doesn’t matter now because I am having your baby and it’s wonderful.” She turned to face him and smiled hoping that that would be the end of it. She had expected to see sadness in his eyes but she was somewhat relieved to see that his face was tender and his eyes were full of adoration.

“There is always something more to learn about you Roxanna, even after all these years.” She gave
a little laugh and dipped her chin as his arm guided her towards him and he kissed the side of her head.

Releasing her he stood up and walked over to his desk and she and took the baby-grow and placed it back in the gift bag. He returned to her side with a brochure in his hand.

“I’ve been doing a bit of window shopping myself and I wondered what you thought about this?” He handed her a glossy brochure for a certain Swedish car manufacture, its latest SUV model proudly displayed on the front cover against a backdrop of snow-covered mountains.

“A car? You only got a new one recently.”

“Not for me. For you.”

“I’ve got a car.”

“It is rather old Roxanna and it is quite small.” He was trying to be diplomatic because he knew how fond she was of her current sports coupe. “Perhaps it is time to get something a little more sedate and besides you’ll never get a pram in your car.”

“Hmm, I suppose, but it is rather big? And it’s not like we live in the middle of the countryside!”

“They are well built darling and have a very high safety rating. Well, we can go and have a look can’t we and you can see what you think?”

“Yes, okay.” She shrugged.

There was a comfortable silence between them now as they turned their attention to their lunch; Henrik buttering more bread for them as Roxanna sliced the cheese. After a while she spoke.

“I was thinking that perhaps this afternoon I might go and look at paint colours for the spare room. That is, if you’re in agreement with us decorating that room for the baby?”

“Yes, yes, of course. But don’t go this afternoon, go home and rest, I can pick up some samples on the way home tonight.”

“Well if you are sure. Thanks. Fletch said his father used to be a painter and decorator, I thought we could ask him to do it; we’d pay him of course, he might be glad of the extra money.”

“Oh, well I thought I might do it.”

“You, Henrik, painting and decorating! Have you ever done it before? Besides you don’t have the time with all this.” She said gesturing around his office.

He looked despondent at her reaction and his shoulders fell. “I just thought that, well you have done all the physical work so far for our baby and this would be my small contribution.”

She let out a sigh touched by his words and placed her hand on his knee.

“Oh well if you think you have the time then that would be wonderful. It could be rather fun. We could do it together.”

“Oh no Roxanna. I don’t want you to do any of it. We can’t have you wearing yourself out and I don’t want you around any paint fumes. You can help by providing the refreshments for the worker.”
She chuckled at this, “Okay then, it’s a deal”. She leant over and kissed him on the lips as he cupped his hand around her cheek.

“Talking of work I should really get on Roxanna. I’ve got a meeting on AAU in fifteen minutes and Ms Campbell will not be best pleased if I’m late and I’d rather not be on the receiving end of her tongue. She seems to think she can demand anything she likes at the moment and expects that I will give in to her!”

“Don’t be too hard on Serena. I think she has been struggling a bit since Bernie left.”

“Hmm. Nevertheless…..”

“Oh come on Henrik. We both know what it’s like to live your life without the person you truly love don’t we?”

“Hmm, I suppose you have a point,” he said lifting her hand to his mouth and kissing it gently.

“How about you take Serena for a coffee this afternoon, have a chat with her away from the ward. She has been a good friend to you at times Henrik, maybe you can offer her the same courtesy in her hour of need?”

He furrowed his brow and nodded his head in agreement, “as always my darling you are absolutely right.”

"I know I am Henrik, I’m glad you agree,” she said teasing him just a little bit. “Well don’t worry about all this,” she said gesturing to the table, “I’ll clear up whilst you get on.

“Thank you” he said standing then bending down to kiss her again. “It’s been lovely to spend time with you so thank you for coming but now I must insist Ms MacMillan that you go home and…”

“I know Henrik, go home and rest!” She said rolling her eyes at him as she started to clear away the debris of their lunch. “Don’t worry, I’ll do just that, but don’t forget to get those paint samples! I’ll be waiting for you when you get back, so hurry darling won’t you!”

He would hurry home to her because he loved her and there was nowhere else he would rather be.
Chapter Summary

Henrik decorates the nursery with a little support from Roxanna.

Roxanna climbed the stairs slowly whilst trying to balance two cups of coffee and a plate of chocolate digestive biscuits on the tray she was carrying. She had underestimated the logistics involved in hauling herself up the stairs whilst carrying the tray and its contents. She could have sworn her bump had doubled in size over the last few weeks, or at least that’s what it felt like. Today she felt particularly fat, like she was lugging around a baby whale, two even, rather than a single human baby.

She had taken to wearing Henrik’s shirts around the house with a pair of maternity leggings but today even those felt snug. She wasn’t vain about it and she didn’t mind what she looked like; getting bigger was a small price to pay for the bundle of joy her body was gifting them, but what she wasn’t prepared for was the physical toll it was taking on her body. Her muscles and joints ached all the time; her back, her pelvis, her knees, the list could go on. Her scans had suggested it might be a big baby and she wasn’t surprised; Henrik with his long limbs was the father after all, so the size and stress it was placing on her body was understandable.

She supposed her age was also a factor and the trauma her body had experienced after John. She’d had to retrain her body to do a lot of things after the accident; fine and gross motor skills and she had never really gained the strength she had before. Luckily though Roxanna had always been a willing participant in anything physical prior to the accident; weights, yoga, Pilates, a bit of running and cycling here and there so she had had a good basis to work from. Most of all she had a determined nature (some might say stubborn) and this had been the accelerant behind her recovery. That and the man she was now bringing coffee to. If it hadn’t been for Henrik, a constant by her side throughout it all, she doubted she would have had any enthusiasm to recover. His unwavering love and attention had fuelled her determination and she would be forever grateful. She just hoped that she could repay him by safely delivering this wondrous life that was growing inside of her. As she climbed the last few steps, she smiled fondly to herself at the thought of Henrik carefully cradling their newborn in his arms.

When she finally reached the top of the stairs she leant against the bannister and took a few moments to catch her breath and to give her body a rest before she continued; it simply wouldn’t do to show any weakness in front of Henrik. He would only worry and give her a well-meaning but tiresome lecture on slowing down and she could do without that. She knew her body and she knew her own limits. She would tell him if she thought there was a serious problem but otherwise she preferred to shield him from any additional worry. He had been in a good place since they had returned from their trip to Sweden and she wanted it to stay that way for as long as possible.

Having regained her composure she straightened herself up, took a deep breath and practically breezed into the spare room as if she was floating on air and placed the tray down on the chest of drawers.

"I brought you coffee," she said wincing at the ache in the small of her back before attempting to rub away the pain with her finger tips.
"I'll be with you in a moment darling. I just want to finish this little bit just here." Henrik replied from the top of the stepladders, his eyes fixed on the area of cornice he was currently painting brilliant white. She took her cup of coffee from the tray and perched on the edge of drawers, sipping at her drink whilst taking in the full transformation of the room. The once dark, sparsely furnished spare bedroom had been transformed into a light and airy space, the fresh dove grey painted walls set off against the brilliant white of the cornice, the sash windows and the shutters.

Watching Henrik work she noted that he took as much care with the paint brush as he did with a scalpel in surgery. As expected he had approached the whole task of decorating the spare room with as the same precision and attention to detail he would if delivering a multi-million pound project at the hospital. There has been extensive research undertaken into the best non-toxic, non VOC paint, the most suitable equipment to use, written plans, a deep clean and sanding of all the surfaces and he was now busy on the second coat of paint.

