First and Ten
by Happylady1

Summary

Modern Day Jamie and Claire. I did quite a bit of research for this, but most of it is fantasy, so not all of the content is factual. I have no beta, so please excuse any errors you find.

Notes

Welcome to my second fic! I've had this one in my head for a bit and the #one quote one shot book 2 prompted me to get started on it. There will not be an update for a bit as I am leaving for two weeks of travel. But hopefully, you will be anxious for more. This chapter leaves many questions that will be answered. Thank you for reading, cheers!
Quote: “Jamie sat bolt upright, staring at the windowpane, bright with the sun. “Christ Sassenach! What time is it?”

Chapter One – The Gala

Well, this was a situation Jamie hadn’t thought he’d ever find himself in. The always professional, always totally put together Dr. Beauchamp was drunk on her ass, and apparently, tonight he was her designated caregiver. What should he do with her? He didn’t know her address, and didn’t feel like it would be safe to drop her off on her own anyway. He could call her uncle’s answering service, the other Dr. Beauchamp, but it was close to one in the morning. Best take her back to his condo, put her to bed and deal with the consequences tomorrow.

Jamie dialed the limousine service he had hired for the evening and instructed the driver to meet him at the door. Claire had finally quit gulping one drink after another and was staring at her long fingered hands lying atop the elegant table cloth. She seemed to be contemplating their mere existence. Leaning close Jamie whispered, “Dr. Beauchamp, it’s time to leave. Come lass, let’s get you to the car.”

Jamie helped her stand on shaky legs, gathered her tiny clutch and gossamer wrap, and with one arm supporting her, guided her toward the door. He glanced around the room, the dance floor was crowded and he hoped that few noticed Claire’s inebriated state. Hell, most of them were three sheets to the wind themselves. Jamie poured a liquid Claire into the limo, she closed her eyes and leaned back against the luxurious seat, and once Jamie was settled close to her side, her head came to rest on his shoulder. She was instantly asleep. When the limo took a sharp turn, Jamie put his arm around her, and she buried her face against his chest, her hand coming to rest intimately in his lap. Jamie stared at her hand, feeling the warmth of it through his tux trousers, He gulped, moving her hand to rest against his stomach. “Hang on, I’ve got ye.” Jamie sighed into her curls.

Claire made her silent, wobbly way to the elevator, then down a short corridor. Jamie managed to unlock his door at the same time her legs gave out. Luckily Jamie was prepared for just this occurrence and easily scooped her up into his arms. Kicking the door shut, he carried Claire to his bedroom. John was in residence, so the only other option was the sofa, and he would rather have her next to him, in case she became ill.

Laying her gently on the bed, Jamie quickly removed his tux, put on a pair of sleep shorts and a worn comfortable tshirt emblazoned with the Saltire. He hastily washed his face, brushed his teeth and stood over Claire, trying to figure out what to do with his new house guest. Getting a glass of water, two pain relievers and another comfortable tshirt, this one sporting his team’s logo, he sat on the bed.
“Dr. Beauchamp, Claire, you need to wake up a bit.” When this failed to rouse her, he shook her gently and her eyes flew open. Blinking owlishly, she looked at her surroundings, “Where the hell I am?” Claire slurred, “Oh hello James Fraser, am I in your bedroom? Come then.” She reached up and pulled him down on top of her trying to kiss his lips. Jamie quickly turned his head and her lips met his cheek.

Pushing himself back into a seated position, Jamie held out the water and tablets, “We’ll have none of that lass, take these, and drink. You’re likely to have a splitting headache tomorrow.”

Claire nodded, sat up awkwardly and acquiesced, then flopped down on her back again, eyes closing, but they popped back open. “I can’t sleep in this dress, too expensive. Can you help me?” She stuck her arms straight up in the air, a pleading look in her drowsy whisky colored eyes.

Jamie chuckled, thinking, it’s a good thing you ARE drunk on your ass, or we might have a situation here.

Jamie removed her heels and lifted Claire, propping his rag doll against the wall, then realized he needed her facing the wall, a task that was easier said than done. Task eventually accomplished, she was steady enough for him to get the ungodly gorgeous dress unzipped and pulled down her luscious body to reveal a matching dark green silky bra and thong. Jamie groaned, how much torture can a mortal man endure before breaking? Apparently a wee bit more as he unhooked her strapless bra, being careful to keep her facing away from him. He was NOT touching the thong that highlighted her perfect rear end. His eyes lingered a fraction too long on the twin dimples that seemed to be winking at him. Shaking his head, he thanked God she wasn’t wearing stockings! A shiver ran through him at the thought of shimmying those down her long shapely legs. He snatched his tshirt from the bed with one hand, keeping the other solidly in the middle of Claire’s back. Eventually the shirt was on and praise the Lord, it reached mid thigh. Tucking her under his soft bedding, Jamie retrieved a small waste can and sat it next to Claire.