"It looks really good Henrik. I think we made the right choice with the colour”, she shouted up to him.

"Hmm" he said as he climbed down the ladder and removed the surgical gloves he was wearing before taking his coffee and sitting beside Roxanna. "It certainly does brighten the space. It makes the room look much larger too."

"It’s such a lovely room anyway with the outlook onto the park and it gets the sun in the morning too. I never did quite understand your choice of dark green for this room. It was so solemn and dismal,” she complained, screwing up her face.

His body rocked as he let out a little chuckle at her words, his shoulder bumping against hers. “Not a fan of my interior design ideas then?” he said raising his eyebrows. He took another sip of his coffee, “I suppose the choice reflected my mood at the time. Like you say, rather solemn and dismal."

She nodded and gave an understanding smile, leaning over to rest her hand on his knee.

"And now?" she said softly.

"Well, let me think.” He said taking hold of her hand. “Now I have you to advise me on such things as interior design, soft furnishings, curtains, paint colours etcetera so with any luck there will be no need to return to the dark, dismal colours of previous.” She rested her head on his shoulder, a satisfied sigh escaping through her smiling lips as he lent down and placed a kiss on the top of her head. They sat in contented silence for a few moments enjoying their coffee until Henrik said, “are those biscuits for eating or just for looking at?”

“Oh yes, help yourself,” she said standing up and offering him the plate. She watched him as he munched his way through a biscuit. "You know you have paint on your face and glasses don’t you Henrik?"

“Do I?” He said, as he removed his glasses and squinted to inspect them. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a handkerchief and attempted to clean away the paint splatters.

“You must be enjoying yourself if you haven’t even noticed.” She said as she took a biscuit from the plate and nibbled at it.

“I have enjoyed myself actually. It has been rather therapeutic. Although I can’t say I will be sorry to finish. The novelty is starting to wear off a little now. Not much further to go though and then we can start putting some of the furniture together, although forgive me if we don’t do that today. I think once I’ve finished painting I’d quite like to spend a bit of time relaxing with you.”
She put the plate down and stood in front of him and wrapped her arms around his neck. “I’d like that,” she said leaning in to peck him on the lips. He attempted to kiss her again but she pulled away from him causing him to let out a groan of disappointment. “I’ll let you get on. I need to start dinner anyway,” she said as she gathered together the contents of the tray.

“Yes, what is it we are having? I’m looking forward to you cooking for me for a change.”

“Chilli.”

“Oh yes, I should have known. It is rather a speciality of yours isn’t it.” He said standing and placing his mug on the tray she was holding.

"Okay Henrik, enough of the sarcasm. Unlike some people we can’t all be good at everything can we? Yes, chilli is my go to recipe and you will enjoy it!”

“I know I will darling. Thank you. I’m very grateful.” He said kissing her on the cheek.

“I’ll see you in a while then. Don’t work too hard will you?” She smiled as she headed out of the door with the tray, taking a deep breath as she prepared herself for the descent.

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After dinner Henrik returned to finish the last of the decorating whilst Roxanna cleared away the pots from dinner and enjoyed a bath. Henrik was now taking a shower in the ensuite whilst Roxanna laid on the bed applying various lotions and potions that had become part of her night time routine. Finishing up Henrik dried himself and still naked, padded over to the wardrobe and pulled out a clean pair of pyjamas before collapsing on to his side of the bed. He stretched his body out and closed his eyes, letting out a deep sigh, pyjamas still in hand. "Tired, my love?” Roxanna enquired as she glanced over at Henrik’s bare body in all its glory.

"Hmm"

"You should be very proud. The room looks great"

"Good I’m glad you think so.” He smiled as he shifted his position, rolling on to his side and resting his head on Roxanna’s chest, one hand resting on the swell of her stomach. “I hate to say it but I think you were right about getting people in. It was more work than I had anticipated. Next time we decide to decorate we are definitely paying someone to do it!” He said as he snuggled further into her body, enjoying the warmth radiating from her, the softness of her dressing gown next to his bare skin. He felt her fingers threading through his hair before planting a kiss on the top of his head.

"Wow," Henrik gasped as he felt a large ripple move across Roxanna’s stomach. He sat up and looked at Roxanna whose face beamed back at him, her palms spread out on her stomach. 

"Gosh Henrik, it must have done a three hundred and sixty degree somersault then, did you see that?"

“I did see it, what did it feel like?”

“ Weird. Honestly Henrik, it’s the most wonderful but the most bizarre feeling I’ve ever experienced.” She moved his hand to the top of her stomach, just below her ribs, “here can you feel
that? I think that feels like an elbow or a knee, what do you think?”

“Hmm,” he said gently palpating her stomach, “It does feel like it. Or a foot perhaps? Do you think its head down? I think it might be you know. Here feel, that feels like a bottom to me,” she moved her hand to the area he was indicating.

“Yes, I think you’re right, it certainly feels like it could be. But I’m sure it will move again around again later, usually when I’ve just dropped off to sleep.”

“You are amazing Roxanna, do you know that?” He said as he leant over to kiss her on the lips. It was a long kiss, longer than he had planned but she tasted so good and he found that his advances were being well received. His hand gently stroked the curves of her body, her thighs, her stomach and breasts until he reached the curve of her chin and he cupped her cheek, slipping his tongue between her lips and she allowed it to dance with her own tongue.

“Well Henrik, this is very nice,” she whispered, in between kisses.

“Lay down on your side, Roxanna. I promise I’ll be gentle with you.”

“I know you will Henrik,” she replied as she kissed his lips once more. He helped her remove her dressing gown and she rolled onto her side, her back facing him. He curled his body around hers and peppered her back with kisses, moving a hand around to the front of her body to caress her breasts, his thumb rubbing over her the soft peak of her nipple. “Oh Henrik,” she groaned as she parted her legs to allow him access and he slowly entered her. “Roxanna, you feel so good,” he whispered into her ear as he set a gentle rhythm, nuzzling into her neck as his hands explored. Her body had changed since becoming pregnant; her hips had widened, her thighs were thicker, her breasts had swelled and her nipples were larger and much deeper in colour. He found the changes fascinating and he had to admit that he was more attracted to her now than before she was pregnant, if that was ever possible.

“Henrik, touch me” she begged as she sought out his hand and guided it between her legs, his mouth still nibbling the curve of her neck. It wasn’t long before he felt her body tense against his and she arched her back as gentle mewls escaped from her lips. He took it as his cue to finish off, calling out her name as he hit the heady heights of his own orgasm.

They lay for a while, his arms wrapped around Roxanna’s body as they allowed themselves time to calm and settle. Henrik breathed in her scent as he hid his face in her hair. He slid his hands around her stomach at the right moment to feel the life inside of her wriggle and kick before settling itself down once again. Life was good, he thought as he smiled to himself. Life was very good and he found himself crossing his fingers in the hope that it would last because having tasted the goodness, he didn’t think he could survive if it was taken away from him now.
Chapter Summary

Essie arranges a baby shower for Roxanna, much to her dismay.

“So, do you think you will be returning to work after the baby is born Roxanna?”