Shaking her gently, “Claire, have another sip of water please.” Jamie brought the water to her lips, “I have a waste can here on the floor in case you feel sick.” She nodded in understanding, staring at Jamie with huge liquid eyes, Jamie lost himself in their depths. Leaning over, he placed a delicate kiss on her smooth brow, lips lingering a bit longer than they should have. He inhaled her familiar intoxicating scent. Claire reached up and stroked his cheek with a delicate touch, “You are a good man Jamie, thank you.” She turned on her side, sleep quickly overtaking her.

Jamie had a restless night, his leg was aching something fierce from being on his feet longer than he should have. He dozed rather than sleeping soundly, listening for any sound of distress from Claire. He wasn’t fooling himself one bit, it was his sexy, half naked bed partner that kept him awake. He woke groggily one time to find Claire snuggled up to him, her back to his front. Her tshirt had ridden up and her warm rear was pressed tight against his groin, his arm around her,
cupping one breast through the fabric. His fingers had started caressing the gentle weight before Jamie woke fully and disentangled himself from her soft body. He rose and had to walk off his raging erection before climbing back into bed next to her.

Jamie remembered back and how he had been attracted to his therapist immediately, at very first sight. She had strode confidently toward him, held out her hand and introduced herself. Of course he had known who she was, Dr. Beauchamp was a constant topic of gossip among his teammates, but it hadn’t concerned him and so he had listened with half an ear. Opinions on her varied drastically, depending on who was doing the talking, but his Da had told him as a youth not to listen to gossip and make up his own mind after knowing the facts. Jamie still didn’t know any personal facts about Dr. Beauchamp, even after months of therapy. He did know she was the premiere sports physical therapist in Chicago, with innovative treatments and procedures. If you wanted to get back into the game, and he did, Dr. Beauchamp was the one to get you there. She was polite, but always professional, never engaging in small talk. After what happened at the fundraising gala tonight, Jamie had some questions he wanted answered and he felt maybe he had earned a right to seek them out. Jamie was going to break through that solid wall that Dr. Beauchamp had constructed around herself, he had seen a crack in that wall tonight. But, did he really have a right to question her? As much as he desired her, he wasn’t looking for a relationship and he HAD sworn off the ladies, focusing only on his goals for his life. What a conundrum. Maybe he would bend John’s ear tomorrow at their planned brunch, seek a bit of advice.

Sometime later, a snore snort woke him out of a deep slumber, Jamie sat bolt upright, staring at the windowpane, bright with the sun. “Christ Sassenach! What time is it?”

Realizing he had called her the pet name that he had never vocalized, he looked over and found Claire still dead to the world. She hadn’t heard him and he sighed in relief. Jamie’s eyes feasted on the gorgeous sight lying snuggled in his bed. The sight of a lass with tousled curls, thick dark lashes and full sweet lips. A Dhia, he was in a world of hurt.
Chapter Notes

Thank you for your response to the first chapter of First and Ten. There won't be a regular posting schedule, but I'll keep this and Promises going as long as you keep reading and enjoying. Thank you for the comments, kudos and reblogging on Tumblr. You are appreciated, cheers!

Just a reminder, I do not have a beta, so please forgive any errors that you find.

Some people are born knowing what they want to do in life, what their calling is. Perhaps becoming a doctor, teacher, having the drive to be the best parent they can possibly be, or being blessed with a natural talent for music that must be explored. Some individuals don’t figure it out until they need to declare a major for college, then later realize that their chosen career path isn’t in the least fulfilling to their soul or happiness. Others stumble onto a chosen path simply by accident. Such is the case of James Alexander Malcom MacKenzie Fraser of Scotland.