It was Lofty. They were in Albie’s and he was sat across the table from Roxanna who was squeezed in between Essie and Donna and a dozen or so other colleagues, Dom, Sacha, Serena and Fletch included. It was Roxanna’s last day at work before her maternity leave started and Essie had taken it upon herself to arrange leaving drinks. Roxanna had reluctantly agreed, expecting a few quiet drinks in Albie’s but when she had arrived at the bar she had been met with a wash of gaudy blue and pink decorations, balloons and streamers. A blue and pink layered cake with a peculiar looking baby figurine on the top adorned the table, already groaning with similarly coloured gifts. A surprise baby shower. Roxanna didn’t quite know what to say, so she just smiled politely and went along with it.

“Er, well I’m not quite sure yet, Lofty. Probably. Hopefully at some point,” Roxanna responded hesitantly, taking a sip of her mineral water. She felt rather put on the spot; she and Henrik hadn’t figured that matter out yet. She had left it open ended with HR on whether she would return. She was still wary about making any fixed plans because at the back of her mind there was always the niggling fear that something could go wrong at any moment. She knew she would feel that way until the baby was born and she could see it, living and breathing, with her own eyes.

“Childcare costs a fortune these days.” Donna interjected. “Isn’t that right Fletch? You’d be better off staying at home Roxanna.”

Fletch nodded back in response. “Too right. The amount I pay out to the babysitter is obscene, she’s on more money than I am!”

“I don’t think Hanssen has got any money worries do you?” scoffed Dom, eliciting muffled giggles from around the table.

“Awh, it’s not just about the money though. The baby phase goes so fast that you need to make the most of it. Honestly I just had to blink and Amber was all grown up,” Donna went on.

Roxanna smiled politely, struggling not to glance over at the door every time she heard it swing open to see if it was Henrik coming to rescue her. She loved Henrik dearly but he had the most annoying knack of finding the most convincing of excuses to avoid any kind of social interaction with his colleagues. Today being a case in point when typically, the need to convene an unscheduled board meeting had arisen just at the last minute. Hmm how convenient she mused to herself as she drew her eyes away from the door and back to the conversation going on around the table.

“Donna is absolutely right Roxanna. They do grow up so quickly you have to cherish every last moment with them,” said Serena taking a sip from her glass of red wine. Empathetic sighs rippled around the table from colleagues well aware of Serena’s loss.

“Elinor was walking by nine months old. She was running rings round Edward and I. And talking! Well once she started that was it, there was no stopping her, from the minute she woke up to the
moment she went to bed, chat, chat, chat.” There was no sadness in her voice and she let out a gentle smile, seeming happy to have the opportunity to talk about her daughter.

“Did you go back to work, after Elinor was born Serena?” asked Essie.

“Not straight away. When she was about three I went back to work part time. But it is difficult though managing work commitments and family life, because believe me, small children have a busier social life than us adults,” she let out a chuckle. “But it is absolutely worth all the hard work and I’m sure Roxanna and Henrik will manage admirably.” She grinned and reached across the table to squeeze Roxanna’s hand. Roxanna smiled back, touched by the other woman’s affection.

“But, the sleepless nights!” Exclaimed Serena. “I have been rudely reminded of them recently by Guinevere and that is not something I envy. Just get as much rest now Roxanna before baby comes because after that, there is no chance! Also you need to make sure that Henrik does his bit, especially during the nights. Edward was a complete arse about it, would sleep through even when Elinor was doing her best to scream the house down and wake up all the neighbours. But, having said that there is nothing better than having your baby cuddled up next to you having a feed in the middle of the night while the rest of the world sleeps and all that matters is you and your little baby. You might not appreciate it at the time, but later, when they are all grown up and no longer need you or want you, it’s those moments you wish you could go back to. What do you say Sacha? I’m sure you’ve done a few night feeds in your time?”

A warm contended smile spread across Sasha’s face. “Absolutely Serena, there is no better feeling. I like to think I did my bit to help. I probably could have done more but…..” He turned to Roxanna now, “I’m sure Henrik will be a great support Roxanna. I imagine he will be very good with a baby. Very calming,” he offered.

Roxanna smiled and nodded. “I’d like to think so,” feeling her cheeks blush a little.

“So you’ll never guess what Scary Sue told Lofty earlier,” it was Dom clapping his hands together.

“Dom…” Lofty protested.

“Pah, Scary Sue! Don’t believe anything she says,” scoffed Serena.

“No honestly, this is good!” Dom promised.

“Come on then, what is it?” urged Donna.

“Go on Lofty….tell them…”

“Oh, well, ….”

“Oh come on Lofty….”

“Er, well okay…..”

As the table listened to Lofty’s tale Essie leaned over to Roxanna and placed a hand on her arm.

“Are you okay Roxanna? You are very quiet” whispered Essie, a look of concern across her face.

“What?” Yes, I’m fine Essie,” Roxanna smiled. “Just a bit tired now I guess. It has been a busy day.”
“Oh I’m sorry if this has all been a bit much.”

“No, Essie, it hasn’t. It’s been so lovely, thank you,” Roxanna reached her arm around Essie’s shoulder to pull her in for a hug.

“Oh, you’re so welcome my darling,” Essie said, reciprocating the embrace and placing a kiss on Roxanna’s cheek. “You deserve it. I’ll miss you though you know. The ward won’t be the same without you there every day,” she beamed.

“Oh Essie,” Roxanna gulped away the lump rising in her throat. “I’m going to miss you too. You will come and visit me won’t you? Keep me up to date with things?”

“Of course I will,” Essie replied, squeezing her friend’s hand. “You try and stop me! I can’t wait to give baby a cuddle!” She smiled. Roxanna smiled back and blinked away the tears forming in her eyes.

“Here’s the daddy!” shouted Dom giving a drum roll on the table, alerting everyone to Henrik’s tall figure skulking through the entrance door.

The sight of Henrik lifted Roxanna’s heart and a broad smile spread across her face. She sought out eye contact with him as their enthusiastic colleagues serenaded Henrik’s arrival with a loud cheer. As Henrik’s eyes locked with her own she noticed that his cheeks were flushing pink as he loomed awkwardly over the table and she felt a pang of sympathy for him because she recognised how uncomfortable all the attention was making him feel.

Henrik looked down and pursed his lips, “thank you Mr Copeland,” he said lowly before the corners of his lips broke out in a small smirk. He lifted his head again and took in the decorations around him, “Well doesn’t this look good.” He focussed once more on Roxanna, knowing that she too would be feeling a little overwhelmed at all the attention and trouble that people had gone to.

Sacha rose to his feet “Henrik, here, take my seat.”

“Thank you Sacha,”

“Can I get you drink?”

Henrik glanced over to Roxanna for confirmation that she was happy to stay a little longer. She read his meaning and gave a smile and a little nod in response.

“An orange juice is fine, thank you Sacha,” Henrik said as he removed his coat, carefully folding it and draping it over the back of the chair before taking a seat at the table.

“Anyone else?” offered Sacha, “Roxanna?”

“No, thank you Sacha, I’m fine,” she replied holding up her hand in gesture.

“You might as well get another bottle of Shiraz Sacha, this one is going down too well,” Serena shouted over to him as she held out a twenty pound note.

“Of course Serena,” Sacha responded as he rebutted her attempt to give him the money then headed over to the bar followed by Dom, Lofty and Fletch.

An awkward silence followed as those remaining looked around the table at each and smiled
politely.

“So Henrik,” started Serena. “Roxanna has been telling us that you have hidden talents?”

“Oh?” His eye brows arched upwards in surprise as he eyed Roxanna across the table. The puzzled expression on her face indicating that she too was unsure of what was coming next.

“DIY?” offered Serena, “Decorating?”

“Oh right.” He said clearing his throat and straightening a beer mat in front of him. “I wouldn’t go so far as describing it as a hidden talent but yes we did decorate the spare room a few weeks ago.”

“I think we is a bit of an exaggeration Henrik. You did it and I watched,” Roxanna chuckled and he smiled softly at her. “You did a really good job and it looks greats.”

“So you’ve got everything ready then? For the baby?” Essie enquired

Roxanna nodded, looking over at Henrik for moral support. “Yes, I think so.”

“Any ideas on the gender?” It was Donna now. “I couldn’t wait with Amber so found out at the 20 week scan. What about you Serena did you find out?”

“No, wasn’t available back in my day.”

“Your bump is quite big Roxanna isn’t it so I reckon it could a boy. What do you think?”

“Oh I don’t know Donna. I really don’t have an inkling. Cliché I know, but as long as it’s healthy.”

“Yes, of course” agreed Serena, leading the murmurs of agreement around the table.

“Are you planning to feed baby yourself? I know nurses are meant to promote breast feeding but honestly I tried and it was really hard so I only lasted for the first few weeks.” Donna sighed.

“Er. Well I suppose we will just see how it goes. I would like to but as you say, I’m sure it’s not as easy as it looks.” Roxanna replied.

“Everyone is different, you just have to work out what is right for you,” offered Serena.

Again murmurs of agreement echoed around the table.

“Oh it’s so exciting! I bet you both can’t wait until baby arrives?” squealed Essie.

Roxanna smiled and looked to Henrik for support. He could sense that she’d had more than enough of the questioning so took it upon himself to answer for them both.

“It will certainly be different,” he said, his eyes on the beer mat, his fingers twitching to realign it once again. “Roxanna and I will just take it one day at time, I’m sure we will figure it out between us.” He looked back up at her and gave her a reassuring smile and she nodded and smiled back at him.

“Henrik, orange juice for you.” It was Sacha returning from the bar followed by the others.

“Ah thank you Sacha,” Henrik said taking the drink from the other man.

“Is it okay if we have some cake Essie?” Asked Lofty.
“Lofty!” exclaimed Dom, “I can’t take you anywhere can I?”

“What? I was just asking…”

“Oh yes, of course.” Essie replied, eagerly pushing the cake in front of Roxanna and holding out the knife for her. “Here Roxanna, you do the honours.”

Roxanna took the knife and smiled, “Come on then, pass the plates over.”

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It wasn’t that much later that Roxanna and Henrik made their excuses to leave. Roxanna felt comfortable that she had been there a sufficient amount of time to show her gratitude towards everyone for their kindness. She had been touched at how thoughtful everyone had been and it was only now she was realising just how much she was going to miss her Holby friends.

She stood clutching several bouquets of flowers as Henrik loaded the Volvo with their belongings and the gifts that their colleagues has been so generous with. She turned to look up at the hospital building, the lights shining out from each window in the dusk light and she sought out her own office window, one of the few without its light on.

“Roxanna. Darling?” She felt Henrik’s hand on her arm.

“Hmm” she turned to look at him, drawing her eyes away from the building. “Sorry, what was that?”

“Do you want me to put the flowers in the back of the car or are you happy to hold them?”

“Er,” she took a gulp and felt tears prick her eyes.

“Oh Roxanna, are you okay?” Henrik sighed, taking the flowers from her and placing them on the back seat and closing the door. He moved towards her and took her in his arms and placed a gentle kiss on her forehead.

“What am I going to do Henrik?” she sobbed into the lapels of his coat. “I’ve always worked. What am I going to do every day? Who will I talk to? The only people I know in Holby are here at the hospital and I won’t be. I don’t think I can do this. I don’t know what to do with a baby every day. We’ll have to get a nanny or find childcare or something. I need to work.”

“Darling.” He sighed. “Let’s just see what happens after the baby arrives. If you want to return to work then fine we will sort something out. If you don’t, then that is also fine.” He wiped a tear away from her cheek with his thumb and tilted her head upwards so she was looking at him. “We’ve been here before remember?” She nodded in response, understanding that he meant after her accident. “You came through that didn’t you?” She nodded again. “We came through it and we didn’t have anything half as exciting as a new baby to look forward to like we do now, apart from each other of course,” he said smiling down as her.

She rested her head on his chest. “I know I’m being silly darling, I’m sorry” she sighed wrapping her arms around his waist. “I think I’m just tired and it’s been quite a day. Everyone has been so kind.”
“Come on, let’s get you home.” He said, bending down to kiss the top of her head before pulling away from her and opening the passenger door and helping her into the vehicle.

When she was inside he bent down so his face was level with hers. “It will be okay Roxanna.” He lent in and kissed her on the lips.

“I know Henrik, thank you”. She uttered as she brushed the back of her hand down the side of his cheek, the kindness in his eyes making her smile. “I love you.”

He smiled back at her, “I love you too.” He tugged on the seat belt and handed it to her, “now put that on, we’re going home.”

She nodded. “Yes okay darling, let’s go home.”
Chapter Summary

Henrik discusses the opening of the YAU unit with Roxanna, whilst she starts to think about the future.

"Roxanna, I'm home." Henrik shouted as he shut the front door behind him and placed his bag on the hall cupboard. He removed his coat and hung it up on the coat pegs before taking out a pair of leather slippers from the cupboard and sitting on the bottom stair to replace his shoes with the slippers.

"I'm in here," came a voice from the sitting room. Henrik put his shoes away in the cupboard and followed the voice, and found Roxanna sitting on the sofa with her feet up and the iPad balancing on her bump.

"Hello," he greeted as he bent over the arm of the sofa and wrapped his arms around Roxanna’s shoulders and kissed on her on the cheek.

"Hi darling," she responded, reaching up and placing a hand over his. "Have you had a good day?"

"An interesting day shall we say," he said as he rested his chin on her shoulder.

"Oh?"

"Ange Goddard and Tom Campbell-Gore started this morning and the YAU unit was opened."

"Of course."

"Unfortunately Tom suffered a myocardial infarction whilst performing surgery on a diaphragmatic hernia with myself and Mr Copeland."

"Gosh," Roxanna exclaimed, her eyes widening as she turned to look at Henrik. "Is he ok?"

"He will be, thanks to Ms Naylor. He's going to need time to recover though, Henrik sighed. Roxanna nodded in agreement.

"I've agreed to Ms Goddard heading up the unit for now. I do hope I don't come to regret that decision." He stood up and moved to the armchair opposite, dropping himself down heavily into it and slackening off his tie. "The hospital can't afford anymore scandals and neither can I." He said staring at an unidentified patch on the carpet.

"Oh Henrik." She sighed, putting her feet down on the floor and turning to face him. "You obviously think she can handle it or you wouldn't have agreed to it." He sighed, removing his glasses and placing them on the arm of the chair then pinching the bridge of his nose between his fingers and closing his eyes briefly before opening them again.

"It was either that or close the unit and I know what the Board's view of that would be. To be fair to Ms Goddard she did give a rather impassioned speech about why she was capable of managing the unit, although I fear she may be one that takes matters into her own hands."
"Nothing wrong with a bit of spirit Henrik," Roxanna teased.

"Hmm. Perhaps she did remind me of someone very close to my heart who also demonstrates that same sense of spirit," he smirked, causing Roxanna to let out a little chuckle.

"Anyway, enough of work. How are you?" He said sitting forward and studying her. "What have you been doing?"