A twelve year old Jamie had accompanied his Godfather Murtaugh, a gruff weather beaten man with a burly black beard, into Broch Mordha, to fetch a few things for his mother. It was rare that they went to town on a Sunday, but Jenny, Jamie’s older sister, had coughed her head off during church and Ellen had sent them to get some cough syrup, tissues and the necessities for dealing with the sudden illness. Murtaugh had went to fetch the needed supplies and Jamie, who was restless after sitting in church and the car trip, was walking up and down main street, looking in windows, while chewing and blowing bubbles with his gum. He made his way to the local pub, thinking to catch a glimpse of a rugby game on their lone tv. To his astonishment, the small tv hanging above the dimly lit bar had been replaced by three large screen tv’s, one showing a rugby game, one showing a football game and one showing an American football game. Jamie plopped down on a stool right in front of the American game, mouth hanging open in awe.

Seth the barkeep, a tall thin man with light blond hair, moved to stand in front of Jamie, but went unnoticed. “Jamie lad, liking the new entertainment are ye?” When this received no answer, Seth continued, “just got em installed Friday, Mr. Campbell is paying extra to get the NFL games. Thought it might be a big draw to get some new patrons.” When this still received no response from a mesmerized Jamie, Seth banged his palm down on the bar, “Some paying patrons, that is. Are ye going ta buy anything Jamie?”

“Sorry, what?” Jamie’s deep blue eyes finally looked at Seth, who just raised his eyebrows at the young man. “Oh, sorry. I’ll take an Irn Bru please.” Jamie fished in his pocket and laid a few crumpled bills on the bar and resumed his intense viewing of the game.

Sometime later, Jamie was interrupted by a loud bellow from Murtaugh as he entered the pub, “Here ye are ye numpty! I’ve been searching high and low, should have figured ye’d find yer way to Campbells. Come on lad, ye’ve wasted enough of my Sunday.”

Jamie reluctantly took his drink and followed his Godfather, eyes still glued to the tv. Once in the old blue pick up truck and headed back home over the bumpy country roads, Jamie came out of his stupor. “Murtaugh, did ye see the new get up at Campbells? Three tv’s with three different sports on at the same time and one of them was American football. It’s so different from Rugby, I really
enjoyed watching the game, though I was a wee bit confused. Do ye ken the rules?”

“No, I dinna no a thing about American football and I dinna plan on learning either,” he glanced at his red headed godson, shook his head and continued, “after we eat, we have that last acre of hay to get in before nightfall. Forecast is rain tomorrow, so get yer head out of the clouds laddie.”

Jamie would help with the hay, but he never did get his head out of the clouds, he had found his life’s calling.

Luckily for Jamie, athleticism came easy. He was tall and lean, had fast reflexes and a natural grace. He also had an overabundance of energy, that at times, was quit a burden to his parents, Brian and Ellen. Not one to keep still, Jamie always had to be in motion. Instead of squishing this tendency, the family helped him channel his energy through the constant chores on their bustling farm. In addition to their crops, they also had diverse livestock, outbuildings and fences to keep up, and an old rambling country home always in need of a fix up here and there. Jamie loved Lallybroch with its leaning tower, acres of forests, blue lochs and babbling burns. He never grumbled at the tasks he was assigned and enjoyed the time working alongside his da or Murtaugh. Willie, his older brother, had no interest in farm life and was planning to go to university to become an accountant. Jenny, like Jamie, loved their bucolic homestead and happily helped their mam around the house and farm.

About the only thing that could keep Jamie sitting still for more than a few minutes, was watching sports or reading a book. After he caught his first glimpse of American football, he read every book Broch Morda’s small library had on the subject, then spent hours on their computer system learning more football knowledge. As well as quick reflexes, Jamie also had a quick mind. He grasped facts, figures and information quickly and retained what he learned. Their own Lallybroch library was filled with classic literature and during the cold winter nights, the family would be found sprawled upon the furniture around the blaring fire, snuggled under handmade quilts, with a book in their hands.

But, as much as Jamie loved Lallybroch, he couldn’t shake his dream of being an American football player. He told his parents of his ambitions and dreams. He wanted to go to college in the USA, a school that he could play football at, as well as receive a degree. If his sports dreams failed to materialize, he would have his college diploma and some life lessons as well, then he would come back home to take over the family estate when his parents were ready for this to occur.

As the years sped by and Jamie’s football ambition did not abate, Brian and Ellen spent hours with him, researching schools and areas of beneficial studies. They had also been diligent in saving for their children’s schooling, but at the cost of university, their children would also have to invest in some student loans of their own. Jenny, five years older than Jamie, had graduated from the University of Highlands and Islands with a degree in business. She had worked for close to six months in Inverness, but couldn’t stand being apart from her longtime boyfriend, Ian Murray, and had moved back home to Lallybroch. The company she had worked for in Inverness, encouraged her to work from home via the internet and phone. It was a perfect arrangement. Ian’s family held a neighboring farmstead, much like Lallybroch, but on a somewhat smaller scale, and the couple were happily planning their future. Willie, still had two years to complete his accounting degree from the same university as Jenny.