"Oh you know, this and that." She said relaxing back into the sofa her hands falling naturally on the swell of her stomach. "I packed my hospital bag then repacked it," she said smirking a little, amused by her own behaviour. "Then I took myself off for a walk in the park and stopped for a spot of lunch at the little café there. It's really rather sweet Henrik. The staff were lovely too. I picked up a leaflet for a baby group that takes place there every Thursday morning, I thought it might be worth a look when baby is a bit older."

Henrik's smiled and nodded his head in agreement. "It sounds very nice darling." He was so pleased that she’d had an enjoyable morning and was thinking of life after the baby was born.

"Then this afternoon I've been rather lazy and spent the whole afternoon on the sofa browsing the internet."

Henrik nodded again in response. "Anything in particular?"

"Well," there was an excitement to her voice now as she picked up the iPad from the sofa and entered her password, swiping the screen a few times before turning it around to show him.

Henrik picked up his glasses and put them on then leant forward to inspect the screen. "What is it?"

"Pinterest. Interior design ideas."

"For?" He arched his eyebrows, curious to what she had in mind this time.

"For your apartment. In Stockholm."

He puffed out his cheeks then blew out an exasperated breath. "Roxanna," he sighed. "We haven't discussed this. Don't you think we've got enough on at the moment?"

Roxanna's chin dropped to her chest, her eyes downcast, still scrolling through the images on the iPad. She should have expected this reaction.

"I suppose" she agreed reluctantly. "I just thought, whilst I've got time on my hands, I could make a start. I mean it's not like we will do the work ourselves is it? It's just a case of knowing what we want and instructing someone else to do it. Maja will be able to advise us of reliable contractors I'm sure."

"Ah yes. Maja. You two are quite the bosom buddies aren't you?" He said bringing the finger tips on each of his hands together.

She looked up now and saw the smirk return to his mouth and she knew from the tone of his voice he was teasing her. "Well," she protested. "We do exchange texts every now and then. I like her Henrik. Does it bother you?"

"No." He responded swiftly. "Not all. I think it's rather nice."

"Good."

He lent back in his seat, his hands behind his head and thought for a while as they sat in silence. He
watched Roxanna as she scrolled through the images on the screen in front of her. The trip to Sweden had been a turning point for Henrik for a number of reasons. Meeting with Maja and talking about Fredrik had helped him with his grief and to shake off some of the guilt he had been carrying around with him. Seeing Oskar too had been more than he could ever have wished for and recent email contact from Maja and Sarah had given him hope that relations could continue heal. It was early days but he was optimistic. The trip had also unearthed an unexpected desire to show his country to his unborn child; to share everything he held dear about it but which he had intentionally tried to forget over the years. He couldn’t pinpoint what had triggered this, perhaps a combination of things; not wanting to make the same mistakes again; Maja’s words echoing in his head that enough was enough, recognition of the need to stop running; the prospect of the next generation, of a family and the need to ensure that there were firm roots in place to build upon.

“About the apartment.” He said eventually, as he watched his wife look up at him, a look of resignation in her eyes. “I'm not adverse to a renovation project Roxanna. The place does need work after all, it's been left untouched for far too long. So, if you would like to, and only if you feel up to it, you can do some research and put some ideas together.” He noticed the grin spreading across her face. “But Roxanna, you and the baby are the priority. I know what you are like when you get an idea in your head, you become single minded about it.”

She beamed at him across the room. "Do you want to have a look at what I've come up with so far?"

"Go on then," he said unable to resist the enthusiasm radiating from her face. He stood up and joined her on the sofa, as she spoke animatedly.

After looking over her ideas and adding some of his own his stomach told him it was time to get something to eat. “Right darling, dinner.” He said kissing her on the side of her head.

“There’s some pasta sauce left in the fridge from yesterday if you want, I’m not that hungry.”

“Hmm” he said leaning forward and fingering an empty sharing size packet of Galaxy Minstrels left discarded on the coffee table. “No wonder.”

“Oh shush Henrik, if I can’t indulge now, then when can I?” She said gently slapping the back of his thigh as he stood up, causing them both to chuckle.

“I’ll make pasta then. I’ll do enough for two because I know as soon as you see it you will want some and I’m not going to share mine with you.” He said brushing his fingers through her hair as he walked past her and out of the room.

“Oh Henrik,” she called. “I’ve got an appointment with Fleur tomorrow, nine-thirty. Are you still able to come with me?”

He popped his head around the door, “of course. It’s in my diary.”

“Great, I’ll come in with you first thing then.”

“Yes, fine.” He agreed before disappearing again into the kitchen.

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They were early for the ante natal appointment so Roxanna settled herself in Pulses with a latte.
whilst Henrik checked up on a few of his patients. Roxanna watched the comings and goings; staff rushing in for their shifts, patients clutching appointment letters searching for their destinations. She was surprised to find that there was a part of her that was glad she was not arriving to start her shift, instead she was eager to get home and crack on with the list of jobs she had set herself. First on the list was giving the kitchen a thorough clean; what was it called, she pondered, nesting? That was it, she chuckled to herself.

At that moment Henrik appeared by her side. "Are you ready?"

She looked up to see his soft facing smiling down at her. "Yes," she said draining her coffee and grabbing her scarf and bag from the chair beside her. Before she managed to stand another figure appeared next to Henrik clutching a takeaway cup.

"Morning Henrik."

He turned to the figure next to him. "Ah morning Ms Goddard."

The two women look at each other and exchanged polite smiles. Henrik, reminded of his manners looked between the two women, "Ange Goddard, our new YAU unit Manager and Roxanna Macmillan. My wife." Roxanna felt her cheeks blush, she was still getting used to Henrik referring to her as his wife and she still got butterflies in her stomach every time he said it.

Ange nodded taking in that last little bit of information and noticing the swell of Roxanna's stomach. She knew he was married, the ring gave that away, but to whom had escaped her. The name was familiar, she mused. A baby on the way too. Well she had not expected that.

"Neurology right?" Ange enquired.

"Yes, that's right..." Roxanna replied. Thanks to John Roxanna’s name was well known for all the wrong reasons these days, much to her dismay. She had considered taking Henrik’s name when they married, and she did at times when it suited, but she’d had an overwhelming sense of defiance and insistence that John’s actions would not dictate her life; she was proud of her family name and it belonged to her so she kept it.

"I'm aware of your work, your research. It's very impressive."

"Oh right," replied Roxanna not expecting that response. A small smile developed across Henrik's face, a feeling of pride bubbling inside of him as he watched the scene playout between the two women.

"Especially your studies on brain recovery in adolescents."

"Well, that was some time ago now. I'm not even sure it's still relevant. I think it’s been surpassed by more recent studies."

"No, don’t be so modest. It was pivotal research and still completely relevant today. I’d love to talk with you further about when you are available."

“Oh okay,” replied Roxanna hesitantly.

Ange glanced at Henrik who was now looking at his watch and starting to shuffle about on his feet and she took it as her cue to move along.

"Well, I'll let you both get on. I look forward to working with you Roxanna." Roxanna stood up revealing the full swell of her stomach which had been partly hidden by her coat and the table.
"Well actually I'm on maternity leave so, it won't be for a while yet." She smiled and looked to Henrik who reciprocated the look.

"Wow, gosh. Well congratulations the pair of you. Right, well lovely to meet you Roxanna. Good luck with it all. Henrik, I'll catch you later." Henrik nodded his head in response and Ange turned on her heels and headed for the lift.

"She seems very lovely." Roxanna commented as they both watched the woman walk away.

"Hmm," not committing himself to anything just yet. "She wasn't wrong about your research you know," he said taking hold of Roxanna's hand. "You should be proud of your achievements."

She smiled at him, "thanks darling but that all seems like a very long time ago now. New challenges on the horizon hey?"

He smiled back at her, nodded and squeezed her hand, "Yes darling, new challenges," he echoed as he led her towards the obstetrics unit.
Thirty-seven weeks Part 2

Chapter Summary

As the birth gets closer Henrik’s anxieties start to increase.

Later that day.....

"There is no point in discussing this any further Ms Naylor. I won't be changing my mind." Henrik growled from his seated position behind his desk. His eyes averted from Jac's steely stare, instead focussing on the papers on his desk; his right hand aligning the pencils next to them. "Now if you don’t mind, I am rather busy."

Jac let out a deep sigh and folded her arms, her eyes not moving from Henrik.

"This is ridiculous Henrik. How am I expected to run a world class facility on skeleton staff?" She demanded of him. "It's been almost two weeks since Petrenko left. I'm there on my own with a bunch of locum nit wits. It's dangerous Hanssen. The shiny new YAU unit hasn't past my attention either with its kindergarten fixtures and fittings. That must have cost a fortune. It's ludicrous, all that money being spent when I can't even have one Registrar."

"That money is ring fenced Ms Naylor, you know that.... The budget for Darwin is completely separate."

"I don’t think this has anything to do with budget Henrik. This is about you wanting to prove to the Board that a project under your leadership can actually succeed because let’s face it, bringing Gaskell here didn’t exactly go down well did it!"

The words cut into him like a knife and Jac noted the slightest twitch of Henrik’s left eyebrow on his otherwise staid face as her words sunk in. She knew she had overstepped the mark, even for her who was well known for her razor sharp comments, but she was so mad that the words had left her mouth before her brain had even engaged. She knew that Henrik was a victim of the whole Gaskell fiasco as much as she, Roxanna and his numerous patients were. Yet she couldn’t quite shake off those last remnants of resentment towards Henrik after the Fredrik incident, then Gaskell. Jac and Henrik; their lives and fates it seemed, so intricately linked and here they were again, locked in battle. Who was going to back down first?

"Thank you Ms Naylor!" Henrik shouted rather too loudly, standing and slamming his hands on the desk. Jac's eyes widened, slightly taken aback. He let out a deep sigh. He picked up his phone from the desk and slipped it in his pocket.

"Henrik, all I’m saying is the ward cannot function at its best without the best staff. Surely you understand that....."

"I don’t want to discuss this any further. The answer is no. Now, I suggest you get back to your ward Ms Naylor, as I need to be elsewhere." He said brusquely as he made his way over to the door and held it open for her, his other arm gesturing for her to leave.

"This is not the end of it Henrik. You should know I’m not silenced that easily." She said folding her
"Good day Ms Naylor."

Jac gave an exasperated shake of her head and brushed past him.

"Why is Mrs Hardy still in bay 3 Nurse Jackson?" Henrik asked sternly as he loomed over the nurse’s station on AAU. Donna looked up at him, a vacant look on her face.

"It would appear from her records she should have been discharged yesterday so why is she still here?" He demanded.

Donna eyes searched over the desk for Serena. "Err, well. The thing is, she lives on her own, she hasn't got any family and Social Services have not been able to sort out a care package just yet."

"So she's bed blocking then." He snapped back. "This is not a hotel nor a care home Nurse Jackson. I want that bed free by the end of your shift. It is not our responsibility to care for patients beyond their medical needs. I suggest you get on the phone to Social Services immediately."

"But it's four thirty now, Social Services aren’t gonna come up with anything else today."

"I don't want any excuses. There are patients in A & E waiting to be admitted. Now see to it Nurse Jackson and if you are refusing to follow orders from a superior I'll have to speak to Ms Campbell about disciplinary action."

“Mr Hanssen!” Boomed a voice from across the ward. Henrik spun round on his heals to be met with the stern face of a rather formidable looking Serena Campbell stood in the doorway of her office, arms folded. “A word. In my office. Now please.” She demanded of her superior.

Like a school boy being shouted at by his Head Teacher, Henrik dipped his head and did as he was told, shutting the office door behind him. They stood facing one another.

“This is my ward Henrik. My staff. My patients. I’ll thank you for not coming down from your ivory tower and interfering in my domain.”

“I remember when that ‘ivory tower’ belonged to you. It didn’t stop you from coming down and interfering.” He responded curtly.

“Yes, well, that maybe so,” she said conceding just a little bit, but not that much. “But it was never to throw defenceless old ladies out on to the street at five o’clock on a winters evening and it wasn’t to threaten decent, hardworking staff with disciplinary action either. For Christ sake Henrik, one patient for one extra night is not going to bring this hospital down. Anyway, I thought you had mellowed in your old age? What’s wrong with you? I had Jac complaining to me earlier about your little spat as well.” Serena slumped in her desk chair and Henrik did the same on to one of the more comfortable chairs, letting out a deep breath, before loosening his tie a little.

“Is Roxanna okay Henrik? And the baby? I saw her sat in Pulses earlier?”

“Yes, yes. She’s fine. It’s fine.” He grumbled, his face glum.

“So what's the problem then? In a few weeks you’re going to have a bouncing bundle of joy in your arms, surely that something to smile about?”
He took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes. “It’s, it’s just getting a bit too real now I suppose.”

“Ah, I see. It’s natural to feel that way Henrik.”

“Is it? As you say, it should be a joyous time so why I am so racked with worry about the whole thing? The birth plan has changed. It’s going to be a natural delivery. I felt happier when it was going to be a planned caesarean because at least we knew what was going to happen. Now…well…anything could happen. I just don’t know if Roxanna is strong enough to deliver the baby herself. She’s a lot weaker since the accident. She doesn’t think I notice but I do.”

“If Fleur thinks a natural delivery is the best option then I’m sure it will be fine. Roxanna doesn’t want to undergo further surgery Henrik, surely that would encounter more risks?”

“I know, I know, medically speaking it’s the right way to go, it’s just…well, she’s my wife and I can’t…” he paused attempting to formulate his meaning but couldn’t find the words. He had revealed too much of himself to Serena already, that much he did know. “I suppose I just like to have things organised,” it sounded pathetic but it was partly true.

“Oh Henrik. Let me tell you now. Babies do not know the meaning of the word ‘organised’. Babies do not run to timetables or schedules, as much as you hope they will. Babies throw your whole world upside so the sooner you accept that, the better. Have you spoken with Roxanna about all this?”

“No. No I haven’t. She’s got enough to deal with.”

“Well, you never know. She might be feeling the same way? It might be worth mentioning it?”

He gave her an appreciative smile and nod before replacing his glasses and straightening his tie then standing to make his departure.

“Oh, Henrik. Before you go, isn’t there something Nurse Jackson needs to hear?”

A sigh of resignation left his body. “Right. Yes, I see,” he said, nodding his head again and leaving the office.

As Henrik walked over to the nurses station Donna ducked her head under the counter in the hope that he wouldn’t see her.

“Nurse Jackson?”

Donna popped her head up, a look of feigned surprise on her face as she reached over to pick up the phone.

“I just can’t get through to Social Services. I’ve tried about three of four times, haven’t I?” She said turning to get reassurances from the colleagues around her, “but no one is picking up.”