A year from his upper secondary school graduation, Jamie and his parents had made the decision to apply to the University of Illinois in the USA, which had a wonderful Global Exchange Program and offered academic scholarships. Jamie would study Agricultural and Biological Engineering and take extra classes in Animal Sciences. This area of study would be beneficial for the future of
Lallybroch, plus the U of I football team had walk on tryouts for students who were enrolled fulltime. During Jamie’s research he had found that there had been many U of I players that had made it into the professional football league.

Jamie worked hard academically and physically as he waited to hear from the U of I. His test scores had been excellent and he pushed himself almost to the breaking point in his workouts. His best friend Ian, Jenny’s boyfriend, was always there to throw Jamie footballs, tackle him to the ground (if he could catch him) and push him through his timed drills. Jamie had grown to an impressive six foot three inches, had long arms and large hands, and was built of solid muscle from his long years of hard work on the farm. In addition, Jamie pushed himself even more with the weight training equipment he had set up in the corner of the barn, getting up before dawn to get his weights in. He liked working out in the barn, enjoying the scents of hay and the livestock. Jamie exercised to the sounds of neighing, grunting and lowing of the animals in the background, never playing music, preferring to hear the sounds of the livestock and the twitter of awakening birds that drifted through the open barn door.

By now, very few people in Broch Mordha, or the area surrounding Lallybroch, didn’t know about Jamie’s big dreams. The Frasers were a well loved and respected family and all hoped that the lad’s future plans would not be dashed by a foreign school. The day the package arrived at the post office from the University of Illinois, word spread like wildfire. Mr. McCallister, the postmaster, took it upon himself to hold the Fraser mail until the afternoon when school was let out. He drove himself out to the farm, proudly walked up to the door, wiped his feet (for he expected to be let in), and knocked on the sturdy oak door.

Jenny, opened the door, an angry look quickly overtaking her face, “Oh there ye are. Do ye have any idea of the time? We’ve been checking the box every half hour. Can ye explain yer tardiness Mr. McCallister?” Jenny was aghast at the smile that spread across the elderly man’s face until he held out the package and pointed to the address. “It’s a package, no just a letter.” His grin widened, “I’m a thinking it’s grand news.”

Jenny promptly dragged him by the arm and sat him down at the high kitchen table. “Dinna move or open the thing. I’m getting the family and we’ll be right back.” Jenny was out of the room in a flash. Soon voices were heard and feet pounded as Ellen, Brian, Murtaugh, Mrs. Crook, the housekeeper, Jenny and finally Jamie, pulling a work shirt on over his head, hurried into the kitchen.

Mr. McCalister held up the package like it was the Crown Jewels of England, “I’ve got something fer ye Jamie Lad.”

Jamie’s hands shook as he gently took the package. He looked it over with reverence and sat it down on the worn oak tabletop. “I think I’d better sit down myself, dinna know if I can handle this news standing, either way, good or bad.”

Brian stood between Ellen and Jenny, arms holding both close to his sides while Mrs. Crook had her hands folded, prayers falling silently from her lips. Murtaugh stood apart, a hopeful look on his face.

Jamie reached for the package, then stopped, “Should Ian be sent for? Should I wait.”

A resounding “NO” shook the rafters, then everyone burst into laughter at their simultaneous yell. Jenny laughing said, “Go ahead mo bhrathair, Ian will understand.”

Jamie pulled a small knife out of his back pocket and slit open the package. He pulled out a pile of
papers, held together by a huge binder clip. He removed the binder clip, perusing through the pile quickly, realizing there were many forms to complete. On top of the pile was an official looking ivory envelope addressed to James Fraser. His breathe was short as he slit open the envelope, unfolded the letter and read the first line:

James Fraser,

Congratulations! You have been accepted into the 2011 Freshman class of the University of Illinois.

Jamie fainted, falling rather gracefully for such a large man, sliding from his kitchen stool onto the floor, a flood of fluttering pages followed him.
Morning Has Broken

Chapter Notes

Thank you for reading, commenting and re-blogging. Hope you enjoy this new chapter. Cheers!