“Leave Mrs Hardy where she is tonight. She looks comfortable enough,” Henrik said glancing over at the bay where the old woman was tucked up in bed reading a magazine. “I know the Head of Social Services so I’ll have a word with them myself. This bed blocking situation must not go on. Social Services need to accept responsibility. Now carry on Nurse Jackson.” He said as he marched out of the ward, head held high as if the earlier confrontation had never taken place.

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Later that evening Henrik arrived home and found Roxanna in the kitchen busy cooking something
"Hi," she said as she briefly glanced over her shoulder at him before returning her attention to the two salmon fillets that were gently frying in the pan. She carefully lifted one with the fish slice to see if the skin was crisp enough. "Dinner is almost ready," she said sensing Henrik’s tall figure looming behind her as she adjusted the lid on a simmering pan of vegetables to prevent the water from spilling over the sides, "I've poured you some wine. Sit down."

"Roxanna," she felt Henrik’s body press against her back, his hands gently grasping her hips and the weight of his chin resting on her shoulder. The tone of his voice made her turn to look at him; his eyes were tired and she sensed that something was troubling him.

"Henrik? Are you ok?"

He nodded and allowed a despondent smile to escape from his lips. "Sit with me for a few minutes?" He said as he stood up straight and sought out her left hand, gently pulling her towards him.

"But...I'm cooking the salmon...," she hesitated, her eyes darting back to the pan and her right hand manipulating one of the fillets with the fish slice. "I think they are almost ready. I don't want to overcook them, I know you don't like your fish to be overdone."

The smile on his face widened, touched at her concern for his culinary preferences. He took the utensil from her and placed it on the worktop, then removed the pan off the hob and turned off the gas. "It will be ok for a few minutes," he said calmly, "please ...come and sit down."

He guided her over to the kitchen table and pulled out a chair for her then pulled up another and sat opposite her before taking one of her hands in his own.

"Henrik, what is it? You are starting to worry me." She said, searching his face for an explanation.

"It's nothing to worry about. I just wanted to tell you that I love you," he said, his eyes locked on hers. "I know we say it to each other often but I think the meaning can become diluted the more it is said. So I want to make sure that you know that there is no one more important to me than you. I have loved you from the moment I set eyes on you and that love has never faltered."

A gentle smile split her lips and she reached up and stroked his cheek with her thumb. "Oh Henrik," she sighed. "I love you too." He smiled back at her, his eyes full of adoration as he covered her hand with his own free hand, turning his head a little to kiss her palm.

"Is this about the ante-natal appointment earlier?" She enquired. "Because as much as I appreciate this outpouring of affection from you, I don’t think it’s purely because I’m cooking one of your favourite meals." His smile turned into a chuckle and he dipped his head a little and she had her answer.

"Can I tell you something Henrik?"

"Yes, of course." He said looking back up at her.

"I’m scared too. I’m scared of the pain that comes with giving birth. I’m scared that I won’t be able to handle it. I’m scared that something is going to go wrong and I’ll have to be taken into theatre. I’m scared that something is going to happen to the baby….that there will be something wrong with it."

"Oh Roxanna," he said squeezing her hand.

"You’re not alone Henrik, it all bothers me too, but what can we do about? Nothing. There is
nothing we can do. This baby has to come out some way or another and it will come when it’s ready. We can’t predict how things will go so there is no point in wasting energy on worrying about something we can’t control.”

He nodded his head and took a gulp. “You are right, I know. I just…..”

“Look. Having a natural birth is the best possible option for me and the baby. I don’t want to go through surgery again, I don’t want to have an epidural and not have control over my body….again. If it becomes absolutely necessary then of course I would but if I can avoid all that with a vaginal birth then I will. Recovery time for vaginal births is much less than a caesarean and it’s better for the baby. I know you are worried about me but honestly, I’m a strong girl. I can do this” She said punching her fist in the air and smiling, trying to lighten the mood. “And, I’ll have you with me and that is all I need. I need you as much as you need me darling, okay.” She leant forward and rested her forehead against his.

“Okay.” He agreed. Giving her a brief kiss on the lips.

“Now, what I also need, is my dinner. So let me finish off the meal and then we can have a nice, quiet, relaxing evening together because when baby is here I don’t think there will be much us time available, so I’d like to be selfish and have you all to myself whilst I can.”

“Yes, okay. It sounds good.” He said, pecking her on the lips again. “Do you mind if I just make one quick phone call before dinner? I just want to draw a line under something.”

“Yes, of course. Something important?”

“Just work.”

“Okay well be quick because I think the dinner is probably ruined now.”

“Dinner will be fine, darling.” As they both stood he kissed Roxanna on the side of her head and he watched her plate up the meal as he leant against the worktop and pulled his mobile phone from his pocket. After scrolling though the screen a few times he lifted the phone to his ear and after a few moments the call was answered.

“Ah Jac. It’s Henrik. I have some news. I’ve gone over the figures again this afternoon and there is some money available after all, so you have the go ahead with the advert for a permanent Registrar.” He paused to listen to the caller. “Hmm, yes. Well, have a good evening won’t you? We can discuss it further tomorrow. I’ll be in early. Yes. Okay. Bye.” He ended the call and turned the phone off and abandoned it on the worktop.

“Now, tell me about your day,” He said as he joined Roxanna at the table and took a sip of his wine. “The kitchen looks very clean by the way.”
Chapter Summary

Henrik and Roxanna reach a pivotal moment in their lives, the outcome of which will dictate the way they live forever.

Henrik’s eyes fluttered open as the shrill of the alarm rang through his ears. His eyes still heavy with sleep he reached his arm out from the comforting warmth of the duvet to hit the off button before quickly ensconcing his arm back under the duvet and closing his eyes again, not yet ready to face the day.

His sleep had been fitful; hospital figures and performance targets dancing through his head, teasing him away from his sleep like a Siren luring a sailor towards the rocks.

He'd given in to Jac's demands for more staff but had fought hard against the Board to get it. That really was the end of it though. The hospital finances were in a worst state than he had ever known. The Gaskell fiasco hadn't helped either; potential long term investors had pulled out, scared off by the "hospital of hell" label the media had painted in their coverage of the whole situation.

Now there would be cuts and he would have to be the one to make them. Of course it would be the most vulnerable who would be the biggest losers; the patients, the nurses working more hours for no more money. Staff would have to go. Cleaners, porters, auxiliary staff, all on zero hour contracts as it was, with nothing to fall back on. The little people on the least wages with the most to lose whose work was essential but virtually unnoticed and certainly not valued. Yes, his name would be mud again but then he knew that when he signed up for the job. "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown," he thought as he pulled the duvet higher above his head. It been an uneasy night and it felt like only an hour ago that he had eventually succumbed to sleep and now it was time to get up and do it all again.

His thoughts turned to his bed companion, Roxanna. She too had been doing her own fair share of tossing and turning during the night, not unusual for her now that she was in the latter stages of the pregnancy. He could only imagine what it must be like for her. The feats of the human body had always been a cause of fascination for him, but seeing first-hand the changes that Roxanna's body had gone through to grow their child was beyond amazing. The most astounding part was yet to come, the prospect of which filled him with fascination and fear in equal measures.

He turned over towards Roxanna and reached out to wrap his arm around the swell of her stomach, wanting to pull her closer to him for the comfort that came from the warmth of her body and her familiar smell. Instead his arm fell heavy on the cold empty space beside him. His eyes blinked open to confirm what his other senses were telling him. The bed was empty which was unusual for Roxanna, especially at this time as she was not a natural morning person.

He sat up and picked up his glasses from the bedside cabinet noting the time, 5.54. He climbed out of bed and pulled on his dressing gown, taking a quick glance around the upstairs rooms to look for her before padding downstairs, growing concern quickening his pace.

The light shone from under the kitchen door and guided his path. He swung the door open to find
Roxanna bent over the open dishwasher, one hand on the counter steadying her balance the other taking out clean dishes.

"Roxanna?" He said, stopping just in front of her. "Are you okay? It's early for you to be awake."

"Henrik," she gasped, slightly breathless as she hauled herself up and placed a clean dish on the counter. "Sorry, did I wake you?" She asked, looking up at him as she leaned against the counter.

"No. The alarm did." He said walking over to her and placing an arm around her shoulder and pulling her close to kiss the top of her head.

"I think I'm in labour," she said calmly, as she rested her head against his chest and nuzzled her face into his dressing gown.

"What?" He gasped, his eyes flitting between her face and stomach, furrowing his brow.

"I couldn't sleep. I couldn't get comfortable, my back was killing me," she said, rubbing the aforementioned area. "I could see you were moving around as well so I thought I might as well come downstairs and let you sleep in peace. Since then though the pain has got steadily worse and moved to my stomach. I'm pretty sure I'm having contractions."

"You should have woken me. How long have you been up?"

She glanced up at the clock on the wall, "not long, maybe an hour, hour and half?"

"We need to get you to hospital," he said, de-tangling himself from her and starting for the door but before he got any further Roxanna grabbed his arm.

"Henrik, please. Don't panic. These things take time. The contractions have been quite far apart so far, so I don't think there is any rush. I want to have a cup of tea and a shower before we go." She sought out his hand and linked their fingers together and pulled him towards her before reaching up to kiss his cheek.

He looked down into her face and brushed her hair away from her forehead and pressed his lips to it. "Well if you are sure," he murmured into her hair before pulling back to look into her eyes, "but I'll feel much happier once we get you to the hospital. Have you been timing the contractions?"

"Not to the exact minute, but I feel one coming, so you can start if you like?" she said, biting her bottom lip, and screwing her eyes as the tightening around her stomach took hold. She broke away from his grasp and turned to face the counter, resting her elbows on the surface and clasping her hands together, her body doubling over as the pain washed over her. She inhaled and exhaled steadily riding out the pain as the contraction hit its peak.

Henrik stood back and took it all in, looking awkward, unsure of what he should do. Eventually he came beside her and started to rub the small of her back gently with his hand.

"Henrik, please don't touch me," she gasped.

"Right, sorry," he said removing his hand and taking a step back.

"I'm sorry darling. I don't mean anything by it I'm just trying to work out the best way of dealing with this," she said as she stood upright and turned to face him, her body resuming to something akin
to normal. "If I shout at you I really don't mean it, my love."

"I understand. Just tell me what you want me to do."

"Make me a cup of tea please and add a teaspoon of sugar."

"Of course." He said as he moved towards the kettle, "and leave the dishwasher!" His voice deeper, as he saw out of the corner of his eye that she was about to continue emptying the clean dishes. "Sit down, you need to conserve your energy."

An amused smile split her lips; she could have predicted his words. "Okay," she said softly as she swept past him, her hand brushing lovingly across his shoulders before she lowered herself on to a kitchen chair.

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A cup of sweet tea and two contractions later and Henrik was helping Roxanna out of her pyjamas and into the walk-in shower.

"Is the temperature okay?" Henrik asked as he held onto Roxanna's arm as she stepped under the water.

"Yes its fine," she replied as she rested her hands against the tiles and turned her face up towards to the water.

"Will you be okay whilst I go and call the hospital to tell them we are on our way?" He said as he let go of her arm, satisfied she had found her balance. "I need to cancel meetings too."

She wiped the water from her eyes and turned to look at him. "What now?" She reached an arm out to him, her eyes dark with fear, "don't leave me..."

He paused to look at her, she appeared so vulnerable in that moment; naked and soaking wet, her fair skin stretched to capacity, tight like the skin of a drum almost transparent in places, blue veins and stretch marks leaving their imprint. He had done this to her. One act of selfish carnal desire on his part, leaving the woman he loved utterly at the mercy of Mother Nature. He should have known better, after all it wasn't the first time: an image of Maja giving birth, screaming in agony, sweat perspiring down her face flashed through his brain. Not that he had seen Maja like this, he had been too cowardly to stick around for that. Maja's words echoed in his ears; "You cannot let history repeat itself. This has to stop now."

"Henrik, please....." He was jolted back to the moment by Roxanna's pleading.

"It's okay, I’m not going anywhere darling," he said, shrugging off his dressing gown and hanging it up on the back of the bathroom door. He pulled his t-shirt over his head and let his pyjamas bottoms drop to the floor before stepping into the shower next to her and dropping a gentle kiss on her shoulder.

Without instruction he picked up the shampoo bottle, squeezed the liquid into his hands and started to gently massage it into Roxanna's hair. She stood and allowed him to take over, taking comfort from the soothing element of the water. He did the same with the shower gel lathering the bubbles around her body and using the shower head to wash away the foam. As he replaced the shower head back in
the holder he felt Roxanna turn towards him and grip on tight to his shoulders, "Henrik..." she groaned through gritted teeth.

"Is this another one?" She nodded, her finger nails digging into his shoulders as she rested her forehead on his chest.

"That’s it darling, lean on me." He said as he took hold of her arms underneath her elbows to support her weight. An involuntary howl tore from her lips.

"Breathe Roxanna." He reminded, adjusting his own breathing to demonstrate. She looked up at him and nodded, attempting to sync her breathing with his. "You're doing so well my darling," he said, offering her a reassuring smile.

"God it hurts Henrik," she groaned into his chest.

"I know, I know, but you are doing amazingly well." He said kissing her head.

As she recovered she lifted her face to look into his eyes and let out a deep sigh. He smiled down at her and pulled her in close to him. They clung to each other as the water rained over them, both well aware that this was a pivotal moment in their lives and that whatever the outcome it would dictate the way they lived forever.

Eventually Henrik pulled back from her. "Now, the contractions are getting closer together so I really think we should make our way to the hospital." He said softly as he looked down into her large blue eyes.

She nodded in agreement, "okay Henrik, but can you get me out of here first?"

"Certainly," he said stepping out of the shower and quickly drying himself off first before holding a fluffy white towel out for Roxanna and enveloping her in the soft material.

"Let's get you dry," he said as he gently patted her down then used the towel to dry her hair and face. She watched the concentration on his face, the care he was bestowing on her and she felt her heart swell.

"I love you Henrik," she uttered quietly.

"I love you too." He replied as he cupped her cheeks in his hands before gently kissing her nose, then nuzzling it with his own nose causing her to smile and reach up to touch his face.

"Are you okay to get dressed whilst I dress and call the hospital?" He said pulling away from her.

"I think I can just about manage that." She said as she followed him through to the bedroom.

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Twenty minutes later they were in the car, the hospital bag secured on the back seat. Roxanna gripped the seat, legs apart, as a further contraction took hold.

“Are you okay to go?” Henrik asked looking across at her, his face concerned, one hand on the
steering wheel, the other on the gear stick.

“Yes Henrik, just drive.”

As the Volvo pulled out of the drive Roxanna glanced up at their home, praying to God that the next time they returned it would be as a little family of three.

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