Chapter 3 – Morning Has Broken

Her head was pounding, her mouth felt like cotton and her stomach was churning. These were the first sensations Claire felt when coming back to consciousness. Blinking her eyes open, she looked around the large, sun filled room. She was in a spacious, very comfortable bed, but the question was, whose bed was she in?

She made a motion to sit up, but her head and stomach protested. Okay then, I’ll just lay her a bit longer. Breathing in through her nose and exhaling slowly, she willed her head and stomach to settle down and relax. As she inhaled, she caught the smell of toast. Did anything in the world smell better than toast? Apparently, her stomach agreed, as it gave a loud grumble. She was just going to make a second attempt at sitting up, when James Fraser came into the bedroom, holding a tray. He was attired in jeans and a blue, button down shirt, with a small check pattern.

“Good morning Dr. Beauchamp, happy Sunday.” Jamie greeted Claire with a bright smile.

“Mr. Fraser, I take it this is your apartment?” Claire inquired.

“Yes, it is. I thought your stomach and head might need a bit of help this morning, after last night. Do you feel well enough to try some tea and toast?” Jamie set the tray down on a nearby table.

Claire eyed Jamie, lifted the bed sheet and comforter covering her, looked down at herself, clad in an oversize t-shirt and panties, well, it could be much worse, and asked, “What exactly occurred here last night, Mr. Fraser?” Claire asked in her professional Dr. voice. When Jamie began to speak, she held up a finger, “hold that thought and please point to the nearest restroom, then turn your back.”

Jamie smiled and did as he was told. Claire sat up slowly, all good so far, and walked softly into the restroom. After using the facilities, taking a drink and splashing some water on her face, Claire felt she could reasonably carry on a conversation. She didn’t even try to smooth her hair, why bother, she had more issues to deal with than a messy mop on top of her head. Turning and looking at her ass, she was satisfied that the t-shirt was decent enough to return to Fraser.

She stood in the doorway and seeing no sign of her host, she surveyed the room. It was large and airy, purely masculine with dark wood and navy bedding and accents. Large windows allowed for a stunning view of Lake Michigan and there were some amazing impressionist paintings along the walls.

Jamie walked slowly back into the room, “Are you feeling well Dr. Beauchamp? Would you like to return to bed, or join me at the table?”

“The table will be fine. Do you have……”
Before she could finish her question, Fraser held up a fuzzy navy blue robe.

She walked over and slipped her arms in the huge robe, grabbed the belt and wrapped it tight around her waist and began rolling up the sleeves, “Thank you.”

Jamie led her to a small table set by another bank of windows with more of the same lake view. The floor plan was open, and she appreciated the large kitchen and living area. But, didn’t take time to study, due to the queasiness of her stomach.

Jamie sat a pot of tea on the table and a stack of buttered toast. “Would you like cream and sugar? Or prefer coffee?”

“The tea is fine and yes, cream and sugar.” Jamie placed what she preferred on the table, then poured himself a fresh cup of coffee and sat across from her.

Glancing at the toast and up at Fraser, Claire asked, “not eating?”

“No, I’ve a brunch date. But, please, have at it.” He motioned with his hand to the toast. “Is the butter okay, or would you like some jelly?”

“The butter is fine.” Claire took a bite of her toast and a sip of tea. “Here is what I recall from last night. We had an agreement that you would accompany me to the charity ball. I remember a few dances and conversing with our table mates. I felt our evening was going well. Then I remember having a conversation with an old……friend. That conversation did not go well. I remember having a few drinks and it gets very fuzzy after that. I’m afraid, I’m not much of a drinker, Mr. Fraser. I rarely imbibe to be honest.” Pausing for another bite and sip, she looked up and met Fraser’s eyes. He was studying her intensely. Clearing her throat, Claire continued, “I hope I didn’t embarrass myself, or you, too awfully bad, but if I did, there’s nothing to be done about it now. But can you please tell me what transpired after I drank myself into a stupor?”

Jamie rubbed his hand over his face before answering, “First, we had an agreement last night that you would call me Jamie and I would call you Claire when we aren’t in the hospital. I would like to continue that agreement?” At her nod, he continued, “Our evening was going well. We danced, we talked, even had a few laughs. But, after your talk with your friend, you got completely drunk, Claire.” Seeing her grimace, he continued quickly, “No worries, I think most of the crowd were three sheets to the wind also. It all happened quickly, one minute you were fine and the next you were staring at your hands laying on the table, looking extremely forlorn.”

Seeing the look on her face, he swiftly added, “It’s okay Claire, it makes perfect sense if you rarely drink, and, you didn’t eat more than a few bites of your meal.”

Claire gasped, “You noticed what I ate?”

“Aye, I mean yes. You were my date Claire, of course I noticed your actions. What you ate, what you drank and where you were, at all times. I saw when you talked to your friend and after, when you started guzzling your drinks. Though, you didn’t really have that many, at least compared to how much us Scots can drink. You are a light weight, Claire.” Jamie chuckled, then noticed the look of distress on her face, “It’s fine, I got you out of there quickly. Doubt anyone even noticed.”

Claire blushed, “Why am I here, in your t-shirt? What happened next?”

“I didn’t know your address, and even if you gave it to me, I thought I’d better care for you instead of dropping you off and leaving you on your own. So, I brought you here. You were very wobbly, but I managed to get you to the bedroom and into bed. You protested that the gown was too
expensive to sleep in.” Jamie paused and thought of her trying to say the correct words and failing, then holding her arms up for him to remove the strapless gown that had no arms, he smiled. “To be honest, you were quite cute.” *Cute, she had been downright enchanting.*

The color on Claire’s face heightened, “So, you undressed me? Anything else happen?” She stuttered out.

Jamie answered sternly, “No! Do you think I’m the type of man that would take advantage of a lass gone with drink? I turned you to the wall, so that your back was facing me, got your gown and bra off and pulled the shirt over your head as fast as I could.” *You have the most perfect ass I’ve ever laid eyes on, Claire.* “I gave you water and pain pills and tucked you in.” Jamie’s voice trailed off as he remembered how she had pulled him on top of her and tried to kiss him. A blush spread across his face.

“Something else did happen, I can see it on your face. Tell me Jamie,” Claire pressed.

“You tried to kiss me, but I turned my head, so you kissed my cheek,” Jamie answered, looking into the depths of his coffee cup. “I knew you would regret it, if you remembered.”

Letting out a sigh, he continued, “I did sleep in bed with you, but only because I didn’t know how you would handle the alcohol and I wanted to be close by, just in case you were sick and needed me. It’s a king size bed, there was plenty of room.” *But I woke up and found you snuggled tight against me. It felt right.*

Silence fell, the only sound was the purr of the refrigerator in the room. Jamie started at the touch of Claire’s hand on his, where it rested on the table.

“Thank you, Jamie. You were a perfect gentleman, in a situation that could have gone wrong in any number of ways.” Jamie turned his hand over and caressed her palm with his fingers. Goosebumps rose up his forearm.

“I am in your debt.” Claire gave his hand a squeeze and stood up.

Claire shook her head and stated abruptly, “Would you have a pair of sweatpants I could borrow? I need to be getting home. I’ll launder the shirt and pants and return them to you at your next therapy appointment. I’ll call an Uber and be out of your way soon.”

“No thank you, I’ve taken enough of your time. If you could please put the pants on your bed while I load the dishwasher, I’ll be right there.” With that she carried the dishes to the counter, turning her back on a still sitting Jamie.

When Jamie left the room, she gripped the counter with both hands. *She had tried to kiss him? There was still more that he wasn’t telling her. Nothing bad, just things he wasn’t sharing. Her hand still tingled where he had caressed her palm. Damn, she needed to get home, fast.*

Claire glanced around the kitchen and found the wine rack, she made a mental note of the labels on some of the wines, repeating them three times to herself. Why hadn’t she thought to grab her phone out of her clutch to take a picture? She opened the fridge, replacing the butter, and also filed his brand of beer away in her brain. Thank you gifts were certainly in order, big time.

Jamie had secured her dress, bra, wrap and heels in a garment bag for Claire. They stood silently in the lobby of the high rise awaiting the Uber. Claire was attired in Jamie’s oversized t-shirt,
sweatpants and extremely large flip flops. Jamie had chuckled at her appearance, she had laughed also, and countered with, “I’m sure the uber driver has seen worse.”

When the doorman opened the door for her to leave, Claire impulsively threw her arms around Jamie, kissed his cheek, and was out the door in a flash.

Jamie stood rubbing his cheek and feeling like he just had the wind knocked out of him by a 300 lb linebacker.
Friends

Chapter Notes

It's an Easter miracle! After a very long break, I finally wrote a new chapter. Hope this finds all of you well and healthy and this brightens your quarantine a bit. Thank you to all readers for kudos and comments. You are appreciated.

“Good morning Mr. Fraser, Mr. Grey, anyone else joining you for brunch?” Madeline, the hostess of Blue Door Farm Stand, a sunny two-story restaurant in Lincoln Park, asked the handsome pair while she gathered menus.

“Just the two of us today”, John replied, “the usual table please.”

“Of course sirs, please follow me.” Madeline led them to a back corner table, away from foot traffic and the prying eyes of football fans. “Do you need the menus?”

“I don’t, you John?” Jamie answered. At the shake of John’s head, “then I’ll put in your usual and have two bloody Mary’s, extra spicy, sent over to your table. Thank you gentlemen and enjoy your meals,” Madeline scurried away to speak to the bartender and the kitchen.

“Well, don’t keep me on pins and needles, how was your date with the delectable Dr. Beauchamp, Jamie?” John asked, raising one dark eyebrow in question.

“It wasn’t a date, I told you this before, I accompanied her as a friend.” Jamie stared at John, daring him to push the matter further. Upon no reply, he continued, “It started out fine, she’s still an extremely introverted woman. Don’t think I’ve ever been around a lass who doesn’t like to talk about themselves. Upon any personal query I made, she would answer, but short and to the point, then turn the questions back on me.”

“I’m sure you weren’t short and to the point. Heaven forbid if she asked you about your family or your home country, and you went on one of your long rambling Scottish tales.” Looking at Jamie’s sheepish face, John let out a groan. “Please tell me you didn’t.”

“Well, she did ask the questions, and I might have given her a few wordy answers.” Holding his hand up before John could reprimand him further, Jamie continued, “But, I had her laughing and she is enchanting when she laughs. Never heard that sound before last night and I certainly wouldn’t mind hearing Claire laugh again. Her golden eyes shine and sparkle and her laugh is deep and throaty…” Jamie’s voice trailed off as he realized he’d said a little more than he meant to say.

John sat contemplating his friend, who’s ears had turned a shade of pink. “You like her, and not as a friend, don’t you?” John asked.

“I don’t know. I’m not sure if I even like her personality. I can’t explain it.” Jamie took a few moments to gather his thoughts. John sat expectantly, staring at his friend. “Since the moment I met her, I’ve wanted to take care of her, break through her reserves, but mostly make her smile. There is always sadness in the depths of her eyes. Even when she would stop laughing last night, the sparkle would be replaced with a bit of regret and she’d be silent again. I’m drawn to her John and I feel conflicted. I don’t know what to do.” Jamie sighed in frustration.
“You said the evening started out fine, earlier. Why don’t you start at the beginning of the evening and tell me all.” John prompted.

As Jamie opened his mouth to speak, John’s phone rang. Glancing down, “I have to take this Jamie, I’ll be right back.” John walked a few feet away toward the windows, immediately going into attorney mode. Jamie smiled to himself, thinking of last evening. Jamie had no qualms with sharing all of the details with John, he was his best friend, attorney and sports agent. And, if John had his way, he’d be his husband also. But they had reached an agreement years ago, that wasn’t ever going to occur.

Fate had brought them together. Two eighteen year olds, trying their best not to shit their drawers from nervousness, during their freshman foreign exchange student orientation at the University of Illinois in Champaign. Jamie had taken one look at the pale faced, dark haired man sitting next to him, held out his hand, “James Fraser, from the Highlands of Scotland.” John had shaken his hand, a smile blooming across his handsome face, “John Grey, London.”

After orientation finished, they went to lunch and got to know each other. They were so very different, John, slight, handsome and immaculately dressed; Jamie, large, handsome in a more rugged way, and dressed in jeans and a t-shirt. Yet, they were very much alike in the things that truly matter, and a friendship was born, not knowing how deeply they would bond.

Jamie had made the football team as a walk on and was matched with another player, Charles, for his roommate. This proved to be a disaster. Charles was crude, obnoxious, a huge partier and a womanizer. In short, he was the complete opposite of Jamie. After being locked out of his shared dorm room numerous times, Jamie found himself spending more and more time with John at his off campus apartment. Although John complained about his relatively sparse living conditions, Jamie took his situation to the higher ups and he was granted permission to share the apartment, with stipulations that he make every football practice and class. Jamie and John argued over the financial situation, Jamie had no extra funds to go towards the rent and John told him not to worry about it, his family was wealthy. Jamie wanted to pull his fair share, an agreement was reached that Jamie did the cleaning, laundry and other household chores.

John and Jamie were both dedicated intelligent students, Jamie studying Agricultural and Biological Engineering and John studying Sports Management and working towards a future law degree. It was the navigation of the college life that were murky waters for them. John and Jamie were pursued by females constantly, of which John had no interest. Jamie was interested, but had no time for anything but a quick hook up and that wasn’t in his nature. His father had told him to be careful where you spread your seed unless you were willing to settle down with the lass and care for a bairn. Both of which he had no interest in, at the moment. He had big plans for his future, football and eventually returning home to Scotland to manage the family estate.

They attended house parties together, playing drinking games and getting goofy, but always leaving before things got too wild. Their future required the use of their brain cells and in Jamie’s case, his body, so they both knew when enough was enough and to call it a night.

One night, they had both had one drink too many and upon returning to their apartment, John turned to Jamie and kissed him. Jamie, stood shocked for a moment, then punched John hard in the face, turned and slammed his bedroom door.

The next morning over coffee, John apologized, explaining that he crossed a line and that it was due to the excessive alcohol. Jamie looked over the rim of his cup, at his best friend, who’s eye was a nice shade of purple and black, and apologized also.
“John, it’s okay. I’m sorry for hitting you, it wasn’t well done of me. I have a horrible temper that I usually keep well under wraps. I know you have feelings for me, realized it awhile ago. But I can’t give you what you need. I can offer my friendship, loyalty and love. But, in a totally platonic way. Will you accept?”

“I accept your offer of friendship.” John raised his eyes to look into Jamie’s, “I just thought, well, you never date and maybe there was a chance…but I realize I was wrong. I do have feelings for you Jamie and I doubt they will go away. But, if all I can have is your friendship, then I’ll happily accept.”

Jamie nodded, “then it’s done, we shan’t speak of it again. I’m off to practice, I’ll see you later.”

They never did speak of that kiss again. Not through their four years at the U of I together, John’s years at Northwestern in Chicago, where he earned his law degree, and not through Jamie’s rising football career. They eventually settled into their lake front condo. John had specialized in sports law and agency. As well as Jamie’s agent, he also had a few select clients among the area’s elite athletes.

Ending his call, John returned to the table, “Sorry about that, now you were going to fill me in on last night.”

As they ate their omelets, Jamie did just that. When he had finished speaking, John sat for a minute digesting his friend’s tale. “I think you should see the good Doctor again,” He finally stated.

“You know it couldn’t lead to anything. We’ve been over this a thousand times. My football days are numbered, I’ve been lucky to go this long until an injury has sidelined me, and I’ll be returning to Scotland as soon as my pro career is over. Back to the hills and my family. Dr Beauchamp has a successful career here and I don’t want to get more attached than I already am. Last night was a mistake.” Jamie sighed and reached for his Bloody Mary, taking a long drink.

“Jamie, when was the last time you did anything for just yourself besides play football? You support charities and send most of your earnings home to your family. We split the condo costs and you pinch pennies like you are going broke.”

Jamie interrupted John, “You know I have to save money while I can, my career could be over at any moment and then what?”

“Oh for God’s sake Jamie, you have enough money saved to support your family and their descendants, give me a break!” John looked at his friend, exasperated.

“John, you came from money, I didn’t. I know what my family sacrificed to help me get here and living my dreams. It’s much easier for them now, but I don’t take anything for granted. One never knows what is around the corner.” Jamie held his friend’s gaze, “let’s not argue, it’s giving me a headache and leading no where.”

John sighed, “Okay, but back to what I said. You rarely do anything for yourself. I know after the last debacle with Geneva, you’re hesitant to even look at a woman. But Dr. Beauchamp is in a different class altogether than that loon. Not every relationship leads to true love, but you’re young and allowed to have an intimate relationship that mutually benefits you both. Ask her out.”

Jamie fingers tapped a rhythm on the white tablecloth, “Easy for you to say. You’ve met the love of your life with Hector.”

John smirked and pointed to himself, “Jealous Jamie? Wishing you’d have hit this?”
Jamie couldn’t help but laugh at his friend, “Sometimes I think it would have been much easier, if I’d have been so inclined. But no, never going to happen.”

“Besides, you know damn well, I dated quite a bit before I met Hector. Even though those relationships didn’t develop into true love, I made many long lasting friendships. That alone is worth the trial and error. And, even worth the heartbreak from time to time.” John reached across and laid his hand over Jamies, “You need to get out there my friend. You are alone an inordinate amount of time now that I have Hector. And with your active brain, it isn’t a good thing.”

Jamie grasped John’s hand, “I know, I know…it’s just so hard. But you’re right. You usually are, you wee shit.”

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